

**ROLE OF WOMEN IN *EBIBI* FESTIVAL OF
IBIADE, OGUN-WATERSIDE**

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ABSTRACT

The role of women in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria, with particular emphasis on how women's identities, responsibilities and contributions has not been adequately considered by scholars for investigation of late. Traditional festivals are still important expressions of African cultural heritage, serving as avenues for preserving indigenous beliefs. The study examined the role of women in the Ebibi festival through a critical analysis of Ebibi festival songs explore how women are represented in the songs, examine their cultural religious, social and economic roles within the festival.

The study adopted a qualitative research design. It selected Ebibi festival songs as the primary source of data. The songs were purposively selected because they constitute of indigenous knowledge, oral history, and cultural values. Relevant journal articles, dissertations, and other scholarly publications on Yoruba festivals, women in traditional societies, oral literature, gender studies, and African cultural practices were also consulted to provide conceptual and theoretical support for the study as secondary data. The study is anchored on Gender Role Theory and Cultural Feminism. Gender Role Theory explains how society assigns culturally defined expectations and responsibilities to men and women, while Cultural Feminism recognise and values women's distinctive cultural contributions, caregiving roles, and capacity for preserving communal traditions. The selected songs were translated where necessary and critically analysed in relation to the theoretical framework. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the cultural meanings embedded in the songs while preserving their indigenous context and significance.

findings revealed that Ebibi festival portray women as indispensable participants whose contributions extend beyond domestic responsibilities to include religious, cultural, social, and economic functions essential to the success and continuity of the festival. The songs celebrate women as custodians of cultural heritage, moral educators, supporters of traditional institutions, and active participants in festival preparations and communal celebrations. They also highlight women's roles in preserving oral traditions through singing, storytelling, and the transmission of indigenous knowledge from one generation to another. The analysis also indicates that modernisation, urbanisation, formal education, religious change, and globalisation have influenced the ways women participate in the festival

The study concluded that Ebibi festival songs are valuable cultural texts that document, preserve, and celebrate the multifaceted roles of women within the traditional society of Ibiade. The representations contained in these songs affirm that women's participation is fundamental to the survival, continuity, and cultural relevance of the festival. Although traditional gender roles continue to influence women's responsibilities, the songs reveal that women possess agency, influence and cultural authority that contribute significantly to community development and the preservation of indigenous heritage. The study, therefore, recommended that, amongst others, that the Ebibi festival songs and other forms of oral literature should be documented and preserved to prevent the loss of indigenous knowledge and greater recognition of women's contributions in heritage conservation initiatives and festival organisation.

Keywords: Ebibi Festival, Women, Gender Role Theory, Cultural Feminism, Festival Songs.

Word count: 460

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study was carried out by ODULAJA Patience Ayodele with the Matriculation No: **PAR/F/24/25/0006** of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the Almighty God and my family.

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I humbly give all glory, honour, and adoration to Almighty God for His immeasurable love, abundant grace, divine wisdom, and unwavering faithfulness throughout the course of this programme and the completion of this dissertation. His grace made me worthy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Festivals are an integral part of African traditional societies as they foster the preservation, propagation and promotion of cultural values (Falola, Toyin, 2003; Akinwale, A.A,2012). The Yorubas of Southwest Nigeria for instance view festivals as an essential element of their social and religious life (Ojo, 2010; Falola 2003).

Festivals provide a forum for the Yorubas to showcase a wide range of musical, poetic, dramatic, and artistic talent as part of the ritual, music and dance that take place during the event (Falola 2003; Akinwale 2012). Besides enhancing moral development and social cohesion, Yoruba festivals serve as a means for social knowledge dissemination and family values reinforcement (Akinwale 2012). They also facilitate connecting the human world to the supernatural world as many festivals are held in honour of the gods and ancestral worshipped by the people (Ojo 2010).

Traditional festivals encourage gender roles differentiation as a way of asserting societal values and norms (Sudarkasa 1986; Akinwale 2012). Women play a pivotal role in festivals as their activities during this period help in transmitting cultural knowledge and reinforce communal ties and family values (Denzer 1994).

According to Denzer (1994) and Okonjo (1976) women take part in various aspects of festivals including economic activities. Women contribute greatly to festival functions by participating in the economic responsibilities, performance and spiritual activities (Akinwale 2012). Their role in festivals is also manifested in their roles as custodians of the culture,

since women are also directly involved in the process of handing down oral traditions from one generation to another, especially in the preservation and transmission of folktales, proverbs and myths among others (Denzer 1994).

Women also help in the production of food required during festivals, preparation of costumes and other traditional musical instruments as well as performing the arts such as music and dance. Women also use the festivals to acquire recognition, power and influence in the community (Okonjo 1976; Akinwale 2012).

However, the roles played by women during festivals have not been documented extensively in the past studies. This is partly due to the fact that most previous research has concentrated on documenting the roles played by men in festivals while giving scanty attention to women's roles. In addition, women's roles in festivals are considered to be of less theoretical and practical significance compared to the roles played by men.

For instance, festivals among the people of Yorubaland, especially in the riverine and coastal areas are significantly influenced by the presence of the water bodies like rivers and sea (Falola 2003). Festivals in these communities are unique in terms of the activities carried out and the socio-cultural values they promote. It is within this context that this study focuses its attention on the relevance of women in Ebibi festival with reference to Ogun-Waterside in Ogun State.

1.2 Aim and Objectives Aim

The main aim of this research is to critically examine the role of women in the Ebibi festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State. Objectives of the Study Based on the above rationale, this study seeks to:

- i. Ascertain the role of women during the Ebibi festival;
- ii. Examine the cultural and spiritual relevance of women's participation in the festival;
- iii. Determine the influence of modernisation on the roles played by women in the festival;
- iv. Evaluate women's relevance in terms of the festival sustainability; and 5. Ascertain if the participation of women in the festival represents empowerment or marginalisation.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Festivals in many African societies serve as a forum in which social customs and rituals that foster the preservation and conservation of history, identity and cultural values are performed. The Ebibi festival is a cultural milestone event in Ogun-Waterside because it enables community members to reaffirm their solidarity as a community as well as conserve their culture while at the same time cleansing their land. The festival, however, takes place in a patriarchal society where women are denied active participation in most of the activities and rituals deemed sacred.

According to Aina (1997), women play pivotal and active roles in the performance, organisation, management, and maintenance of indigenous festivals. Women are also active participants and custodians of the rituals, performances, organisation and documentation of the festival. Nevertheless, the roles of women in many African societies, especially in the aspects of festivals have either been inadequately documented or poorly documented with

emphasis placed on identifying the functions without exploring their relevance. For instance, the role and significance of women during the Ebibi festival have been inadequately explored despite their visible participation. In addition, most studies on African festivals have focused on examining the roles played by men while giving minimal attention to women's roles. For example, Okafor (2005) explores the socio-cultural implications of African festivals while giving minimal attention to the roles played by women. The roles played by women during festivals are perceived to support the activities of their counterparts due to the traditional gender roles that portray them as subordinate to men. As a result, women's roles are minimised and they become passive participants in the festivals.

Women play a subsidiary role in the traditional festivals of Ogun-waterside, particularly in Ebibi festival. Consequently, their roles and significance are not well documented and acknowledged which hinders efforts at accelerating active participation of women in promoting and conserving culture. This study seeks to fill this research gap by examining the relevance of women in Ebibi Festival of Ogun-Waterside.

1.4 Thesis

A critical analysis of the selected Ebibi festival songs reveals the cultural and spiritual significance of the festival in addition to providing the roles played by women in Ebibi festival. The songs help to highlight women's roles in the preservation of the social values, cultural beliefs and indigenous knowledge of the community. It is from these songs that one can understand the relevance of women in Ebibi festival as well as the manner in which women help to promote and sustain the festival.

1.5 Research Methodology

The study will adopt a qualitative ethnographic research design. Thus, the study will present a comprehensive description of participants and their activities without any alterations from the researcher's side. Data collection will be done through field observation which is carried out in Ibiade, Ogun Waterside Local Government of Ogun State. The Ebibi festival songs will be used as the primary data for the study. Participant observation, oral interview, documentation, and video recording of the Ebibi festival will be used to gather this information. Besides primary data, the study will also utilise secondary data from relevant published and unpublished works including books, journals, and dissertations.

The researcher will randomly select Three (3) Ebibi festival songs from the oral interview, participation, and observation and use them for the study. A purposive sampling technique will be used to choose the appropriate cultural activities as well as the role of women in the Ebibi festival. The study will focus on the female roles and activities that illuminate the objectives of the research because such perspectives have been underrepresented in the previous studies. This approach is efficient since it focuses on women's voices which have been neglected in many other research works.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

- i. What are the roles of women in the Ebibi festival?
- ii. In what ways do women participate in this kind of festival which is considered to be of male origin?
- iii. How do women's roles contribute to the success of the festival?

- iv. Do women's roles portray any form of inequality or challenge existing gender stereotypes?
- v. How has modernisation impacted the roles of women in the Ebibi festival?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study emanates from various aspects of the research. This paper focuses on providing a gender role perspective of Ebibi Festival as it is considered mainly a male festival by the locals. Therefore, the significance of this study lies in its academic, social, and cultural values.

Academically, this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on African festivals by focusing on the gender aspect of the Ebibi festival. Besides, this work will add to the existing pool of information concerning women's roles in other festivals of African origin. The research is significant from a social point of view as it provides an insight into women's roles, limitations, and empowerment in African traditional festivals. This paper demonstrates the importance of literature in awakening the minds of the people and bringing about social change. It focuses on analysing female roles and activities and highlighting their importance in the sustenance of Ebibi festival despite being neglected by the male community members. The study is also important as it will shed light on the relevance of festivals as custodians of history, indigenous knowledge, and cultural values.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study covers the role of women in the Ebibi festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside Local Government of Ogun State. It focuses on analysing the different roles played by women during the festival and the significance of these roles. In addition, the study will highlight the various aspects of Ebibi festival to demonstrate the cultural and spiritual

relevance of women's roles. However, the current research will be limited to Ebibi Festival only. It will involve analysing three (3) Ebibi festival songs, discussing how women's roles contribute to the festival's continuity, and investigating the influence of modernisation on women's roles in the festival. The study will focus on women's roles in African traditional festival and analyze it using Gender role theory and Cultural feminism perspective to reveal the hidden meanings of women's roles during the Ebibi festival in particular and African traditional festivals in general.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

The following terms used in this study have been defined according to their meaning in the research. However, the following definitions are not exhaustive and do not imply absolute or universal truth.

Festival

A festival is an event that is organised in celebration of one or more specific aspects of a particular religion, tradition, or culture. It is an idea which is characterised by an indigenous holiday. A festival is a period of joyous commemoration usually involving days of merrymaking, greetings, and entertainment as a means of promoting social solidarity. A festival is a gathering that encourages film screenings, performances, and events such as music and dance.

Ebibi festival

Ebibi festival is a traditional Yoruba coastal community festival mainly associated with the coast people of Ogun-water side, Ogun State. The festival is associated with water deities, fertility, and harmony. It is believed that the festival encourages purification, fertility,

protection, and unity among the people of the locality. It is a festival that includes ritual offerings, music, and dance, and communal feasting to mark the attainment of harmony, and social and communal development.

Role

Generally, a role is a function or a position played acted, or performed by an individual, or the manner in which a person performs or acts. It is a set of behaviours and actions that are performed by an individual as a member of a certain society. In this study, the term refers to women's work function during the Ebibi festival.

Relevance

Generally, relevance refers to a connection, application, or relation to a particular circumstance, subject, or thing. It is often used to indicate how applicable or pertinent something is to a particular case or person. However, in this study, it refers to the importance of women's role in the Ebibi festival. It focuses on the significance and usefulness of women's activities in the sustenance of this kind of festival.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review of Related Literature

The study of indigenous festivals and women's roles in cultural practices has been a subject of great interest to African cultural researchers, anthropologists, gender analysts, and sociologists. These scholars have extensively studied the role of festivals in cultural preservation, socialisation, religious practices, economic development, and the creation of identity. Similarly, considerable research has been dedicated to understanding the role of women in the preservation of indigenous cultural practices and traditions. This paper reviews the literature on the themes of festivals as cultural practices, women and cultural preservation, gender and participation in indigenous festivals, and the socio-economic importance of traditional festivals.

The first scholar reviewed in the context of women's role in indigenous festivals is Falola (2018). He explains that traditional festivals are significant cultural practices full of meaning and purpose as they enable communities to pass down their cultural heritage from one generation to another. Elaborating on the significance of the festivals in African societies, Falola (2018) explains their role in promoting social integration and historical continuity as African festivals allow people to perform various ritual activities and transmit indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, and beliefs from generation to generation. In this context, the scholar notes the educational role of festivals in African societies where the distinction between genders is blurred. Discussing the role of women in traditional festivals, Falola (2018) notes their contribution to cultural preservation as festival organisers through oral traditions, music, dancing, and provision of food and accommodation.

Another scholar who discusses the importance of traditional festivals in African communities is Falassi (1987). According to Falassi, festivals are periodical social events celebrating communal values and experiences. The author explains that traditional festivals enable communities to express their values collectively and maintain social cohesion through communal ritual activities and events. Similarly, Turner (1982) points to the unifying aspect of festivals, explaining how they contribute to socialisation through communal masquerade and ritual dances. In his view, festivals promote *communitas* that unite people of different social categories, such as men and women, and different ages.

On his part, Drewal (1992) discusses the ceremonial aspect of Yoruba festivals, explaining how the rituals help the Yoruba people to express communal identity through the performance of rites and ceremonies that involve drumming, dancing, sacrifices, chanting, and processions of masquerades. According to Drewal (1992), regardless of the changes in religion and modernisation, the Yoruba people have maintained their cultural continuity through the observation of festivals as sacred rituals. Asante (2007) focuses on the role of women in the preservation and maintenance of African cultural heritage through oral literature, music, dance, and African traditional education. He asserts that women have always participated in the process of passing down African cultural heritage through oral stories, folktales, fables, and songs. Asante (2007) highlights the role of women as cultural transmitters and moral guardians in African societies.

Steady (2011) examines the role of women in promoting socialisation and cultural heritage through their active participation in ritual activities and traditional festivals. Elaborating on the significance of women's involvement in festivals, the author asserts that their role helps achieve historical continuity and maintain communal values and traditions. Another scholar who discusses the importance of traditional festivals in African communities is Tamale

(2020). She asserts that African women help their communities to uphold cultural heritage by participating in various ritual activities and ceremonies, as well as festivals, and observing traditional cultural practices despite the challenges posed by modernisation and globalisation.

2.1.1 Gender Relations and Women's Participation in Yoruba Society

The theme of gender and women's participation in traditional festivals has been widely explored by scholars. In general, the authors agree that women in traditional Yoruba society held relatively high status in social organisation and played significant roles in cultural practices. According to Oyěwùmí (1997), prior to colonisation, gender categories in Yorubaland were not fixed and were not the basis of social organisation, as gender did not predominate over other social categories, such as age. The author asserts that the introduction of colonialism changed social organisation and the concept of gender, resulting in the subordination of women to men. Amadiume (2015) agrees that African women played significant roles in religious, economic, and political organisation in African societies. Discussing the role of women in traditional Yoruba festivals, the scholar asserts that women's active participation in festivals helped them to demonstrate their leadership roles in society.

Aina (2012) explores the role of African women in social development and community organisation. She argues that women have played significant roles in African societies, such as promoting economic development, engaging in governance processes, and participating in cultural practices. At the same time, the author notes that African women's contributions are minimised in most cases, and their involvement in cultural practices is not acknowledged. Mama (2021) discusses the changing roles of women in African societies and their increasing participation in governance processes. In her view, the growing involvement of women in political and communal affairs highlights their changing roles as community leaders in promoting social development.

Women's participation in traditional festivals plays a crucial role in cultural heritage promotion and socialisation. Aina (2012) asserts that African women actively participate in cultural practices, which include ceremonies that utilise body adornments, rituals, and festivals. The author maintains that women's role in festivals helps to promote cultural heritage and create awareness about it. Similarly, Afolabi (2021) discusses the importance of women's involvement in traditional festivals and ceremonies in Southwest Nigeria. According to the author, women can play significant roles in festivals as organisers, performers, transmitters, and custodians of indigenous cultural practices. Elaborating on the relevance of women's participation in festivals, Afolabi (2021) asserts that the involvement of women in ceremonies promotes socialisation, cohesion, and community development.

Another role of traditional festivals is that they generate substantial revenues and create employment while promoting cultural heritage and identity. Adeyemi (2018) argues that traditional festivals promote tourism, which helps to generate income while creating employment and supporting economic development. According to the author, women play a significant role in festival-related economic activities, such as food vending, craft production, cultural shows and exhibitions, and hotel service provision. Similarly, Oloruntoba (2021) discusses the role of women in the development of festivals as they take part in petty trade, catering, and craft production as well as providing hospitality services to visitors. Therefore, it could be asserted that women's involvement in festivals provides them with additional income, supporting their economic development and promotion community growth.

In addition to the African scholars who discuss the significance of traditional festivals for sustaining cultural heritage, other researchers have devoted much attention to the role of festivals in socialisation while demonstrating the importance of involving community

members, women, and youth in festival performance. UNESCO's cultural heritage framework

(2019) is also concerned with the importance of festivals in promoting cultural heritage. According to the framework, festivals enable people to perform cultural practices and generate economic benefits from them. The author highlights the importance of involving women and youth in the preservation and promotion of cultural practices. Similarly, Ogunyemi (2020) discusses the role of traditional festivals in identity construction and community development, asserting that festivals enable members of a community to come together to commemorate an event or mark the onset of a season or annual cycle.

The author highlights the importance of traditional festivals in community development as they contribute to the development of communal celebrations, promote cultural heritage, reinforce social cohesion, and create a sense of communal identity. In addition, Durkheim's theory of collective consciousness states that communal ceremonies promote cultural heritage by reinforcing shared values in all participants. The study of collective consciousness helps to interpret social life and understand the role of traditional festivals in community development and cultural heritage promotion.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that African scholars generally agree on the significance of traditional festivals for sustaining cultural heritage, promoting community development, and generating economic benefits. The reviewed scholars discuss the role of women in traditional festivals, focusing on their role as organisers, performers, and cultural transmitters. However, the literature lacks empirical studies on the significance of women's participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade in Ogun Waterside Local Government Area of Ogun State. The majority of the reviewed studies concentrate on the significance of Yoruba and African festivals in general without specifying the role of women in the local Ebibi

Festival. Moreover, most scholars devoted much attention to the role of festivals in cultural heritage promotion without assessing the extent of women's participation in the Ebibi Festival.

Lastly, there is insufficient information on the challenges facing women's participation in the Ebibi Festival and how their involvement could be promoted.

2.2 Conceptual Review

The conceptual review for this study is based on the notion of women's roles in traditional Yoruba festivals. Women play a variety of roles in traditional Yoruba festivals and ceremonies. Contrary to the popular belief, women do not only participate in religious practices but also serve as managers of festival programmes, organisers of ritual activities, and performers of festival events and ceremonies. Women's roles in traditional festivals contribute to the preservation and promotion of the indigenous religious beliefs, cultural practices, and values as well as to socialisation and community development (Aina, 2020; Oyěwùmí, 1997).

Traditional Yoruba festivals play a significant role in cultural heritage promotion by providing a platform for the demonstration of history, beliefs, and customs. Such celebrations as the Osun-Osogbo festival, Sango festival, Eyo festival, Gelede festival, and the Ebibi festival of the Ogun-Waterside people are important events that entail ritual activities as well as the production of traditional foods and drinks. Women participate in almost all aspects of these festivals, helping to ensure their smooth organisation and implementation while promoting cultural heritage and community development (Drewal, 1983; Oloruntoba, 2021). Women's participation in traditional festivals facilitates community development by promoting socialisation, solidarity, and economic growth.

The conceptual review of this paper will be based on the themes of women's roles in traditional Yoruba festivals and their associated values and socialisation aspects. Women's roles in traditional festivals could be grouped into various categories, including religious roles and practices, cultural preservation and transmission, social roles, economic roles, and artistic roles.

The following section discusses these categories in detail.

2.2.1 Concept of Women in Traditional Yoruba Festivals

Women play a significant role in many traditional Yoruba festivals, such as the Osun-Osogbo festival, Sango festival, Eyo festival, and Gelede festival, as well as the Ebibi festival of the Ogun-Waterside people. These festivals are important events that involve religious practices and ceremonies as well as cultural performance and leisure activities. It is noteworthy that women play a pivotal role in traditional festivals, which could be related to their participation in various religious practices and cultural performances and their roles as organisers, managers, and mobilisers of the festival activities. Women's roles in traditional Yoruba festivals could be related to their status in society, which involves their roles in religious practices, cultural preservation and transmission, socialisation and community development, economic development, and artistic performances.

i. Religious and Spiritual Roles

Women play significant roles in traditional Yoruba festivals, which often involve rituals that have sacred meanings and promote religious beliefs and practices. Women take part in various rituals and ceremonies and play crucial roles individually as well as collectively at different stages of the festival events. Women demonstrate their religious beliefs and practices through the performance of various ritual activities, preparation and offering of sacrifices to

deities, and participation in festivals' ceremony. Women's roles in the performance of the various rituals and ceremonies are determined by their status in society. In traditional Yoruba society, the religious beliefs and practices are regarded as a communal affair, in which men and women participate on equal terms (Awolalu, Dopamu, 1979; Idowu, 1962). As such, women could be found in all religious activities, where they hold various roles and responsibilities.

For instance, women take part in the Osun-Osogbo festival, Sango festival, Eyo festival, Gelede festival, the Ebibi festival, as well as in other traditional festivals.

ii. Cultural Preservation Roles

Women in traditional Yoruba society play a critical role in cultural preservation and transmission. Festivals enable women to showcase and pass down various aspects of cultural heritage, including oral literature, to the younger generations. Women play a crucial role in ensuring that oral traditions are performed and passed down from one generation to another. The transmission of oral traditions helps to preserve intangible cultural heritage while promoting cultural awareness and socialisation (Finnegan, 2012; Vansina, 1985). Women play a significant role in oral traditions as the tradition keepers, passing down oral histories, folktales, fables, folk songs, and festival tales from generation to generation. In doing so, women help to transmit moral values and educate younger generations about the origins of society and its cultural practices while promoting cultural heritage and fostering socialisation.

iii. Social Roles

Traditional festivals promote socialisation and solidarity among community members while bringing people together to participate in communal activities. Women's active participation in festivals promotes socialisation by encouraging individuals to interact with each other,

strengthening communal bonds, and promoting solidarity within and between communities (Durkheim, 1912,1995). Women's involvement in the festivals promotes communal celebration as they are key organisers and mobilisers of the participants. Traditional festivals require the active involvement of all family members, including children, who learn social norms and values from their parents and other community members. Women's participation in festivals promotes unity, peace, and communal living while facilitating intergenerational interaction and cooperation (Falassi, 1987). Involving women in festivals as mobilisers and organisers of the festival events fosters community development and ensures that all community members participate in all ritual activities, cultural performances, and leisure activities involved in the festival.

iv. Economic Roles

Traditional festivals promote economic development by creating employment and generating revenues through the sale of various goods and services. Women play a significant role in festival-related economic activities, including petty trade, food vending, and provision of services by engaging in a wide range of festival-related business activities. Women participate in festivals as providers of food, drinks, handicrafts, and other goods and services. Women's involvement in petty trade, food vending, and provision of hospitality promotes sustainable livelihoods while supporting economic development at the community level. Moreover, women take part in festivals as food vendors selling traditional Yoruba foods and drinks, thus supporting local economic development while promoting cultural heritage. The economic benefits accrued from festivals increase community members' purchasing capacity, improve their quality of life, and support community development (Oloruntoba, 2021).

Additionally, women's active involvement in all aspects of the festivals contributes to their personal empowerment by enhancing their economic status and fostering their social

development. Being active participants in festivals, women obtain valuable skills related to management, organisation, and leadership, enabling them to play a more prominent role in community development. Women's increased involvement in festivals promotes community development and empowers them economically and socially.

v. Artistic and Performative Roles

Women's participation in artistic and performative activities plays a significant role in the celebration of the Yoruba festivals. Elaborating on the performative aspect of Yoruba festivals,

Drewal (1983) discusses the performance of masquerades, music, and dance, which are important elements of most traditional festivals. The performance of masquerades is always accompanied by music and dancing, during which women demonstrate their mastery of the art of dancing. Women also participate in the festivals as designers and models of traditional costumes and dress materials. Moreover, women engage in mask-making, body painting, and decorating masquerades, offering their skills to the community. Women's involvement in body adornment helps to promote the traditional art of beautification and self-organisation among community members while enhancing their personal image. The artistic aspects of the traditional festivals contribute to the development of the communities by promoting and preserving cultural heritage. The art and performances, including song and body painting, create aesthetic pleasure and facilitate the transmission of history and traditional values from one generation to another, thus playing a significant role in cultural preservation and socialisation (UNESCO, 2003).

2.2.2 Sustainability and Continuity of Traditional Yoruba Festivals

Women's role in traditional Yoruba festivals ensure sustainability and continuity of the indigenous festivals through its expressions in religious, cultural, social, economic and artistic aspects of the community (UNESCO, 2003; Falassi, 1987)

i. Preservation of cultural values

Women play vital role in preserving the cultural values through passing on knowledge, customs, beliefs, songs, dances, dressing styles and rituals from one generation to another during the performance of traditional festivals such as Ebibi Festival, Gelede festival, Eyo Festival therefore ensuring that the culture is not lost in the midst of modernisation

ii. Sustainability of the traditional festivals

Women ensure sustainability of the traditional festivals by preparing materials needed for the traditional festival, teaching and learning cultural events, dances, games and performances handed down from older generations, participating in all the aspects of the traditional festivals.

Their active participation ensures the continuity of Osun-Osogbo Festival, Sango Festival, Eyo Festival which if not carried out by the younger generations could lead to extinction.

iii. Maintenance of community solidarity

Traditional festivals foster community solidarity. Women participation in communal activities such as cooking, singing and dancing, fundraising, offering guests hospitality and helping in the organisation of festivals bring families together thus reinforcing harmony, peace and solidarity within the community.

iv. Religious aspects

Women take part in the performance of rituals, prayers, sacrifices and other related activities to the traditional festivals. Their active involvement in all aspects of the festivals enable them to develop sense of belonging to a certain community which helps in sustaining the indigenous religion by offering sacrifices and prayers.

v. Maintenance of cultural identity

Traditional festivals contribute largely to enhancement of belongingness and cultural identity among the people. Women participation in these festivals enable them to develop cultural identity by teaching the younger generations about the communal history and customs, traditions, folktales, songs, dances and language through the various aspects of the celebration of the festivals.

2.2.3. Challenges to women's participation

Challenges facing women in the performance of the activities of the traditional festivals

Modernisation in Africa has caused tremendous changes in all aspects of life for example social, cultural, religious and economic aspects of life. The influence of the changes in the social aspects of the society has brought about impact on women's participation in social events such as the indigenous festivals. The changes taking place in the society have both negative and positive effect on the participation of women in the traditional festivals. While on the other side of the coin some changes have brought about more appreciation of the roles of women in all aspects of life especially the social events, the other side has brought about the diminishing interest in the performance of the indigenous festivals leading to decline in participation of women in these festivals (Aina, 2020). As the custodians of the culture

women are faced with lot of challenges in their efforts to perform their roles in the traditional festivals.

Some of the challenges facing women in the performance of the activities of the traditional festivals include:

i. Urbanisation

People are migrating from their rural homes to towns and cities in search for better jobs and education leading to decline in active participation in traditional festivals due to distance. Migration reduces the rate of passing on of knowledge from one generation to the next since the knowledge is not actively practiced in the new generations.

ii. Western Education

Most African women are being educated in the western system which has created awareness on gender discrimination giving them equal rights as men to participate in all social aspects of life including governance. Though this has brought about more participation of women in the traditional festivals, some women are unable to get involved due to their academic studies. Western education has also brought about negative perceptions towards the African traditional religion resulting in decline in participation in festivals. However, western education has also helped in creating more awareness on the traditional festivals both locally and internationally thus creating more interest in practicing the traditional festivals (Aina, 2020).

iii. Religious Conversion

Conversion to western religions such as Christianity and Islam has brought about negative impact on the performance of the traditional festivals. Religious conversion has discouraged

women from active participation in the festivals due to differences in core beliefs and practices. However, most women still appreciate the festival as a cultural event full of entertainment and keep their cultural practices alive through the performance of the festivals (Awolalu, Dopamu, 2005).

iv. Globalisation

The process of globalisation has brought about foreign culture, values and other social aspects which have influence on the African culture in general. While globalisation has brought about more awareness on the traditional festivals through the social media, it has discouraged most African youths from adopting the traditional African festival and has influenced them to adopt foreign festivals which are more celebrated internationally. As a result there are less number of people willing to take up the roles played by women in the traditional festivals as the foreign culture brings about changes in the ways of dressing and living (Aina, 2020).

v. Modern gender ideology

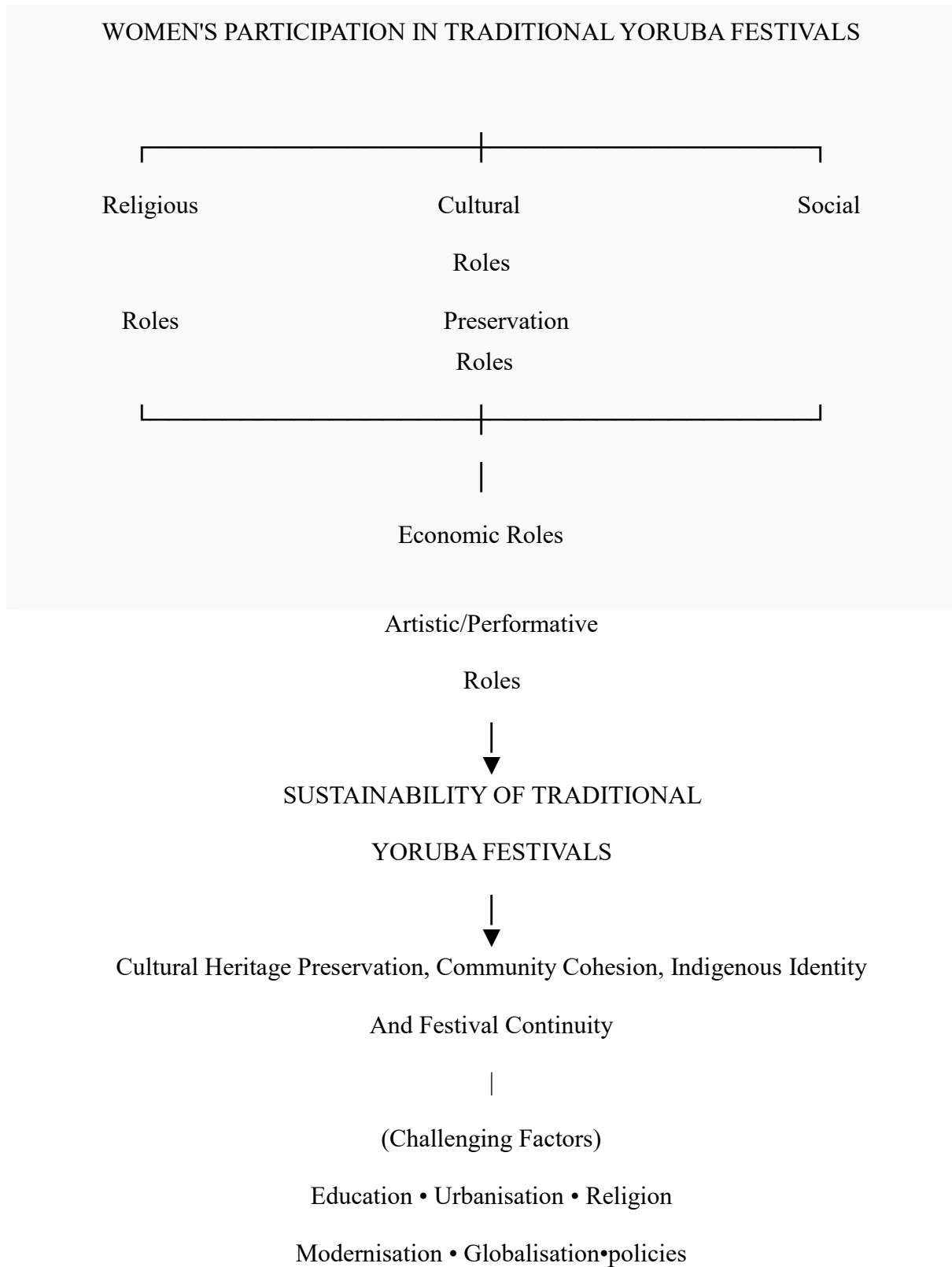
Modern gender ideologies give more emphasis on equality of opportunity and empowerment of women which has brought about more involvement of women in all human endeavors including governance. This ideologies create room for active participation of women in the traditional festivals such as the Ebibi Festival of Ogun-Waterside. Due to the changes in gender ideologies some rules and regulations of the festival are being challenged paving way for changes in the traditional festivals (Aina, 2020).

vi. Government policies

There are government policies that encourage the promotion and conservation of Africa's rich and diverse culture by giving support to the departments involved in organising the traditional festivals as well as encouraging tourism in the festival. The policy has created more interest and appreciation of the festivals both locally and internationally therefore creating more platforms for women to participate in the festivals. However, government policies of regulation and commercialisation of the festivals has brought about diminutive effect on the original meaning and purpose of the festivals (Oloruntoba, 2021).

From the above challenges facing women in the performance of the activities of the traditional festivals that are taking place in modern day Africa, one will be led to conclusion that though the challenges such as urbanisation , religious conversion and globalisation pose threat to the existence of the traditional festivals, the other challenges such as western education, gender ideologies and government policies have created more platforms for women to participate in the traditional festivals and promote the events both locally and internationally.

Diagrammatic Representation of the Conceptual Review



2.2.4 Theorising Women's Roles in African Traditional Festivals

The role of women in African traditional festivals has been a topic of great interest to many scholars due to their active role in preserving, performing, and passing on African cultural heritage. Traditional festivals are a means by which Africans express their religious beliefs, social values, history, and social-cultural identities. Thus, women are not only active participants in these festivals but also cultural custodians who perform rituals and practices, manage and organise the events, act as organisers, leaders, and social managers. In this regard, it is important to define and explore such key concepts as women, gender, culture, traditional festivals, ritual participation, cultural preservation, and indigenous knowledge. This section provides a conceptual review of the key terms central to the research study on the role of women in African traditional festivals.

2.2.5 The Concept of Women in African Societies

Women play a major role in many African societies as home makers, religious leaders, and custodians of cultural heritage. Traditional African beliefs regard women as the pillars of society that carry and sustain religious, social, economic, and cultural values. Women hold privileged positions in traditional African societies despite the prevalence of patriarchy. Scholars have noted that African women act as cultural transmitters of indigenous values through folklore and oral traditions, songs, stories, rituals, and ceremonies. Women's role in traditional festivals is therefore significant and multifaceted, encompassing not only their roles as wives and mothers but also involving their active participation in ritual practices central to the celebration.

2.2.6 The Concept of African Traditional Festivals

Traditional festivals are community events that mark occasions of historical, religious, and cultural significance to the community and its members. They play a significant role in reinforcing the social-cultural values of the African people while also providing a forum for the expression of religious beliefs. Traditional festivals encapsulate ritual practices, social gatherings, and artistic performances that are all aimed at reinforcing community solidarity, promoting cultural heritage, and celebrating achievements, both historical and contemporary. As a matter of fact, African traditional festivals are a forum for social, spiritual, artistic, and economic activities that promote the wellbeing of the people while also giving vent to their religious beliefs.

Festivals encapsulate a wide range of ritual performances, including sacrifices, storytelling, and oral traditions, all of which are aimed at reinforcing social-cultural values and beliefs.

i. Ritual Performances

Ritual performances comprise sacred activities performed to appease gods and ancestors who are believed to bless the community and ensure a plentiful harvest and general wellbeing of the people. Ritual performances consist of prayers, purification, processions, and dances performed by priests and priestesses, community elders, and other appointed representatives. Ritual performances are believed to foster peaceful co-existence among community members while also promoting spiritual wellbeing and prosperity of the community. African traditional festivals, therefore, provide a platform for engaging in ritual acts aimed at achieving communal and personal goals while also reinforcing spiritual beliefs and promoting social solidarity.

ii. Sacrifices and Offerings

Sacrifices and offerings are performed during the festivals in order to seek the intervention of the gods and ancestors in achieving communal goals. Sacrifices may take various forms, ranging from food offerings to animal sacrifices, depending on the community's beliefs and practices. Women prepare various offerings and assist in the sacrificial rituals as part of their duties and responsibilities during the festival.

iii. Storytelling and Oral Traditions

Storytelling is a cultural activity that enables the community to pass on cultural beliefs, history, and customs from one generation to another. During the festival, elders, especially women, engage in storytelling as a way of passing on cultural knowledge and reinforcing communal values and beliefs. This enables the younger generations to learn about their history and cultural practices.

These aspects of African traditional festivals are all aimed at promoting cultural wellbeing, reinforcing communal solidarity, and upholding religious beliefs.

2.2.7 Concept of Gender and Festival Participation

The term gender refers to the roles, responsibilities and behavioral expectations that society sets for women and men. Gender roles vary among societies depending on cultural beliefs and practices. In most African societies, gender roles are well defined and determine the social obligations of each gender. Gender roles in festivals therefore set the behavioral roles for women and men during the events. For instance, while some ritual performances are restricted to men, women take part in other festival activities as a way of fulfilling their social

obligations. In most cases, women's roles in festivals encompass not only their domestic duties but also involve economic, spiritual, social and cultural aspects of the event.

Studies on women's roles in festivals reveal that despite their active participation in various activities, women do not hold dominant positions. However, their contributions are crucial to the success of the festival as well as the preservation of cultural practices. The role of women in African festivals has been described as that of silent partners due to their extensive but non dominant involvement. Additionally, festival studies indicate that African traditional festivals entail communal participation and responsibilities, with women and men participating in various aspects of the event.

Women's roles in African traditional festival encompass ritual preparation, dance and music presentation, costume preparation, and food preparation among other roles. Each of these roles entails various responsibilities that are aimed at ensuring the wellbeing of the community.

i. Ritual preparation

Women play a crucial role in preparing materials for ritual use during the festival. They also engage in cleaning and decorating the venue for the festival. Women prepare food offerings and assist in the preparation of other ritual materials for the event. Ritual preparations are significant aspects of the festival as they enable the community to perform the event in accordance with their cultural beliefs and practices.

ii. Dance and music presentation

Dance and music presentation form a significant aspect of women's participation in African traditional festivals. Women present dance performances that highlight the cultural values and

beliefs of the community. Songs and oral traditions are also important components of women's roles in the festival. The songs not only entertain the audience but also convey cultural information and beliefs about the event and the community. Women's dance and music performances therefore play a key role in promoting cultural knowledge during the festival.

iii. Costume preparation

Women engage in a wide range of activities in preparation for the festival, including sewing, weaving, decorating, and tying beads. In this regard, women prepare the costume, head-tie, and other related materials that are used during the festival. Traditional costumes play a significant role in African cultures as they reflect the values, social status, and cultural identity of the people. Thus, women's role in costume preparation supports their role in sustaining cultural heritage.

iv. Food preparation

Women prepare traditional meals and refreshments for the visitors, performers, assistants, priests, and community members. The communal nature of food preparation and eating fosters social cohesion and unity among the community members. In addition, the food is prepared with the intention of promoting wellbeing and social solidarity. As a matter of fact, food prepared during festivals promotes social solidarity and unity among the community members while also supporting spiritual wellbeing.

Women's associations play a key role in fundraising, welfare services, organisation of cultural events, and community development activities. Female leaders also oversee fundraising efforts, welfare services, provision of community services and amenities, and organisation of cultural events and programs. Women's associations therefore play a significant role in

community development, including the organisation of festivals. Studies on women's age-grade organisations have revealed their tremendous role in promoting community development.

The concept of gender provides a solid theoretical basis for the study of women's roles in festivals and the identification of their contribution to the events. Women's roles in African traditional festivals demonstrate their active participation and significant contribution to all aspects of the event.

2.2.8 Women as Custodians of Cultural Heritage

The role of women as custodians of cultural heritage forms one of the central theoretical frameworks for understanding their roles in traditional festivals. Cultural heritage encompasses cultural beliefs, practices, history, knowledge, and values. Women play a significant role in African societies as custodians of cultural knowledge, beliefs, and practices. In this regard, women ensure cultural continuity by maintaining and transmitting cultural practices, history, values, and beliefs from one generation to another.

Women sustain African cultural heritage through oral traditions, folktales, songs, and dances, as well as through the production of traditional materials and artefacts. They serve as cultural teachers and advisers in reinforcing cultural beliefs and promoting social cohesion. Women's roles as custodians encompass various aspects of cultural practices, particularly those related to traditional festivals. For instance, women transmit cultural heritage to younger generations through oral traditions and family activities. They participate in the festivals as a way of reinforcing and passing on cultural knowledge and beliefs to their children and younger generations. As a result, women enable the community to maintain its cultural identity.

Women also sustain cultural beliefs and practices by engaging in the production of traditional materials and artefacts. Women's knowledge and skills in weaving, tying, and decorating are useful in producing the materials needed for the festivals. Similarly, women's singing abilities enable them to perform the songs and chants that are important aspects of cultural heritages. In addition, women participate actively in the preparation of the festival events, including preparing food offerings, costume materials, and other related items. Thus, women's role as custodians enables them to ensure the maintenance of cultural heritage through practice and performance.

2.2.9 Women as Agents of Social Cohesion

Traditional festivals play an important role in promoting social cohesion and solidarity. They provide opportunities for family members, age groups, traditional institutions, and neighboring communities to interact and exchange with one another. Women are at the forefront of these relationships as they take part in various social and organisational activities (Oloruntoba, 2021). Women play significant roles in promoting community relationships through their social and organisational activities. They express this by:

i. Organising communal activities:

Women play a leading role in organising various activities that take place during the festival such as communal cooking and feeding, hospitality, dancing, cultural show, and reception of guests. Their organisational role helps promote festival events and encourage community members to participate (Oloruntoba, 2021).

ii. Mobilising community members:

Women mobilise family members, neighbors, and the youth to participate in various festival events. Through their mobilisation, family networks, women's groups, and community organisations are formed and promoted.

iii. Mediating conflicts:

Elderly women and community mothers play a leading role in mediating conflicts among community members before and during the festival. Their role helps promote peaceful coexistence and enables the festival to be celebrated in a harmonious and joyful manner (Aina, 2020).

iv. Passing on social values:

Women participate in the festival through indigenous songs, stories, dances, and interactions to pass on social values such as respect for elders, peace, communal responsibility, hospitality, honesty, and solidarity. The values promote social cohesion and solidarity among community members while enhancing cultural identity (Aina, 2020).

Women play various roles that promote social cohesion and solidarity during the Traditional Festival. Their active participation helps foster peaceful coexistence, promote communal values, and maintain cultural identity among community members.

2.2.10 Women and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Indigenous knowledge systems comprise the knowledge, skills, and practices that a community acquires and develops over time to promote its social, cultural, religious, economic, and environmental aspects of life. The knowledge is passed down from one generation to another through observation and experience. Women are key custodians and

transmitters of indigenous knowledge. Their active participation helps promote and sustain the festival despite the adverse effects of modernisation and globalisation. Women play significant roles in ensuring that indigenous knowledge systems are transmitted and sustained within a community (Aina, 2020).

Women are involved in various activities during the festival that require indigenous knowledge. These include:

i. Herbal medicine:

Women possess indigenous knowledge of preparing herbal medicine and use the skills to treat minor illnesses and offer healing during the festival period. They also provide traditional herbs for healing, purification, and protection purposes (Awolalu, Dopamu, 2005).

ii. Sacred songs:

Women transmit indigenous knowledge through sacred songs, praises, and poems performed during the festival. The knowledge is passed down from one generation to another through oral tradition. Songs and poems help pass on historical information, religious beliefs, and social values while promoting the festival's indigenous language.

iii. Cultural symbols:

Women help sustain the cultural symbols used during the festival through their participation in the event. They pass on the knowledge of the meanings of colors, attire, and symbols used in the festival to the younger generations. Such actions help promote cultural identity and sustain the indigenous knowledge systems in the community (Aina, 2020).

Women play a significant role in sustaining the Traditional Festival by passing down indigenous knowledge and promoting cultural identity among community members. Their

participation helps sustain the festival's unique cultural elements that are often lost in the process of modernisation and globalisation.

2.2.11 Theoretical Perspectives on the Role of Women in African Traditional Festivals

The role of women in African traditional festivals has attracted the attention of many researchers who seek to understand their role in promoting and sustaining the event. Researchers have identified various theoretical perspectives that help explain women's roles and their significance in traditional festivals. The perspectives include the cultural preservation perspective, the functionalist perspective, the symbolic perspective, the feminist perspective, and the indigenous knowledge perspective.

i. Cultural Preservation Perspective

The cultural preservation perspective focuses on the role of women in preserving and transmitting indigenous cultural heritage to subsequent generations. Women participate in the festival as custodians of cultural heritage. Through their involvement in the preparation and performance of rituals, oral traditions, songs, dances, and preparation of food and drinks, they help sustain the festival. In most African communities, mothers and elderly women are the custodians of cultural knowledge and traditions. They pass down the cultural knowledge and customs to the younger generations through oral traditions, rituals, dances, and stories. Women's participation in the festival helps preserve the cultural heritage of the community for future generations. Researchers argue that without the active involvement of women in traditional festivals, African cultural heritage would be gradually lost due to the neglect of indigenous knowledge and traditions (Aina, 2020; UNESCO, 2003).

ii. The Functionalist Perspective

According to the functionalist perspective, traditional festivals serve as social institutions that promote social cohesion and solidarity within a community. Women play a crucial role in ensuring that the festival achieves its intended objectives. The roles performed by women promote communal solidarity and contribute to the festival's success. Women help prepare food and drinks for the community members and guests. In addition, they mobilise family members and community members to participate in various festival events. Women also participate in songs and dances that promote communal unity and social cohesion. Researchers argue that women's roles in the festival support its religious, social, educational, and economic functions (Durkheim, 1995; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952).

iii. The Symbolic Perspective

The symbolic perspective views festivals as systems of symbols that help people express their beliefs, values, and attitudes toward certain activities or phenomena. According to this perspective, women's roles and activities during the festival signify deeper meanings that reflect communal beliefs and values. Women use body painting, songs, dances, body language, dressing styles, and other activities to express various aspects of their lives and beliefs. Their participation in the festival helps pass on cultural beliefs and values to subsequent generations. Researchers argue that women's roles in the festival are important in promoting and sustaining cultural beliefs and communal identity (Geertz, 1973; Turner, 1969).

iv. The Feminist Perspective

The feminist perspective examines women's roles and status within African traditional festivals and questions their inferiority to men. This perspective argues that despite the

perceived inferiority of women in many African traditional societies, they have significant roles in the festival. Researchers argue that women's roles in the festival are not limited to dancing, singing, and serving but also include leadership, management, and economic activities. African feminist scholars note that women's roles in the festival should be understood in the context of their cultural beliefs and practices. Researchers argue that women have used their roles in the festival to promote communal development and sustain cultural traditions (Oyěwùmí, 1997; Amadiume, 1987; Nnaemeka, 2004).

v. Indigenous Knowledge Perspective

Women play a significant role in transmitting indigenous knowledge to subsequent generations. Indigenous knowledge perspective views women as key custodians and transmitters of indigenous knowledge that promotes African traditional festivals. Women help sustain the festival by passing down such knowledge as songs, oral traditions, herbal medicine, preparation of food and drinks, and preparation of costumes and materials used in the festival. The knowledge is passed down from one generation to another through observation and experience. Researchers argue that without the active involvement of women in the festival, its cultural significance and identity would be lost due to neglect and lack of transmission to the younger generations (Warren, 1991; UNESCO, 2003).

The discussion on theoretical perspectives on the role of women in African traditional festivals helps demonstrate their importance in promoting and sustaining the event. Women play various roles that support the religious, social, cultural, and economic aspects of the festival. The roles help promote communal solidarity, transmit cultural knowledge and traditions, and maintain cultural identity. In addition, women's roles support the festival's economic development by promoting such activities as petty trading. The perspectives are

significant in understanding the role of women in African traditional festivals and provide the theoretical background for the study.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides the theoretical background of a study and helps explain the social aspects of the research topic. The study of the role of women in the Ebibi Festival of

Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State will be guided by the Gender Role Theory and Cultural Feminism Theory. The theories will help provide the theoretical background of the study and explain the significance of the roles played by women in the festival.

2.3.1 Gender Role Theory

Gender Role Theory focuses on social roles, attitudes, behaviors, and expectations of individuals based on their gender. The theory explains that gender roles are not innate but are developed and learned through socialisation, culture, religion, and societal expectations.

The theory argues that individuals are socialised to perform specific activities based on their gender (Eagly, 1987). For instance, the theory explains that from a young age, individuals learn how to act and behave based on their gender roles. Oakley (1972) argues that socialisation processes take place within the family, community, religion, and other social institutions. The development of Gender Role Theory can be traced back to the works of various social psychologists who examined gender roles from a sociological point of view. The views of social psychologists such as Parsons and Bales (1955) helped develop the theory as they revealed the relationship between gender and social roles. According to the theorists, society sets specific roles for men and women based on their gender to ensure social stability and communal harmony. The roles set for men and women are different but

complementary. For instance, the theory argues that men are expected to fulfill instrumental roles such as leadership, authority, and provision of resources, while women are expected to perform expressive roles such as caregiving, childbearing, and nurturance (Parsons, Bales, 1955).

Gender Role Theory explains the social expectations and roles of women in African traditional festivals. Women are expected to perform various roles during the festival, including dancing, singing, preparation of food and drinks, and offering hospitality to guests. The roles are set by societal expectations and are meant to ensure that the festival is celebrated successfully (Falassi, 1987). The theory also explains the role of women in promoting social cohesion and solidarity through such activities as dancing and singing (Drewal, 1992).

Gender Role Theory will help explain the roles played by women in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State. The theory will help provide a clear understanding of the social expectations of women in the festival and the reasons why they are involved in such activities. The theory will also help explain the economic roles played by women in the festival as they sell various items during the event. The theory can also be used to discuss the significance of women's roles in the preservation of cultural beliefs and practices. In the Ebibi Festival, for instance, women are involved in various social activities that promote the wellbeing of the community. The roles played by women are performed to uphold cultural beliefs and practices and ensure communal harmony.

Gender Role Theory is significant in explaining the roles played by women in African traditional festivals because it helps explain the rationale behind the roles. The theory shows that the roles played by women are performed to uphold cultural beliefs and practices and maintain communal harmony. Women are involved in various economic activities during the

festival. According to Gender Role Theory, such activities as petty trading and selling of food and drinks help promote communal solidarity (Parsons, Bales, 1955). The theory is also significant in understanding the religious roles played by women in the festival. For instance, the theory helps explain the roles played by women in rituals and ceremonies to promote spiritual well-being and harmony (Drewal, 1992).

In African traditional societies, gender roles are based on cultural beliefs and practices. In most communities, men and women play different roles that are aimed at promoting communal harmony. In Yoruba society, for instance, men are the political and ritual leaders while women perform domestic duties such as cooking, childbearing, and market activities (Aina, 2012). Such roles are performed to ensure that the community functions smoothly and all members meet their physical and social needs (Oyewumi, 1997).

Women in Yoruba traditional festivals play various roles that are aimed at promoting communal harmony and ensuring that the event is celebrated successfully. They participate in various social activities such as dancing and singing to promote solidarity and social cohesion (Falassi, 1987). Women also play significant roles in the preparation and performance of rituals during the festival. The roles played by women in the festivals are based on the social expectations of the community (Drewal, 1992). During the festival, women also perform economic roles such as petty trading and selling of food and drinks to supplement their personal needs (Oloruntoba, 2021). These roles help promote communal solidarity as they are performed to meet the individual and collective needs of community members.

Gender Role Theory will be significant in this study as it will help explain the rationale behind the roles played by women in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State. The theory will help provide an insight into the social expectations of women in the festival and the significance of the roles. It will also help explain the economic roles played

by women in the festival and how they contribute to communal solidarity. The theory can also be used to discuss the religious roles played by women in the festival and the reasons behind the roles.

The theory is also important in explaining how gender roles can both empower and limit women within society. On one hand, women are respected for their contributions to cultural preservation, family stability, and communal unity (Amadiume, 2015). On the other hand, patriarchal structures may restrict women from occupying visible leadership positions or participating fully in decision-making processes (Oyewumi, 1997). In many traditional settings, women's contributions are sometimes undervalued because leadership and authority are often associated with men (Hooks, 2000). Gender Role Theory therefore provides a framework for examining both the recognition and limitations associated with women's participation in cultural festivals (Tong, 2018).

Furthermore, Gender Role Theory explains how modernisation and social change are gradually influencing traditional gender expectations. Increased access to education, urbanisation, religion, and globalisation have transformed women's roles within many African societies (Aina, 2012). Contemporary women now participate actively in education, politics, business, tourism, cultural promotion, and community leadership while still maintaining traditional responsibilities (Nzegwu, 2015). This social transformation has also influenced women's participation in festivals and cultural institutions (Afolabi, 2023). Women are increasingly becoming more visible in cultural planning, tourism management, heritage preservation, and community mobilisation activities associated with festivals (Adeyemi, 2018).

In contemporary Yoruba society, educated women and women associations often contribute to the organisation, publicity, and development of traditional festivals. They participate in

fundraising activities, tourism promotion, media awareness, cultural exhibitions, and community development projects connected to festival celebrations (Oloruntoba, 2021). Gender Role Theory helps explain how traditional gender responsibilities are adapting to changing social realities while still maintaining cultural relevance within society (Nzegwu, 2015).

The theory also emphasises that gender roles differ across societies and historical periods. What is considered an appropriate role for women in one community may differ in another community depending on cultural beliefs and historical experiences (Oakley, 1972). This means that women's participation in the Ebibi Festival must be understood within the cultural context of Ibiade and the broader traditions of Ogun Waterside communities. Gender roles within the festival are influenced by local customs, communal expectations, indigenous beliefs, and historical practices unique to the people of the area (Ogunyemi, 2020).

Another important contribution of Gender Role Theory is its explanation of communal cooperation between men and women. Traditional festivals are communal activities that require the participation of different groups within society (Turner, 1982). Men and women often perform complementary roles that contribute to the success of the celebration. While men may handle certain ritual and leadership functions, women provide social organisation, hospitality, artistic performances, and cultural continuity (Falassi, 1987). The theory therefore shows that both genders contribute to communal development and cultural preservation in different but interconnected ways (Asante, 2007).

Gender Role Theory is highly relevant to this study because it provides a framework for understanding the social and cultural expectations attached to women's participation in the Ebibi Festival. The theory helps explain the roles performed by women, the cultural meanings and attributes attached to those roles, and the ways women contribute to communal identity

and cultural preservation within Ibiade community. It also helps examine whether women's contributions are adequately recognised within the festival structure and how traditional gender expectations influence their participation (Oyewumi, 1997).

2.3.2 Cultural Feminism

Cultural Feminism is another relevant theoretical perspective that can be applied in this study since it highlights the importance of women's role in society. Unlike Liberal Feminism, which focuses on women's need for equality and access to the same opportunities as men, Cultural Feminism emphasises women's cultural, social, emotional, and spiritual roles in society. The perspective was popularised in the 1970s by researchers such as Carol Gilligan (1982), Mary Daly (1978), and Adrienne Rich (1976). They argued that women have a unique moral and social role in society, which should be valued over their role as leaders and changemakers.

In his book *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan (1982) argued that women have a different perspective on morality, which is based on social relationships. He claimed that women's voices were marginalised in a male-dominated society. Gilligan (1982) asserted that women were more likely to base their moral decisions on care, cooperation, and social responsibility. Cultural Feminism perspective views women's social roles as critical to achieving harmony in society. According to the view, women have a unique role in maintaining social peace, which is undermined in patriarchal societies. Therefore, Cultural Feminism perspective is critical in understanding the role of women in society, especially in patriarchal systems.

Cultural Feminism perspective is also relevant in understanding the role of women in traditional festivals such as the Ebibi Festival. According to Alcoff (2016), women have a unique role in passing down cultural values and traditions from one generation to another.

Their role is critical in ensuring communal life and social organisation continues even after generations. Women participate in a wide range of activities that facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge and traditions. They play a key role in passing down cultural knowledge through storytelling, music, food preparation, and other rituals. In many African societies, women are actively involved in a wide range of cultural activities, including dancing and singing during festivals. Cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival are not only entertaining but also play a critical role in passing down cultural knowledge, values, and traditions from one generation to another.

Women also play a critical role in sustaining their cultural values and traditions through their social roles. According to Steady (2011), African women have played a wide range of social roles, including religious, economic, and political activities. Their role in the community has been diminished due to colonialism and patriarchy. For instance, Amadiume (2015) noted that African women have played a significant role in religious practices, ceremonies, markets, and traditional governance systems. However, their roles have been minimised over time. Cultural Feminism perspective is relevant in this study since it views women's social roles as critical in African societies.

The relevance of Cultural Feminism perspective is in understanding the importance of women's role in sustaining cultural activities. The role of women in cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival cannot be underestimated. Their participation in the festival is not only symbolic but also plays a critical role in ensuring the traditions are passed down and sustained. Women participate in all aspects of the festival, including preparation and celebration. Their involvement is key in ensuring the festival's success and sustainability. Therefore, the perspective is relevant in this study since it views women's roles in cultural activities as critical to their survival and sustainability.

Another strength of the Cultural Feminism perspective is its emphasis on women's role in passing down indigenous knowledge and traditions. According to Nzegwu (2015), African festivals play a critical role in passing down indigenous knowledge from one generation to another through oral traditions and rituals. Women are key players in most of these traditions and practices. Their role in the festivals is through oral traditions such as folktales, stories, songs, and dances. Therefore, women play a critical role in passing down African traditions and cultural knowledge. Cultural Feminism perspective is relevant in this study since it emphasises the importance of women's role in passing down cultural knowledge and traditions. Cultural Feminism perspective is also relevant in this study because it emphasises the importance of women's roles in cultural activities to enhance social cohesion. Women play a critical role in African cultural activities because they bring out their social and communal values. Through activities such as dancing and singing, women display their social values, which are then passed down from one generation to another. Steady (2011) argued that women in African societies were viewed as fertility and motherhood symbols and played a critical role in ensuring communal peace and prosperity. The perspectives are relevant in this study since they explain the importance of women's role in promoting communal values and social cohesion through cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival.

Cultural Feminism perspective is also relevant in this study because it views women's social roles as valuable and significant to the well-being of the community. According to Rich (1976), women's social roles are based on their ability to nurture and care for other community members. Cultural Feminism perspective is critical of the notion that women's roles are inferior to men's roles in society. The perspective is relevant in this study since it sheds light on the importance of women's social roles in African societies. It highlights the significance of women's roles in promoting social cohesion, communal values, and cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival.

Another strength of the Cultural Feminism perspective is its recognition of women's role in maintaining cultural activities. According to Steady (2011), women are key players in most of the African cultural activities that facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge, values, and traditions. Their role in these activities is critical and cannot be replaced by men.. It is through women's active participation in the festival that the traditions and customs will continue to thrive and prosper.

Cultural Feminism perspective also recognises the importance of women's roles in promoting and maintaining indigenous knowledge. According to Aina (2012), women play a critical role in ensuring African traditions and customs continue to flourish. Their role in the traditions and customs is through active participation in most of the activities. Women also play a critical role in passing down the traditions and customs to the next generation of their community.

Therefore, the perspective is relevant in this study since it recognises the importance of women's roles in promoting African cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival. The final strength of the Cultural Feminism perspective is that it recognises women's emotional role in cultural activities. Women play a critical role in most of the African cultural activities because they bring out their social and communal values. Cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival are important sources of social cohesion, which is achieved through women's active participation in the events. Women also provide emotional support to each other through most of the activities, which enhances social cohesion within the community. The perspectives are relevant in this study since they explain the importance of women's role in promoting communal values and social cohesion through cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival.

The Cultural Feminism perspective is also relevant in this study because it recognises the importance of women's role in cultural activities in promoting African cultural identity.

African cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival are important in promoting African cultural identity because they help people remember their history and origins. Women play a critical role in most of these activities and therefore contribute to promoting African cultural identity. According to Nzegwu (2015), African festivals such as the Ebibi Festival are important in promoting African cultural identity through the oral traditions and rituals that are performed during the events. The perspective is relevant in this study since it recognises the importance of women's role in promoting African cultural identity through cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival.

The Cultural Feminism perspective is also relevant in this study because it recognises the importance of women's role in cultural activities in promoting and maintaining social values.

Cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival are important sources of social values for most African societies. Women play a critical role in most of the activities and therefore contribute to promoting social values through the events. The perspective is relevant in this study since it recognises the importance of women's role in promoting and maintaining social values through cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival.

Finally, the Cultural Feminism perspective is also relevant in this study because it recognises the importance of women's role in cultural activities in promoting and maintaining social roles. Cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival are important sources of social roles for most African societies. Women play a critical role in most of the activities and therefore contribute to promoting social roles through the events. The perspective is relevant in this study since it recognises the importance of women's role in promoting and maintaining social roles through cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival.

2.3.3 Integrating Gender Role Theory and Cultural Feminism Theory

The integration of the Gender Role and Cultural Feminism Theories is critical in this study since it provides a comprehensive understanding of women's role in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State. The Gender Role Theory focuses on explaining how society assigns different roles to men and women based on their gender (Eagly, 1987; Oakley, 1972). On the other hand, the Cultural Feminism Theory explains the significance of women's roles in society (Gilligan, 1982; Alcoff, 2016). Therefore, the integration of the two perspectives will enable this study to achieve a comprehensive understanding of women's roles in the Ebibi Festival.

The Gender Role Theory will enable this study to achieve a better understanding of the social expectations that influence the role of women in the Ebibi Festival. According to the theory, social expectations dictate that men and women should perform distinct roles in society (Parsons, 1951; Ridgeway, 2011). The theory will help this study explain how the social expectations influence the roles of women in the Ebibi Festival. According to the theory, women are expected to play supportive roles in most of the activities performed during the festival. On the other hand, men are expected to play leadership roles in the event. Therefore, the integration of the Gender Role Theory will enable this study to achieve a comprehensive understanding of women's roles in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State.

The integration of the Cultural Feminism Theory will also help this study achieve a comprehensive understanding of women's roles in the Ebibi Festival. The theory will help explain how women's roles in the festival are significant to the community. According to the theory, women play a critical role in most African cultural activities (Steady, 2011; Amadiume,

2015). Their roles are significant because they help sustain cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival. Women's roles in the Ebibi Festival are through their active participation in most of the activities that take place during the event. Therefore, the integration of the Cultural Feminism Theory will enable this study to achieve a comprehensive understanding of women's roles in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State.

The integration of the Gender Role and Cultural Feminism Theories will also help this study achieve a comprehensive understanding of the significance of women's roles in the Ebibi

Festival. According to the theories, women play a critical role in most African cultural activities (Steady, 2011; Amadiume, 2015). Their roles are significant because they help sustain cultural activities such as the Ebibi Festival. Women's roles in the Ebibi Festival are through their active participation in most of the activities that take place during the event. Therefore, the integration of the Cultural Feminism Theory will enable this study to achieve a comprehensive understanding of women's roles in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the research analysis of the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun – Waterside, Ogun State. Each section of this chapter was structured around the objectives of the study which interrogated the role and relevance of women in the festival. Consequently, this chapter therefore, provides the procedures used in examining cultural practices, oral traditions and documented literature on the Ebibi Festival and how it connects to the cultural, social and symbolic importance of women's participation in this festival.

3.1 Background of the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside

The Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State is a celebration of great significance to the people of Ogun Waterside who live in close proximity to water. This is a festival of environmental, historical and spiritual origins which has, over the years, developed into an artistic and cultural event. It is a festival whose origin is traceable to early settlement in the riverine area of Ogun Waterside. The people of Ibadan – Old Oyo and Iboho hinterland have in the past been settled mainly along water bodies. They therefore believed, worshiped and sacrificed to deities and ancestral spirits which they believed to inhabit the trees, rivers, streams and land. According to Falola (2016), Yoruba traditional festivals are products of environmental and historical experiences of the people from which the cultural activities of the day's events emanated. The festival is held annually as a day of thanksgiving and reinvigoration of the community. It is a day when the people of Ebiade gather together to express their collective gratitude to the creator for the gift of the land, good harvest and general well-being. It is a day when music, dance, chanting and various rituals provide respite from the weariness of daily life and promote a sense of solidarity and belonging among the

people of Ibiade. Turner (1982) referred to the festival as a liminal period in which the social organisation of the community is suspended or modified to enable people to live together more harmoniously. The Ebibi Festival of the people of Ibiade is thus a cultural institution which provides a platform for the people of Ibiade to present their cultural values, oral traditions, songs, dances, customs and rituals which have stood the test of time. According to Barber (1991), the Yoruba oral traditions are primarily performative as the people used the oral performance as a form of storing and transmitting cultural knowledge.

3.2 Cultural Structure and Social Organisation of the Ebibi Festival

The Ebibi Festival is a cultural format in which the people of Ibiade participate in complementing each other through distinct roles. Traditional leaders and indigenes of Ibiade therefore make up those who customarily organise and perform the functions of the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade. The women of Ibiade participated in all the aspects of the festival as assistants, hosts and moral guides of the festival.

Generally, the Ebibi Festival is a socio-cultural institution through which the people of Ibiade assert their social unity and solidarity as members of the same origin and location. The festival brings about social cohesion among the members of the community who collectively take part in its events and activities. According to Falassi (1987), the festival is a social integrative process which promotes social solidarity, particularly in traditional societies. The Ebibi Festival of Ibiade therefore facilitates socialisation of the members of the community in terms of reinforcing their sense of community belonging. It is a festival which enables members and non-members to interact with each other in a friendly manner to promote peaceful co-existence. It is for this reason that visitors from local and foreign shores alike, particularly the Christian missions and the Islamic centres are always welcome at the festival.

3.3 Presentation of Women's Participation in the Ebibi Festival

The participation of women in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade is through various cultural, social and symbolic facets which added meaning to the festival. The women of Ibiade participated in the festival through their hospitality during the festival occasion which created lasting friendships for the community. In addition to their role as hosts, the women of Ibiade took part in oral traditions which included stories, singing, dancing and praises. They similarly participated in folk songs which related community history, social values and beliefs. Some typical song samples include:

Song 1

“Òsò yóo

Àjẹ yóò

Eni fo ki má se tẹmi

Yóo”

Song 2

“Jigbọ rẹlẹ, Ajarimomo

Jigbọ rẹlẹ o

Ajarimono

Jigbọ rẹlẹ,

Ajarimono

Bùwólóló wá tún déyìn wa mono

Ajarimono ayé

Jigbọ rẹ̀lé, eh eh eh

Jigbọ rẹ̀lé o, eh eh eh”

The women of Ibiade also demonstrated collective participation in the festival through their moral guidance of the youths during the festival period. Women in general and elderly women in particular have a role to play, in guiding the young people according to the set values of the festival and the community at large. Furthermore, the women of Ibiade expressed their participation in the festival through their traditional dressing styles which were mostly aso-oke, iro and buba, gele and bead necklaces in addition to other body ornaments. This demonstrated the people's respect for their cultural heritage. In addition to the above roles, the women of Ibiade participated in the festival through their traditional roles as consultants in matters affecting the community. They similarly demonstrated their role bearing capacity as moral agents of change and community development.

3.4 Gender Structure and Role Distribution in the Ebibi Festival

The Ebibi Festival of the people of Ibiade is a cultural event which took place according to the gender structure and role distribution of the people. Men generally played leadership roles while women followed closely in all aspects of the culture. Women performed all kinds of roles except those which were exclusively assigned to men (Oyěwùmí, 1997). Although women did not have official authority, they played important roles in the maintenance and sustenance of the festival which ensured its continuity. Their effort, however, was not always visible as men received recognition for most of the roles performed during the festival.

Nevertheless, women's roles were important as they helped to carry the festival forward and sustain it across generations. Some roles and rituals in the festival were also restricted from the women due to cultural beliefs and practices associated with the festival. Gender structure and role distribution in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun – Waterside, Ogun State was therefore based on the sociocultural expectations of the people.

3.5 Modernisation and Changing Patterns of Participation

Modernisation such as education, urbanisation, influence of major world religions and changing social norms have changed various patterns of the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun – Waterside. Modernisation has played a dual role of promoting and inhibiting women's participation in the festival. Urbanisation has brought about changes in lifestyle which affected the women's participation in the festival. However, it has also empowered women through education and financial independence. Consequently, women's participation in the Ebibi Festival has changed over time. For instance, the migration of the Ibadans to urban centres inhibited the rate at which the people of Ibiade interacted with them, thus hindering the process of sharing cultural values. At the same time, Christianity and Islam discouraged the people of Ibiade from participating in traditional festivals such as the Ebibi Festival because of their belief that traditional African religions were against their faith. Women participation in the festival has therefore, been greatly challenged by the changing social norms which have diminished the importance of such cultural events. The impact of these modernising forces has created difficulties in women's efforts to participate fully in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State.

3.6 Cultural and Symbolic Significance of Women's Participation

Women's participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade is of great cultural and symbolic significance to the people of Ibiade. Women's participation in the festival was an affirmation of their status as custodians and transmitters of history, culture and tradition of the community. The women's folk tales, stories and oral traditions were means through which the community preserved its history, values and social organisation. Oral traditions were passed down from one generation to another and were performed to ensure that they were perpetuated across generations. According to Barber (1991), oral traditions among the Yorùbá people are dynamic in nature and have been passed down through performance. Women therefore played a critical role in ensuring that the oral traditions survive because they were the ones who preserved them through performance. In addition to their role in transmitting history and culture, women's participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade similarly showed their symbolic significance as moral custodians of the people of Ibiade.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Roles of Women in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State

Women also take part in the performance of the Ebibi Festival. They also participate in the singing of songs, orating oríkìs , clapping, and dancing. Songs and speeches have been the means of sustaining African values. According to recent studies on Yoruba oral traditions, women's contribution in the oral performances of festivals helps to pass on and sustain African cultural values. Badru, Ogunniran and Hamzat (2024) in their research found out that Yoruba's festival songs and oral performances have helped in the transmission of cultural values, oral histories and knowledge in the indigenous communities. Women have also helped in the sustenance of their cultural identities through the oral performances of songs that have meaning in their societies. In addition, some of these songs are performed in question and answer style and have great moral and social implications. For example, a lamentation and symbolic song performed during the festival goes as thus:

Jigbẹ̀ rẹ̀lé ,

Eh eh eh

Jigbẹ̀ rẹ̀lé o

Ajarimono ayé

Jigbẹ̀ rẹ̀lé, o

Eh eh eh

Masquerade is departing.

Farewell, Masquerade.

Masquerade, the warrior who has seen and knows the paths of the world.

Farewell, Masquerade.

This is an illustration of the Yoruba oral tradition of using songs to narrate about social happenings, to praise individuals and to remember them even after their deaths. It is a way of saying farewell to the masquerade and rejoicing the end of the festival.

Moreover, women also perform reflective and critical songs with moral instructions addressed to family members and the community. For example:

“Òrò bá rò, kò máa ké...” Words that require deep thinking / should cause one to reflect deeply”

“Your child has caused disarray in the town”

“This child!”

and another song:

“Òrò bá rò, kò máa ké...” Your husband has soiled the town”

“This child!”

These performances are meant to remind and admonish the ill behaviors of some community members. Hence in the Yoruba performance tradition, songs are performed to pass moral messages and to carry the histories of the people.

Women also play an important role in fostering cultural values and traditions through promoting traditional dressing. The women make themselves beautiful in traditional attires

such as iro and buba, gele, aso-oke and beads to signify their cultural identities. In this way, women uphold cultural values as well as beautify the festival. This observation supports previous findings of studies conducted on the roles of women in the Yoruba festivals. For example, according to Ogunleye (2020), in traditional Yoruba festivals, women display their cultural values through dressing and beauty.

In addition, women also admonish, encourage and advise young girls and children in relation to the festival. This admonition is in the form of speeches and songs with moral and social implications. The women tell the young ones about the histories, events and significance of the festival as well as the mannerisms expected of them in relation to the festival. Moreover, older women also assist in mobilising their daughters, granddaughters and children to come out and participate in various activities during the festival. Some also offer prayers to bless the festival and wish for a good harvest in the farms of the community members. Recent research on female ritual authority in Yoruba festivals by Adeyemi (2018) also supports this observation. The study shows that in Yoruba festivals, older women have ritual authority over the young ones. They admonish them on various issues and remind them of moral behaviors expected of them in the society. This reveals that aside from playing subordinate roles at home, women also have ritual authority over the younger generations in relation to cultural matters.

Another role played by women in relation to the Ebibi festival is the promotion of cultural values through passing on cultural knowledge and traditions. This is done through teaching younger generations the various cultural values and customs of the Ebibi festival. Mothers and grandmothers teach their children various songs, greetings, customs and the meanings of festival events. This helps in passing on cultural knowledge and traditions from one generation to another. Findings of recent studies on African indigenous festivals reveal that

women also serve as custodians of cultural knowledge and traditions in African societies. For example, Nwafor (2024) in his work on Women and Indigenous Festivals in Africa makes similar observations regarding the roles of women in festivals. He reveals that women play an important role in passing on cultural knowledge and traditions.

Although various roles played by women in the Ebibi festival sustain the festival, certain contradictions stand out in the roles of women during this event. Women play subordinate roles in most of the activities of the festival. Although they participate in many aspects of the organisations of the festival, they lack authority in performing some of the rituals because of the prohibitions attached to them by the community. For example, women are prohibited from participating in some of the festivals' religious rites. This shows that women's roles in the Ebibi festival are contradictory because despite playing various roles in sustaining the festival, they lack decision making powers in some of the aspects of the festival. Similar observations were made by Oyěwùmí (1997) in her research on gender and women's roles in traditional African societies. She reveals that although women participate in many aspects of the African traditional religion, the rituals and practices of this religion are controlled by men. Hence women's roles in traditional festivals such as Ebibi are contradictory due to the fact that women participate and perform various practices but lack control over some of the rituals. Furthermore, women are also involved in various other social functions and responsibilities as family caregivers in addition to their roles in the Ebibi festival. This affects their time to perform some of the activities involved in the festival. For example, during the festival, women are engaged in child caring, house cleaning and cooking for their families in addition to participating in the festival's activities. This observation supports the findings of Aina (2012) who studied women's roles in African societies. He reveals that women in African societies are family caregivers in addition to playing other social and community

roles. On the other hand, Connell (2020) studied gender and society and revealed that in traditional societies, women bear the responsibilities of caregiving due to their gender.

Some younger women are also becoming less interested in indigenous festivals because of modernisation, western education, urbanisation, religious influences, and changing social values. Ojo (2020) argues that modernisation and globalisation have contributed to changing attitudes toward indigenous cultural practices among younger generations in Yoruba society. Falola (2018) similarly maintains that foreign religions and western influences continue to challenge the continuity of some African traditional practices and cultural festivals.

Another contradiction observed is that women are highly respected as custodians of culture and morality within the community, yet they may still experience restrictions in areas involving ritual authority and public recognition. Amadiume (2015) explains that women historically occupied important positions in African indigenous societies, but colonial and patriarchal influences contributed to the reduction of women's authority within many traditional institutions. Nzegwu (2015) also argues that African women continue to negotiate spaces of relevance and influence within traditional systems that are often structured around male authority.

Despite these important contributions, women do not directly participate in certain sacred rituals associated with the Ebibi Festival because of existing cultural and spiritual regulations guiding the celebration. Certain ritual spaces and processions remain restricted to male custodians of tradition. However, this restriction does not diminish the significance of women's roles in the festival. Their contributions in areas such as hospitality, music, cultural preservation, social organisation, and moral support remain essential to the successful celebration and continuity of the Ebibi Festival in Ibiade, Ogun Waterside.

4.2 Cultural and Spiritual Significance of Women's Participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun -Waterside, Ogun State

There is no doubt that the cultural and spiritual significance of women in Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside emanates from their active participation in preparation and performance of the festival. In other words, women's role in the Ebibi festival is not only seen but felt due to their status in Yoruba cosmology. African women are considered to be 'bearers of life and sustainers of culture' (Steady 2011). It is from their roles and status of women in Yoruba that we can discuss the cultural and spiritual significance of women's participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State

The cultural significance of the women's participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside comes up from the fact that women take an active part in sustaining the cultural values of their people through folktales, songs, attire, and hospitality, moral instructions and other values. Women's folktales and songs are vital carriers of culture which helps in handing them down from one generation to the other (Barber 1991). Women take part in festivals as a way of showing their attachment to and preservation of their culture. It is important to note that in the traditional Yoruba society, every activity including dancing, singing, folktales, myths, festivals, and ceremonies carries cultural information (Barber 1991). Women are active participants as well as custodians of these activities, which makes them important players in preserving and passing on such cultural heritages to the next generations.

In addition to oral traditions, women participate in the Ebibi festival as a way of promoting communal unity, solidarity and cooperation (Oyěwùmí 1997). In the Yoruba cultural belief, communal orientation and solidarity are important values that must be upheld in every aspect of social life. In this regard, women play active roles in promoting and upholding communal values during the festivals as a way of ensuring social cohesion within their societies. Women

are regarded as important links between households, age groups, and social classes. Thus, their active participation in festivals promotes unity among different segments of the community (Oyěwùmí 1997).

Moreover, the cultural significance of women's participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside comes from the fact that they help to foster the feeling of belonging among the members of the community. The Ebibi festival is a ritualised re-enactment of history which helps the people to remember their past and take it into consideration when making present and future decisions (Mbiti 1990). Through the participation in the festival women help their children to know and understand the origin of their society as well as maintain their cultural values. Women's songs, dances, stories and moral instructions are important tools in passing on cultural information (Barber 1991).

Women's participation in the Ebibi festival is spiritually significant due to the fact that women are considered to be close to the source of universal power. According to Steady (2011), in most cases it is women who bear or carry the power in religious practices. Although the women's role in Ebibi festival is not directly connected to ritual power, their contribution is viewed as being spiritually significant by the community members. In other words, women take part in the festival as bearers of the power of the past.

Their spiritual power is connected to the following facts: First, women's participation in the Ebibi festival is connected to fertility and community's prosperity. Women are the creators of future generations as well as the ones who bear children. Moreover, women used to prepare special food and drinks for the whole community during the festival. All of this made women to be viewed as spiritual power bearers who bring life and prosperity to people and the community as a whole. Amadiume (2015) states that in African traditional religions, there is an understanding of power and religion in which both male and female principles are

considered to be necessary and sufficient for achieving religious power. It means that both men and women bring their own power into the religious practices.

Second, women's spiritual power is connected to the idea that they play an important role in maintaining the spiritual peace and harmony of the community. Women participate in the festival by staying away from prohibited things such as staying away from specific places during the celebration of the Ebibi festival (Mbiti 1990). Their spiritual involvement is also seen in women's songs, dances, prayers and moral instructions addressed to the community members in order to encourage them and invite them to conform their actions to the established norms and values.

Their spiritual significance is also connected to the religious belief that women are important elements of the ritualised cycle of death and rebirth. Women play an important role in initiation rites which are designed to help individuals to learn the ways of their ancestors and to acquire the cultural knowledge in order to become mature members of the society. During the Ebibi festival women maintain the ritual purity of the community (Mbiti 1990).

The spiritual significance of women's participation in the Ebibi festival is connected to the religious belief in women's connection to fertility and community life. Fertility was and still remains to be an important element of life in many traditional societies, particularly in Africa. Women are the bearers of the life force and its manifestation. It means that women's contribution to the community is viewed as positive and spiritually significant. Falola (2016) states that the Yoruba people express a number of their social values through their traditional festivals. The themes of fertility and rebirth are central to many Yoruba festivals and women play a leading role in the festival dances, songs and rituals.

The cultural and spiritual significance of women's participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside comes from the fact that women serve as bridges of intergenerational continuity. They pass on their knowledge and experience to the younger generations by participating in the festival. In other words, women help the community to remember and maintain its culture by engaging children and the youth in stories, songs and dances.

Nnaemeka

(2004) states that in African traditional societies continuity is achieved through the relational approach. African women play a vital role in maintaining the cultural heritage of the people as well as passing it down to the next generations.

Intergenerational continuity is important for the spiritual significance of women's participation in the Ebibi festival because it helps to keep the cultural traditions and religious beliefs alive. Women serve as living vessels which enable the community to remember, maintain and perform their rich cultural heritage. Moreover, women's role in the ceremony is spiritually significant because it helps children to develop the appropriate attitude to community service and the cultural traditions of the people. Amadiume (2015) states that women are very important elements in the African communal system because they bring moral balance within the community.

The cultural and spiritual significance of women's participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside emerges from the fact that women support the moral and ethical principles of the community. Women participate in the festival as moral agents which helps to reinforce those principles within the community. For example, women take part in most aspects of the ritual, with the exception of the participation in the Ebibi procession and interaction with the masked performer (Steady 2011). In addition to that, women are responsible for ensuring communal purity by conforming to cultural restrictions during the

festival. Such restrictions are imposed upon them, in order for the community to achieve a state of ritual purity. In other words, women serve as monitors of the moral conduct of the community members by ensuring that all cultural norms and taboos are respected.

Moreover, the cultural and spiritual significance of women's participation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside emerges from women's moral authority. Women are viewed by the community members as role models who set an example which is supposed to be followed by the younger generations (Nzegwu 2015). Moral authority is connected to women's role in promoting and maintaining the religious beliefs as well as cultural traditions of the community. Amadiume (2015) states that in African traditional societies men and women possess different religious power and moral authority. Women are viewed as playing a complementary role to men in maintaining the religious beliefs and cultural traditions. Women's moral and religious authority is connected to the fact that they are involved in most aspects of the festival which requires a good moral conduct. In addition to that, women have to be morally pure in order to participate in the festival, particularly in such aspects as Ebibi procession. Women's moral authority is one of the reasons why their contribution to the Ebibi Festival is spiritually significant. This is connected to the fact that women have the opportunity to demonstrate devotion, gratitude and respect to the Supreme Being as well as the ancestors of the community. The devotion and respect are expressed through women's songs and prayers, which are performed during the Ebibi festival. Such songs and prayers may be described by the following women's prayer:

“ Òsọ yóò...”

“ Àjé...”

“Èni fọ kí má ẹ̀ tẹ̀mi yóò...” It is interpreted as:

“The power of wizard will be broken.”

“The power of witches will fail.”

“Whoever wants to hinder my progress...”

4.3 Influence of Modernisation on Women’s Roles in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun State

It goes without saying that modernisation has a great impact on women’s roles in the Ebibi festival. In other words, the concept of modernisation has changed the way women participate in the festival. The term “modernisation” refers to such processes as education, migration, exposure to external cultures, and new religious movements which took place in Nigeria. All of these changes have influenced the ways in which women participate in the Ebibi festival.

The process of modernisation has had a very important impact on women’s roles in the Ebibi festival because it has changed women’s social roles. For example, as a result of migration and education, women have acquired some of the social roles which are considered to be traditionally men’s roles. Women’s access to education has increased their knowledge about the cultural traditions and values of their community which has a great impact on their roles in the festival. As a result of receiving an education, women are playing such roles as interpreters, advisers, and researchers which influence their participation in the Ebibi festival (Aina 2012).

Women’s increased roles in the community have also taken part because of economic empowerment. Education and access to employment opportunities have contributed to women’s empowerment. That is why now women are able to make decisions concerning not

only their own lives, but also the lives of the community members (Nzegwu 2015). Consequently, women's roles in the Ebibi festival have changed because they became more influential in terms of the decision-making process.

Another impact of modernisation which influences women's roles in the Ebibi festival is exposure to other cultures. Nowadays, people are more likely to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds as a result of globalisation and migration. In addition to that, modernisation has brought various religious movements which made people change their religious beliefs. The change in religious beliefs resulted in the fact that some festival activities are no longer practiced (Peel 2000). For example, some of the women's participation in the festival activities may be viewed as an obstacle to achieving salvation which resulted in people refusing to participate in such activities.

The impact of modernisation on women's roles in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun Waterside is also reflected in such problems as migration. As the number of people migrating from rural areas to urban areas has increased, the festival activities are not being carried out in the traditional ways as they used to be before. This occurred because migrant workers and students are not always available to participate in the festival. Migration has also brought about the problem of loss of cultural knowledge and values due to the fact that few people are interested in learning the traditions and customs of their culture in the urban areas. Such changes have influenced women's roles in the Ebibi festival as well as their participation in it. In spite of the negative impact of modernisation on women's roles in the Ebibi festival, it has also made a positive change by influencing women's empowerment. As a result of migration, exposure to new ideas, and employment opportunities, women's participation in the festival has become more influential and prominent. For example, women play an active role in promoting and advertising the Ebibi festival in the local and international community. In

addition to that, social media enables women to educate people about the cultural traditions and customs of their community in order to ensure that they are preserved and passed on to the next generations.

Moreover, the impact of modernisation has changed women's participation in the Ebibi festival in terms of redefining gender roles. Women's roles in the festival changed as a result of the recognition of their contributions. In other words, the recognition of their roles has made women to be viewed as important players in terms of carrying out and maintaining the cultural traditions and values of their community. In addition to that, the recognition has also changed the way the community members view women in terms of their social and cultural roles. Overall, the influence of the process of modernisation on women's roles in the Ebibi festival has resulted in changes which can be viewed as both positive and negative. As a result of migration and exposure to new ideas, women acquired new social roles and responsibilities which changed the way they participate in the festival. Such changes as loss of cultural knowledge and increasing number of people changing their religious beliefs are viewed as negative.

4.4 Relevance of Women's Participation in Sustaining the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun- Waterside, Ogun State

The relevance of women's participation in the sustaining of the Ebibi festival of OgunWaterside cannot be overstated. This is because women's contributions are the social, cultural, and emotional pillars upon which the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun-Waterside, Ogun State, thrives and survives. Although the ritual custodianship of Ebibi festival is largely by males, women's contributions to the festival are mostly unpaid and informal. The following paragraphs examine women's relevance in sustaining Ebibi festival from different perspectives.

First, women are relevant to Ebibi festival because they are the custodians of cultural knowledge and oral traditions that are performed during the festival. Women pass on cultural knowledge and oral histories through storytelling, praises, songs, and stories. Hence, women play a critical role in keeping their culture alive, with stories as the most important cultural tools. Oral traditions are vital to the identity of the Ogun Watersiders. Barber (1991) argues that Yoruba oral traditions are not stagnant but dynamic and require constant reinvigoration for effectiveness. Without women's oral traditions, the Ebibi festival may have lost its meaning by now. Women are also the keepers, narrators, and interpreters of the history of Ogun Watersiders through folklore and folktales. The relevance of women to the Ebibi festival is, therefore, anchored in their role as custodians of knowledge.

In addition, women are relevant to Ebibi festival as organisers of the communal hospitality during the festival. This includes cooking and serving meals, and providing the visitors with the necessary comfort and convenience. Women are mostly responsible for preparing meals and providing the visitors with the much-needed nourishment and relaxation. As a result, the festival acquires meaning and remains vibrant and relevant. This is because women give the festival a communal feel. Women's organisational role during the festival is a major reason why the festival attracts many visitors, including indigenes and visitors from the outside. Their organisational activities also promote unity among the community members thus enabling festival activities to take place smoothly and without conflict. From a spiritual perspective, women also help sustain the moral tone of the festival through their support songs and prayers. Mbiti (1990) contends that in African traditional religion, participation in ritual is a communal affair and requires the combined efforts of all members of the community. In terms of moral participation, women are relevant to Ebibi festival. Women's moral encouragement and support reinforce the spiritual values and meanings of the Ebibi festival. Women are also relevant to Ebibi festival by helping sustain it inter-generationally.

This includes passing on cultural values and meaning to the festival to younger generations. Through women, African cultural knowledge and traditions are sustained among the younger generations. Women play the role of socialisation agents. In this regard, women can pass on the values and meaning of the Ebibi festival to the younger generations through the oral traditions.

Hence, by socialising the younger generations, women enable the festival to survive and be continuously performed inter-generationally. In terms of family life, women have the ability to teach their children about the Ebibi festival from a very young age. Nnaemeka (2004) argues that African women sustain culture by using relations to transmit cultural values and beliefs.

Women also play a role in the economic sustainability of the Ebibi festival. This is because women's economic participation helps generate income for the festival. For instance, women may sell items related to the festival or fund-raising activities which provide income for the festival. Women contribute immensely to the festival through their economic efforts. Nzegwu (2015) asserts that African women's economic participation plays a significant role in promoting communal harmony, especially in matters pertaining to culture. Women's economic involvement, therefore, plays a critical role in promoting and sustaining the Ebibi festival. Women are also relevant to Ebibi festival because they help sustain its identity and ethos. Women help maintain the ethos of the festival through their cultural expressions. Their cultural expressions help to reinforce the identity of the Ebibi festival. For instance, women's dresses, songs, dances, and games are part of the cultural expressions that help reinforce the festival's identity. According to Falola (2016), cultural identity and ethos in Yorubaland are manifested in such activities as dressing, singing, dancing, and games. As such, through their cultural expressions, women help sustain the identity and ethos of Ebibi festival.

It is important to note that women's significance and relevance to Ebibi festival are not overtly obvious due to their informal and unpaid nature. Despite the informal nature of their involvement, the relevance of women to Ebibi festival cannot be overlooked. Steady (2011) argues that African women contribute to African cultural systems in ways that are not readily visible but play a crucial role in promoting and maintaining culture. Women are active participants in all spheres of cultural activities. From the discussion, it is safe to conclude that women's contributions are vital to the promotion, survival, and sustainability of Ebibi festival.

4.5 Women's Participation as Empowerment or Marginalisation in the Ebibi Festival of Ibiade, Ogun-Waterside, Ogun State

The participation of women in the Ebibi festival is both empowering and marginalising. This is because while women benefit from their involvement in the festival, their role is constrained by the socio-cultural norms governing the festival. Women's participation in the Ebibi festival is empowering because it enables them to exercise their agency, skills, and knowledge to influence society within the framework of the festival. Women participation is marginalising because the festival imposes various restrictions on women thus curtailing their full involvement in the festival activities. The following paragraphs discuss this point further.

First, the participation of women in the Ebibi festival is empowering because although their involvement in the festival activities is unpaid, women benefit from such participation. Women benefit from their participation in the Ebibi festival because their involvement reinforces their role as community leaders and social organisers. Women are mostly involved in ensuring the smooth running of the event as discussed in the previous section. Women's participation in the festival activities, therefore, enables them to exercise their leadership and organisational skills. In addition, women exercise their agency by actively exercising their

cultural expressions. Women's cultural expressions include singing and dancing during the festival. By expressing themselves culturally, women assert their cultural identity thus empowering themselves in the process. Moreover, women's participation in the Ebibi festival enables them to participate in preserving and transmitting their cultural heritage to the younger generations. This aspect of women's involvement in the festival empowers women by giving them a sense of belonging and identity.

Women's participation in the Ebibi festival is marginalising because although women contribute immensely to the success of the festival, they are denied active roles in certain aspects of the festival. For instance, women are not allowed to participate in any of the major rituals surrounding the Ebibi festival. During the restricted days, women are not allowed to participate in the procession of the sacred staff and have to stay away from the ritual sites. Thus, despite women's enormous spiritual contributions to the festival, they are denied active roles in most of the rituals. The exclusion of women from participating in the rituals marginalises them by curtailing their full involvement in the festivity. In addition, women's participation in the Ebibi festival is marginalising because women have to conform to the status of assistants and caretakers of the festival. In other words, women's participation in the Ebibi festival is marginalising because their contribution to the festival is viewed as subordinate to men's contribution to the festival. Amadiume (2015) argues that the marginalisation of women occurs when women's contributions are viewed as an extension and supplement of men's contributions to society. According to Amadiume, such marginalisation makes women's contributions invisible even when they are essential functions performed by women. Women's marginalisation in the Ebibi festival is further manifested in the fact that the contribution of women to the festival is restricted to certain aspects of the festival. This marginalisation is, therefore, manifested in women's restricted participation in some of the festival activities.

Although women's participation in the Ebibi festival is both empowering and marginalising, they participate in the festival because the festival provides them with a platform to exercise their agency. Women know their roles in the festival and are willing to exercise their agency even in the face of marginalisation. Women's willingness to participate in the Ebibi festival despite their marginalisation is the result of their cultural beliefs and values. According to Nnaemeka (2004), the cultural beliefs and values of African women make them negotiate their participation in matters affecting their society. Nnaemeka refers to this type of negotiation as nego-feminism. Women do not negotiate their roles in society but use their negotiating skills to influence the general perception of their roles in society. The nego-feminism of African women enables them to assert their roles in society. The following paragraphs discuss the various roles of women in the Ebibi festival.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study on the relevance of women in Ebibi Festival of Ibiade in Ogun Waterside Local Government Area. The study sought to examine women's role and involvement in the Ebibi festival particularly in relation to cultural, spiritual, social and development issues as well as the impact of modernisation on women's role in the festival. The study also seeks to discover if women's involvement in the festival is empowering or marginalising.

The study was guided by the following questions: What are the roles of women in Ebibi Festival of Ibiade? What are the cultural and spiritual implications of women's participation in Ebibi Festival? How has modernisation affected women's roles in Ebibi Festival? What is the relevance of women's participation in Ebibi Festival? Is women's participation in Ebibi Festival empowering or marginalising?

The findings in chapter four showed that women play very important but less noticed roles in the Ebibi Festival. Their roles cut across various areas of the festival such as cooking, preparing food for the guests, entertaining the visitors or guests, singing, dancing, displaying cultural items and conveying indigenous knowledge. These activities bear great influence on the preservation of culture as well as ensuring harmony.

The study also showed that women's participation in Ebibi festival has cultural and spiritual implications. Women are seen and regarded as custodians of culture in Ogun-Waterside. They provide the moral guidance for the smooth running of the festival. Though women's role in

the ritual aspects of the festival is limited, they equally assist in other aspects of the festival which promote and maintain harmonious social relationship.

It was further found that women's participation in Ebibi Festival has been greatly affected by modernisation and urbanisation. Modernisation has brought about new challenges to women's participation in traditional festivals such as Ebibi. As a result of modernisation there has been increased level of education among the people and this has had adverse effect on women's participation in the festival in some ways. Whereas previously women participated actively in all aspects of the festival even those that require them to offer direct assistance, today, women are losing interest in most of the activities of the festival. It was further found that modernisation has brought new opportunities for women to promote and market the Ebibi festival. It was further found that women's participation in Ebibi Festival is very relevant towards achieving and maintaining social cohesion.

Finally, the study found that women's participation in the Ebibi Festival is both empowering and marginalising. The finding shows that women are empowering themselves through active role in promoting the cultural values and developing the community. However, women are marginalised especially on certain aspects of the festival due to their being some roles that are not allowed to them due to their gender.

5.2 Conclusion

The study finds that women play a very important role in the Ebibi Festival. It further finds that though women's role in the Ebibi Festival may not be visible on the formal and ritual aspects of the festival, their role is very significant and is felt in almost all aspects that promote and preserve the festival. The study therefore concludes that the Ebibi Festival could not have reached this long without the active role and participation of women.

Women's role in Ebibi Festival is both empowering and marginalising since although they participate actively in most of the activities of the festival they do not have the power to participate in some of the aspects due to their gender. The study therefore concludes that women's involvement in the Ebibi Festival represents both empowerment and marginalisation. The study further concludes that women's participation in the Ebibi Festival has been undermined by modernisation and urbanisation. However, the study concludes that despite various challenges facing women's participation in the festival, women should continue playing active role in participating in all aspects of the festival.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

Firstly, there is a need to create awareness on the various roles women perform in the Ebibi festival in order to help people acknowledge and appreciate them. Also, the study recommends that the local government officials and community leaders should strive to encourage women to take part in more roles in the festival.

Furthermore, there is a need to create opportunity for documenting the activities of women such as songs, stories and performance so that their efforts could be recorded.

The study further recommends that the process of modernisation should be used to create more opportunities for women to participate in the festival instead of limiting women's role in the festival.

Also, the study recommends that cultural awareness programmes should be organised for the people in the community to create more appreciation of the need for all members of the

society to take part in promoting and preserving the culture among the people of Ogun-Waterside.

The study further recommends that further studies should be carried out on the roles of women in other festivals such as those in other communities in Ogun State and Nigeria in general so that comparative analysis could be carried out.

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APPENDIX

PHOTOS SHOT DURING THE FIELDWORK



Women and Children Holding Burnt Sticks



Women Holding Ewo Woro



Women and Children Plucking Ewe Woro



Women at Orisa Ala



Researcher Observing the Festival



Statue of Unity of Ibiade



Jigbo Parading the Street

INFORMANTS AND THEIR PROFILES

S/N	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	OCCUPATION	DATA PROVIDED	DATE COLLECTED
1	Alhaji Ayodeji Odulaja	Male	80	Asiwaju of ogunwater side	Overview of the Festival	14, April 2026
2	Mr Adéyemi Adefesobi	Male	55	Chief priest	Participation of women	14, April 2026.
3	Mrs Iyabo Audu	Female	58	Women Leader	Role of women in the festival	15, April 2026
4	Mr fatai suliamon	Male	34	Youth Leader	Songs	15, April 2026.