



## Using self-study approach to critique gender stereotyping and discrimination on family resources for girls and women: educational implications



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### ABSTRACT

Girls and women continue to suffer at the hands of patriarchal society that excludes them in family resource allocation. The primary objective of this paper is to examine the challenge that leads to the exclusion of family resource allocation in the form of educational resources for African girls and women. This paper adopts a self-study research approach, which is undergirded by interpretivism philosophical methodology. Intersectional feminism offers a lens for questioning the domination and supremacy of patriarchal society that perpetuates girls' and women's vulnerability in the acquisition of family resources in this age. We then discuss how girls and women lead lives marred by hunger, poverty, and inequality. Furthermore, we discuss gender violence and inequality, girl commodification, lessons from matriarchal and patriarchal polities, and gender discrimination at the workplace. We recommend that gender stereotypes and discrimination be eliminated in all social settings; and that at family, society and workplace levels. Finally, that educational institution should reconstruct curricula that should purposively interrogate girls and women's gender stereotyping and discrimination, GBV and other gender issues.

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## Introduction

This paper is a self-study that interrogates the challenges experienced by girls and women and leading to of their exclusion in accessing family resources, and their lack of ownership of economic assets. This self-study further interrogates the entrepreneurial prospects among African girls and women due to culturally embedded gender stereotyping and discrimination in inheritance and allocation of family resources within African households. In this self-study research, we offer a narrative as we reflect on actual life experiences (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020).

Many earlier studies focus on discrimination related to disability (Ghosh, Chakraborty & Basu, 2022), weight (Gerend, Stewart & Wetzel, 2022), gender identity (De la Torre-Sierra & Guichot-Reina, 2022), disaster risk management (Lee *et al.*, 2022), race (Parker *et al.*, 2022; Corno, La Ferrara & Burns, 2019; Oosthuizen, Tonelli & Mayer, 2019) and ethnicity (Setati, 2019). There are currently no studies on gender discrimination and stereotyping in relation to family resources, hence the justification for this paper.

Family allocated resources such as capital and land allow good economic and business prospects, including economic growth (Hjerpe, 1998). These resources are equally crucial for individual and family success in the business and economic world. We are convinced that individuals' economic participation and development prospects are affected by level of education, social networking, and in the main by the family resources. However, the goal of attaining a democratic and free South Africa society, wherein "everyone should have equal opportunity to prosper" is obstructed by long-standing cultural stereotyping.

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Gender stereotypes impede women's performance in the economy. Due to gender discrimination and high female illiteracy (Mofokeng, 2021), women continue to be an untapped resource, resulting in a very low labour force (less than 15% in Pakistan in 2013) (Bukhari & Ramzan, 2013). For women to be deployed as professionals, decision-makers, and property owners, their abilities must be recognised through education and legislation. Women with financial clout can help alleviate poverty, especially in developing African countries. This is in line with the Basotho idiom, "*mosali o ts'oara thipa ka bohaleng*," which loosely means "a woman can hold a knife on its sharpest blade." This idiom refers to a woman's tenacity and agility as an expert in uniting families.

This conceptual paper uses the theoretical philosophy of interactional feminism, focusing on family power struggles, cultural dominance, and patriarchy. It is embedded within the interpretivist paradigm and uses self-study to assess the impact of gender discrimination on African girls and women in allocating inherited family resources. Girls and women are denied their filial and human rights, with subsequent hardships and torture at the hands of family in-laws. Intersectional feminist theory informs our understanding of gender stereotyping and discrimination in the distribution of family resources to girls and women. Within intersectional feminism, our discussion examines power struggles, cultural supremacy, dominance and perpetual patriarchy.

This paper contributes to the body of knowledge in sociology and business management, family business and gender stereotyping and discrimination. The objective of the paper is to argue how gender discrimination and cultural stereotypes result in girls' and women's exclusion from sharing family resources. Five primary research questions anchor the paper. The first question is 'how do gender discrimination and cultural stereotypes result in girls' and women's exclusion from sharing family resources?' The second question is 'how does sharing family resources such as a house, livestock and land affect girls and women?' The third question is 'does family resource allocation have an impact on girls' and women's lives in terms of hunger, poverty and inequality?' Fourthly, what patriarchal practices prevent girls and women from venturing into decent jobs and seizing entrepreneurial opportunities at their disposal? Lastly, 'what is the influence of gender stereotyping and discrimination caused by societal patriarchy that results in misuse of power and domestic violence?'

In the next sections of this paper, we offer a literature review to operationalise the terms family resources, gender stereotyping and gender discrimination. We then move to present the research and methodology aspect and close the study with a presentation of findings and discussion.

## Literature Review

Literature offered the conceptualization of family resources, gender stereotyping and gender discrimination. We found it appropriate to include the researchers' positionality in gender stereotyping and discrimination and its educational implications.

### Family Resources within An African Context

Family resources are assets that include real estate, business, life insurance, livestock, and other assets like cars, trucks, tractors, ploughs and land. As patriarchy permeates African customary law, it compromises South Africa's efforts in moving towards full democracy. Patriarchy diminishes the dignity of girls and women because it belittles women to the level where women are treated as minors who cannot own property; cannot become traditional leaders, and cannot inherit property (Tebbe, 2008). Tebbe (2008) puts South African family resources heirloom in perspective. And we observed, in most African households, the custom of passing down assets excludes girls and women while preferring boys and men. Due to this exclusionary practice, young men have a competitive advantage because they have a financial foundation over young women who start with nothing. about the inherited resources confer independence upon the boys while simultaneously denying justice to the girls. Availability and access to resources by girls and women promotes their decision-making powers. United Nations (2023) reports on the unfortunate situation of girls and women wherein 50 countries promote gender-discriminatory legislations against girls and women. Mudau and Obadire (2017: 466) argues that "women's suppression is perpetuated by "outdated practices that suggest that a woman's role in the family is subordinate to that of a man."

### Gender Stereotype in African Patriarchal Systems

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Commissioned Report (2013: 8) defines gender stereotype as a "generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by, or the roles that are or should be performed by men and women." Gender stereotyping is described as "widely held beliefs about the characteristics, behaviours, and roles of men and women" (Endendijk, Groeneveld, van der Pol, L. D., van Berkel, S. R., Hallers-Haalboom, *et al.*, 2017). Women's stereotypes, according to Stewart (2021), are a barrier to women's success because they cause humiliation, marginalisation, misconduct, and inequity. In the historical past, duty allocations were distinct and segregated between men and women's jobs. Masculinity was designated to heavy, physically demanding and most intellectually challenging roles when leveraged with education.

On the other hand, women were categorised as soft, lacking physical stamina, and had to engage in menial house chores and jobs. The patriarchal system treats women as non-intellectual, heavily burdened with emotional stress, and cannot lead or make proper decisions or judgments (OHCHR Commissioned Report, 2013). Women are treated as unequal due to cultural beliefs that place women at the lower level of the family tree (Yenor, 2011) while placing men as heads of families or leaders of societies. According

to Mudau and Obadire (2017), women fail to control reproductive process; women are deprived from advancing educationally. Therefore, this study calls for redress so that women would be empowered; in addition to seeking to promote gender equality. Society places much faith in male success and fortune while marginalising women.

### **Gender Discrimination**

“Gender discrimination is when someone is treated unequally or disadvantageously based on their gender but not necessarily in a sexual nature and it includes harassment/discrimination based on sex, gender identity, or gender expression” (University of Stanford, 2021).

The University of Stanford website addresses gender stereotypes and discrimination for its student and staff populace not to fall into a trap as perpetrators of such social ills. Although we agree with Triana et al. (2015) that women experience discrimination more than their male counterparts at work, it came to our attention that perpetrators are not only men. From our lived experiences, women at all levels can also become perpetrators. Therefore, educating men as the primary perpetrators alone may not solve the problem.

### **Researchers’ Positionality on Gender Stereotyping and Discrimination and Its Educational Implications**

*Mamothibe:*

‘This project reflects a larger part of my life as a girl, youth, and woman. I come from a position of disadvantage as a middle-class African heterosexual woman from a middle-income family in the Maloti Mountains. I had to work hard and change my destiny. Indeed, through my hard work, I earned my doctoral degree and became a university lecturer in a few of South African public universities. I am currently a Programme Coordinator and a Senior Lecturer at the Durban University of Technology, serving 95% of students from low socio-economic communities. I relate to this paper because I am a woman who experienced an African patriarchal society throughout my childhood to womanhood, and it occurred in my home and community I grew in and the education systems and workplaces I engaged with. I am a living testimony that gender stereotyping and discrimination practice is strong and alive in African communities and universities.’

*Kgomotlokoa:*

‘Many times, in my life I wanted to write about the plight of girls and women within patriarchal domination and supremacy. This project offered me [an] opportunity of representing many girls and women who suffer from gender stereotyping and discrimination in different settings. I was discriminated [against] many-a-times during my childhood on many aspects of my life. Firstly, on the type of play/ game I wanted to engage in, it was supposed to be approved for girls [by the society]. My parents were liberals, but the clan and community members’ strong ties were superior and denied me access to certain sports I liked most. My thesis is #girls-and-women-lives-matter, and I think I need to conscientise my people and communities I live in and those afar about this. Secondly, I experienced a lot of boys’ bullying during my primary school; and sometimes I was labelled a good girl. Thirdly, my youthful years were characterised by bullying, in which I was a victim. I was unfairly hit [physically abused] by strangers confusing me with their girlfriends. Furthermore, I was not successful in becoming the school principal during my youthful years [I was 26 years] when the community and school governing body believed in me, and the circuit inspector blocked my success based on being ‘young and woman’. The same happened when I applied for university promotion as an associate professor and head of a department. I was not successful because I had a vendetta with the University Dean. It was not only with a girlish experience, but my life into adulthood and womanhood was also marred by gender discrimination, inequality, and violence that I regard them as the manifestations of African cultural gender stereotypes. This paper reflects the life I lived growing up, from my girl childhood to my womanhood.’

Mamothibe and Kgomotlokoa share many common experiences: As girls in their father’s house and local community; and later as women-wife to African men characterised by patriarchal domination and supremacy; and workers within patriarchal institutions that promote male leadership and regard women as weak and fragile (Stewart, 2021).

Our experiences bear testimony that African girls and women experience gender stereotyping and discrimination that positions them as family commodities who are expressly excluded from the heirloom of family resources. African girls and women further lead deprived lives of hunger, poverty, homelessness, inequality, and violence that manifest in low educational attainment and cycles of poverty. And fighting for our rights [and right of girls and women who cannot] against African cultural gender stereotypes and gender discrimination has landed us in disrupting societal and cultural strongholds and altering of patriarchy where we are supposed to be “good daughters, girlfriends, fiancées, wives, in-laws, female colleagues and saints.” Fighting for human rights, particularly the rights of girls and women, has landed many girls, ladies and women in domestic violence, gender-based violence, bodily injuries and deaths (Myeni, 2021).

### **Research and Methodology**

This paper adopted an interpretivist qualitative paradigm and self-study to interrogate family resource allocation within African patriarchal system. Using self-study research presented the researchers opportunity to reflect on their experiences using storytelling (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). Apart from narrating our own stories we used secondary data from literature to further interrogate this

social phenomenon. As research confirms that interpretivism is interconnected to qualitative research, similarly, self-study research is aligned to narratives in the form of text.

## **Findings**

### **Entitlement to Family Resources from African Cultural Gender Stereotyping and Discrimination Perspective**

From a European perspective, family resources are normally transferred down the family by signing 'a will' (Foster, 2001: 209) that gives attorneys powers for the apportionment of resources to heirs as prescribed by the will. While legally, all the children are eligible as heirs, Sousa (2010) reports more likelihood of males than females being testate. This practice differs from African practice, where family resources are allocated to boys and men heirs based on the deceased father's wishes and societal norms. From African patriarchal practices, girls and women are excluded from the heirloom. This patriarchal practice is entrenched within gender stereotyping and discrimination influenced by African culture that entitles boys and men to proceeds of heirlooms, whereas girls and women are excluded. This gender stereotyping and discrimination act is founded on the societal belief that girls and women get married to other families, and they can survive from their husbands' share received from their in-laws' parents. This culturally embedded stereotyping and discrimination is as old as humankind; apparently those who were discriminated against had no power to question this. The patriarchal society brought it into existence and ensured its perpetuation over the ages.

The African patriarchal practice on allocation of family resources links well with Inya (2020: 3) who contributes to gender discourses that builds up on an African womanism perspective where "patriarchal ideology emphasises the dominance and superiority of the male gender. Matriarchal ideology is driven by resistance, which manifests at two levels: resisting male domination and resisting the intrusion of a fellow female into one's territory."

The denial of some family members, in this case, girls and women, to resources that should capacitate and make them functional in society, business and the economy deprives them of a promising future. This denial exposes them to domestic violence and abuse by their future husband and in-laws. The poor conditions that many girls and women live in after their wealthy parents have passed on; and the tortured life of many married women are subjected to extends this cultural stereotyping and discrimination. This problem has been in existence for so long without any intervention by family, society, or church (Wood, 2019), traditional leadership authorities and other community structures. This denial is visible in educational settings that do not successfully address gender stereotyping and discrimination in their curricula. It is necessary to address and unbundle the myths that cause gender stereotypes and discrimination culminating in cultural stereotyping. Wood (2019) describes a church as a multifaceted tree housing all stakeholders and the singular entity that could empower girls and women while uprooting patriarchy. Other organisations that ought to share similar interests are the government (Ford, 2014), schools and institutions of higher education.

We all have a duty in this era to disrupt this culturally patriarchal African practice through societal awareness programmes and African gender education campaigns. It might take time, but it is a certain possibility in African societies.

### **Suffering, Deprivation, Hunger and Poverty among African Women**

The deprived life of hunger and poverty characterises many African girls and women. The notion of girls and women suffering emanates from the research questions: How do family resource allocation exclusion impact girls and women's hunger and poverty? The results of girls' and women's exclusion in family resource allocation heirlooms result in them leading lives of hunger and poverty. This is a clear indication that African society marginalises girls and women whose lives are filled with hunger, poverty and inequality, and their stigmatization and vulnerability leave them prone to gender and domestic violence. Hunger and poverty lead girls and women to illiteracy due to a lack of access to productive resources (Ingutia, Rezitis & Sumelius, 2020). Ingutia et al. (2020) further highlight that exclusion of girls and women from family resources accentuates inherited child poverty characterised by malnourishment, school drop-out, child marriages and child labour. Like the biblical Daniel who was thrown in the lion's den, girls and women are thrown in the inescapable cycle of hunger and poverty that exposes them to perennial cycles of poverty.

Awarding heirlooms to boys and men clearly demonstrates how girls and women in African families are less valued than boys and men. A boy child is awarded a high value as an heir of the family and clan name. This gender stereotyping of awarding boys and men high family status and cultural dominance perpetuate a patriarchal society with boys and men exerting domination and superiority over girls and women. Instead, girls and women navigate a difficult life path replete with power struggles for equality in their father's and in-law's house. It spills over to negatively affecting their position of inequality in society and workplaces. This cultural gender stereotyping is the cause of gender discrimination that lands many African girls and women living in hunger and poverty. The power struggle is still prevalent in many African households, where girls are traded as commodities at tender ages; and the use lobola proceeds to pay school and university fees for boy siblings. Sometimes, the girl's lobola proceeds are used to settle a marriage for the boy siblings. Moreover, the African girl from both poor and rich family enters the marriage space with empty hands; and looks upon the in-laws and husband to support them.

## **Educational Implications of Exclusion from Family Resource Allocations on African Girls and Women**

There is a variety of justifications peddled for the continual entrenchment of gender discrimination and stereotyping as expounded by Louw (2009). From the cultural point of view, Louw (2009) maintains that families and societies are naturally based on aggression, domination, procreation, spouse and child protection, while economy, property, production and distribution of goods are the natural domains of men. In this terrain, education that would prepare girls and women for a better life is not provided to them. The patriarchal practices prevent girls and women from pursuing respectable careers and taking advantage of available entrepreneurial opportunities.

African women and girls' exclusion from an empowering education is grounded on the notion and expectation that they will get married. The girl's family believes it is a waste of money to send a girl child to school, as the young woman will marry another family and therefore, the family will not benefit. Instead, girls are viewed as assets that must be taken care of for the best returns. The family does not realise the girl's value; she can be educated so that the in-laws can pay a heavier bride price for her. As a result, when boys go to school, girls will be left behind looking after their children and doing other domestic chores.

In this era, preparation for future work involves learning. If one is not educated and is not prepared for the labour market, the chances of proper employment are nullified. In cases where the husband passes on, a woman gets the burden of looking after the children on her own by taking low-status occupations, such as cleaning and babysitting. With no education and assets, young and old women live in cycles of poverty. In addition, some with little education would make it difficult for women to participate economically in the labour market or initiate thriving businesses. Gender stereotyping and discrimination cause havoc in African girls' and women's lives. Freijomil-Vázquez et al. (2022) and Vanner, Holloway, and Almansori (2022) recommend educational curriculum as a way of empowerment and capacitation to transform entrenched gender biases and stereotyping that presents and manifests in gender discrimination. This paper calls for educational institutions to integrate African gender stereotyping and discrimination, and other gender-related issues into the curriculum. Since it is societal norm "to value and privilege what is male over what is female, legitimising patriarchy and camouflaging its unfairness" (George, Amin, de Abreu Lopes, & Ravindran, 2020: 20). Therefore, societal orientation is required to cater for community members who are already out of the school through policies and community engagement strategies.

## **Gender Violence and Inequality as Manifestations of Gender Stereotyping**

In the past, wife beating was a prevalent abuse by husbands where wives were also encouraged to worship their husbands as demigods due to a belief that God is closer to the man. This belief elevated a man to a position of a minor god. Positioning men as smaller gods is still perpetuated into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This practice results in girls and women as the most vulnerable members of African societies and victims of gender-based violence (GBV). In some cases, women and girls suffer from GBV caused by the people closest to them (Barroso-Corroto, Cobo-Cuenca, Laredo-Aguilera, Santacruz-Salas, Pozuelo-Carrascosa, et al., 2022), family members or a spouse. Instead of girls and women opting out of intimate relations as girlfriends or wives and reporting the matter to the police, they stand this abuse to keep the family intact. The abuser [a father, brother, or husband] provides basic needs, such as food and clothing and, to some extent, shelter. The girls and women sometimes must withstand verbal and emotional abuse which could be as severe as physical and sexual abuse, but the perpetrator escapes jail sentences as such cases are often not reported. Sometimes family subdues girls and women not to report the case, as it is a family matter, and the family can best handle it. Although the family promises to solve the problem, in most cases, the perpetrator does not stop. Instead, he takes advantage of the girls and women's silence. In extreme cases, women and girls lose their lives at the hands of the abuser. This is common in South Africa, compelling President Cyril Ramaphosa (South African Government, 2022) to declare GBV a state of emergency.

GBV is also common in other parts of Africa and India, where girls and women suffer abuse through forced or arranged marriages. These girls and women are not respected by their families, forcing them to marry their in-laws, who reduce them to pawns that can be traded for childbearing and caretaking of the in-laws' house. Forced marriage exposes girls and women to GBV, and they sacrifice their happiness and future through childbearing and rearing. There is a prevalence of forced marriages in rural KwaZulu-Natal Province, where teenage girls are hunted and taken to in-laws and then allocated a husband (Thaba, 2013). In a few days, the in-laws pay a dowry to the girl's family for their intrusion; and they initiate lobola negotiations. At that time, the girl is kept hostage by her in-laws' family, so she does not escape. Immediately, the girl's education and future husband prospects die at the hands of culturally forced-marriage practices. Again, girls become marriage subjects without rights, subjected to rape in the name of African culture. If they do not comply, they get exposed to GBV.

The attire worn during rituals by Zulu and Swati girls exposes their breasts and sometimes their private parts in the name of cultural rites of passage. This practice subjects girls to vulnerabilities in exposure, like products sold in the marketplace. They advertise and trade their bodies and await a transaction that comes in different ways. The purpose is for them to get future husbands. However, in the process, they expose themselves to GBV, such as forced marriages and rape. When such acts happen, South Africans blame girls and women for their exposure and experience of rape and GBV through their own volition as men are not accountable (Call et al., 2002). Most GBV incidents taking place never see their day in courts.

Ho (2011) argues that the education system has a role to play in reducing global GBV. Through students' participation and acting as change agents (Hooks, 2014), GBV can be mitigated. South Africa can learn from Canada, where teachers increase students' critical consciousness about GBV and how teachers experience the pedagogical process (Vanner et al., 2022). Freijomil-Vázquez et al.

(2022) highlight a need to deconstruct patriarchal discourse that sustains GBV, which is deeply rooted in South African society, culture, and education.

### **Family Resources and Girl Commodity**

This aspect responds to the research question on how girls and women are affected by commodity and resource allocation. A girl child grew up as a family's pride, nurtured for the transaction to in-laws one day and make a fortune. This gender stereotyping results in girl commodification for building-up the family resources required to build a family empire. It is disconcerting when fathers celebrate the birth of their girl children in anticipation of the cows' horns coming in from his daughter's future in-laws to fill up their kraal. Some of the girls and women raised in low-income families with limited resources could manage to get a better education and start accumulating wealth in their parents' houses. However, such young women are ripped off their proceeds because family resources cannot be taken to the in-laws.

This practice is common in some African rural communities we grew up in, where the young women's property is taken by the parents and brothers when young women get married. From the rural societies we grew in, the phenomenon is prevalent, and we observed it on many occasions when family would take all the belongings so that a young woman can go bare-handed, with nothing to establish herself as she is introduced and socialized into the circumscribed role of being a wife subordinated to the machinations on her in-laws.

The girl as commodity is a gender stereotyping practice that leads girls into forced marriages to create wealth for family. Children between 12 and 18 years are traded in forced marriages to meet strange husbands and in-laws, turning into wives and child-making machines. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2001) report indicates that approximately 74% of DRC girls between the ages of 15 and 19 were married, divorced or widowed. The statistics show that about 800 women die each day during pregnancy and childbirth, and more than 200 million women who want to use modern contraception globally cannot access services" (Ford, 2014). Girls and women continue to suffer in patriarchal societies. Moreover, this cultural practice keeps girls and women poor and powerless. It does not matter whether one comes from a poor or rich family. One gets a sense of the gender stereotyping and discrimination associated with a family heirloom. A milestone might have been reached in 2014 when political leaders agreed to treat girls and women equally and to stop treating them as commodities (Ford, 2014); however, it continues to happen. Treating symptoms cannot help in addressing gender issues. There is a need to address girls' and women's gender stereotyping and discrimination that are entrenched within patriarchal systems.

### **Lessons from Modjadji and English Monarchies: New Developments in Matriarchy and Patriarchy**

Matriarchy practices in Modjadji monarchy and kingdom prevail and it is important to examine how this exerts an impact on the birthright of boys in this setting. We are quite aware that other communities that cling to matriarchal practices are equally contributing to gender stereotyping and discrimination of boys and men. The story of the Modjadji Queen in Limpopo Province in South Africa accentuates matriarchy but also comes with challenges (Kanjere, Thaba & Teffo, 2011). In contrast to patriarchy, girls and women are the crown's sole heirs where boys and men experience gender stereotyping and discrimination in a rare case of the reverse impact of traditional phallocentric society. Besides being harmful, gender stereotyping and discrimination deny both genders their birthright.

In this paper, we want to join in the gender stereotyping and discrimination discourse initiated by the late Queen Elizabeth II when she made some proclamations about the royal bloodline and heirloom of the English crown. Her decision changed the English royal history and gave hope to royal girls. The results were observed when the daughter of Prince of Wales, William, ascended to the throne after her brother Edward V. This move in the royal house should signal a need to reconstruct cultures and address gender stereotypes and discrimination that goes with it. This change was possible because it was initiated by a leader of the monarchy, who ascended to the throne after her father's death because the family had not borne a baby boy.

In a few instances, women find support: England and Balubedu are the few countries allowing females to rein as queens. The longest-reigning monarchy, Queen Elizabeth of England, died in 2022 from senility, and her son King Charles, succeeded her. On the other hand, the matriarchy of the Balubedu tribe, was under the leadership of the regent King, after the death of the rain Queen Modjadji of Limpopo Province in South Africa (Kanjere, Thaba & Teffo, 2011).

### **The Legacy of Gender Discrimination in The Workplace: Power and Masculinity**

Gender discrimination is widespread among women, regardless of their social background (Pokharel, 2008; Bukhari & Ramzan, 2013). Men are perceived as masculine, whereas women are perceived as soft. In modern society, this prejudice is primarily motivated by individuals rather than cultural factors (Kanjere, Thaba & Teffo, 2011). Men are given leadership roles as family heads and decision-makers because of this unequal power distribution, while women are forced to perform menial household tasks. Prior to colonisation, women had no access to education, decent jobs, money, or property. This historical gender stereotype privileges men and makes girls and women remain on the margins. The woman is viewed as a future wife, mother, and daughter-in-law who needs to grow up following the societal norms of an exemplary holder of these subservient roles. She was a family pride when she was traded to her in-laws, and the in-laws take pride in their daughter-in-law who is mannered to take care of them, bear offspring, and continue the family lineage while she remained poor, powerless, and prone to abuse. Her daughters receive the same treatment and

watch their brothers inherit the family estate while they are discriminated against. Hence, the goal of this paper is to argue how gender discrimination and cultural stereotypes prevent girls and women from inheriting family resources.

Poverty is evident in South Africa's rural areas, where black South Africans tend to start small and micro businesses with no facilities or support, destined to fail (Thaba-Nkadimene, 2020a). Because of the country's high unemployment rate, most citizens have a little dignity and a high proclivity for communal instabilities, as evidenced by regular basic delivery protests and recent #feesmustfall campaigns. Female youth are more affected by unemployment than other youth and adults (Thaba-Nkadimene, 2020b). As a result, government and private sector support for entrepreneurial development and the creation of job opportunities for female youth is essential. Furthermore, the government must enforce employment equity compliance.

Social injustices in African communities jeopardise South African rural women's social justice and human rights. Forced marriages, extramarital affairs, polygamy, domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape, and a lack of economic participation are common among poor rural women (Thaba-Nkadimene, Molotja & Mafumo, 2019). Transformation in economic and social justice may be accelerated in these communities through government intervention programmes aimed at emancipation and human development. Working women face gender oppression at home and work, making it challenging to balance home and work responsibilities (Thaba-Nkadimene *et al.*, 2021: 255). In this study, these women reported higher levels of stress and conflict than their male counterparts, with gender disparities extending from home to work.

### **Unfair Treatment of Young Women at A Patriarchal Workplace**

This segment answers the research question on patriarchal practices that prevent girls and women from venturing into the job market. Young women cannot join some professions due to cultural reasons or lack of knowledge in some leadership fields. Coe (2019) states that science and medicine professions need to incorporate girls and women and increase human capital. Therefore, a skills gap exists due to the underrepresentation of girls and women in these professions (Coe, 2019).

According to the OHCHR Commissioned Report (2013), some jobs are described as physically demanding and unsuitable for women, or culture forbids women from engaging in such. Girls and women are not allowed to receive any entrepreneurial and economic education in preparation for a better life. Instead, they are trained to become future wives, homemakers, and till the father's or husband's land to provide food for the family. This way, girls and women are left poor as they cannot generate any resources for themselves in their lifetimes. This challenge is perpetuated by their lack of access to education and human development. When young women are educated (Nussbaum 1999) and start to advocate for themselves, they may still encounter workplace discrimination based on gender in terms of rewards and treatment. When given the opportunity, some women accurately rated themselves, while others underrated themselves, and men overrated themselves. Women in higher education do not perceive the Labour Relations Act as supporting gender equity and improving their quality of life (Akala, 2018).

These young women might hold similar positions as their male counterparts; however, they get low rewards and recognition (OHCHR Commissioned Report, 2013). In rare cases, when equality is espoused, male counterparts reduce women and girls to "babe" and request her to prepare tea for male colleagues. In other cases, they get involved in sexual exploitation where males demand sexual favours. Male colleagues would do anything to keep 'a woman at an arm's length' to maintain their power struggle. These cultural practices and cultural gender stereotyping maintain patriarchal power over a woman through responsibilities at home and work. The man assumes duties that pay more, and in most cases, the woman takes a less-paying job.

Young women do not feel a sense of belonging to the family or at work as patriarchal norms dominate these spaces. Despite their education, young women are treated unfairly and unequally at work, disregarding the Labour Relations Act (Akala, 2018). However, some companies are starting to recognise employee equity for fair treatment at work (Ntanjana, 2018). Other institutions, like the church, have the power to end gender prejudice and stereotyping (Woods, 2019). This paper contributes to sociology and business management body of knowledge and family business and gender stereotyping and gender discrimination.

### **Discussion**

This self-study interrogated how cultural gender stereotyping and discrimination influences allocation of resources and heirloom to African girls and women. These patriarchal practices are deeply rooted in societal norms and cultural beliefs that prioritise boys and males over girls and women. These patriarchal practices perpetuate inequality that results in hunger, poverty, low education, and lack of good health. The notion that 'women as weak and fragile' (Stewart, 2021) is a serious cultural gender stereotype that is entrenched within patriarchal society.

This paper shows how the exclusion of girls and women from family resources has crucial educational and economic implications. The cultural stereotypes as manifestation of patriarchy entrench underinvestment in girls' education. Furthermore, this exclusion has a limiting factor on girls and women's venturing into entrepreneurship and decent employment opportunities (Radebe & Smith, 2023).

We explored how cultural gender stereotypes contribute to gender-based violence (GBV) and perpetuate inequalities within African societies. Forced marriages, and societal expectations further exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to GBV (Mtotywa,

Ledwaba, Mambo, Nkonzo, Ntshagovhe and Negota (2023). Women and girls are often subjected to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, with cultural norms and patriarchal structures often legitimising such violence.

This paper has put in perspective the concept of "girl commodity", that refers to how girls are treated as assets to be traded for family wealth and societal status. The value of "quality education for girls, reduces fertility rates and therefore slows down population explosion; lowers infant and maternal mortality rates and improves health and nutrition and well-being of families" (Ayoola, 2022: 256). This practice reinforces gender stereotypes and perpetuates the cycle of discrimination against women. Even in cases where girls manage to accumulate wealth, they are often deprived of their assets upon marriage, further disempowering them economically. Furthermore, the marginality of women is legislated, within customary laws, that women position in the family is equivalent to minor, with no ownership to her own children, property and assets accumulated during her marriage, in case she would like to divorce.

The discussion extends to workplace discrimination, where cultural gender stereotypes perpetuate unequal treatment and opportunities for women. Apart from workplaces, gender stereotyping occurs in media, educational and recreational socialization through promotion of gender prejudice and discrimination (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). Despite advancements in education and workforce participation, women continue to face barriers in accessing leadership positions and fair treatment in the workplace. Such discrimination undermines efforts towards gender equality and economic development.

Comparisons between matriarchal and patriarchal systems provide insights into the complexities of gender dynamics. While matriarchal systems may empower women in certain aspects, they also present challenges and discrimination against boys and men. The evolution of gender norms within monarchies, as seen in the English monarchy, highlights the potential for change and gender equality.

## **Conclusion**

In this self-study, we reflected on our experiences on allocation of family resources, gender stereotyping and discrimination, and interrogated literature on related topics. The study sought to answer, five primary research question. We interrogated the influence of discrimination and cultural gender that results in exclusion of girls' and women from sharing family resources. Furthermore, gender discrimination and cultural stereotyping that aspire to scaffold and perpetuate African patriarchal practices prevent girls and women from venturing into decent jobs and seizing entrepreneurial opportunities at their disposal. Apart from non-allocation of family resources and assets, girls and women fall into the trap of misuse of power and domestic violence. This study suggests that girls and women be allocated family resources and assets; that could determine their success in mitigating poverty and its effects. The resources could enable students' success in education; and making informed decisions on their future. This study recommends large scale research on family resources, gender discrimination and cultural stereotypes within African patriarchal systems.

On the grounds of the interrogation of the self-study approach and literature review, we conclude that the entrenchment of cultural gender stereotyping and discrimination within African societies perpetuates inequality, hinders women's empowerment, and exposes them to various forms of violence and exploitation. Addressing these issues requires multifaceted approaches, including educational reforms, legal protections, and societal awareness programmes. By challenging patriarchal norms and promoting gender equality, African societies can unlock the full potential of women and contribute to sustainable development.

In this study we recommend the adoption of educational reforms that will integrate gender-sensitive curricula in schools and institutions to challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality from an early age.

There is a need for a legal protection that repeal all laws that work against democracy and freedom in family conducts and resources allocation, in South Africa. When laws that perpetuate gender discrimination such as customary laws are repealed, there should be a concerted enforcement of laws against gender-based violence and discrimination. Furthermore, South African organisations should be encouraged to implement gender-sensitive policies and practices to ensure fair treatment and opportunities for women in the workplace. A country such as South Africa with high levels of gender-based violence and femicides and high women unemployment, must promote the formulation of policies that protect and enhance women's rights to inheritance and economic participation.

The study further recommends continuous discussions and community engagements on the innate dangers of patriarchal practices, cultural gender stereotyping and discrimination within African cultures. Fostering dialogue and awareness campaigns within communities will help in challenging harmful gender norms and promote gender equality. Lastly, the study recommends that South African research hubs including universities, should invest in research to better understand the root causes and consequences of gender inequality, and monitor progress towards gender equality goals to inform policy and interventions. According to Freijomil-Vázquez, (2022) future research should delve deeper into students' GBV beliefs and experiences as conditioning factors for their professional work in caring for patients who have experienced this type of violence. We recommend that educational institutions reconstruct curricula that unbundle gender stereotyping and discrimination, as well as GBV.

And if these recommendations can be implemented, and communities buy into the action of dismantling cultural gender stereotypes and discrimination entrenched within patriarchal systems, then South Africa could be marching in a determined steps in addressing many of social ills, as a failure to allocate family resources begets backwardness and contradictions to the political democracy achieved.



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