A STUDY OF IBUSA NAMES: GENDER, MEANING, AND ATTITUDE

Florence Nwaefuna[1]

Abstract

The issue of gender is a topical one. Feminists conceive that males dominate females in different spheres of life ranging from politics, religion, the judiciary, and to the way people use language to express social reality. This paper examines how gender is reflected in the personal names of the Igbo people of Ibusa, in the Delta State of Nigeria. It does this by exploring the meaning of the names and by investigating the attitudes of the name bearers. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire and an oral interview from two secondary schools and one social club in Ibusa, from the 6th to the 31st of October 2007. The analysis is based on 160 traditional names that were collected during the process. The results reveal that Ibusa names for both males and females have sexist undertones. Furthermore, that names ascribed to males are associated with objects of social significance while female ones generally comment on mundane things. Moreover, the paper reveals that 86% of males and 93% of females have positive attitudes towards their names, while a negligible percentage of males (10%) and females (6.6%) claim that their names portray them in a negative light. It was anticipated that a significant number of people would have negative attitudes towards their names because of the meanings encoded in such names, but the data shows that names which were thought to be negative were in fact positive because of the context under which they were given.

Keywords: Naming, gender, Ibusa-Igbo, masculinities, femininities, patriarchy

1.   Introduction

Naming plays a significant role in the culture of the Igbo community of Ibusa. Onumajuru (2016) states that the Igbo choose names according to the circumstances surrounding the pregnancy or birth of a child. These circumstances range from the socio-economic to the political conditions affecting the family or lineage into which the child is born. Igbo names are part of the Igbo cultural heritage, so they are motivated by several factors including Igbo proverbs, one's personal god or a deity loyal to the family, and market days. Sometimes children are named after their parents' ancestors. These are usually ancestors that parents think might have been reincarnated in the child. According to Ubahakwe (1981, cited in Onukawa, 2007, p. 73), these names fall into four classes, namely, "unique, given, pet, and nicknames." Parents usually prefer names which are classified under given names, and these are usually carefully chosen because the Igbo community of Ibusa believes that names have a great impact on an individual's personality and evolving history. They believe that people's names determine their destinies and are more than an emblem of their identity. As a result, due care is taken when naming an individual. Names that denote negativity are

---

1.   Independent scholar. Email: nwaefunaf@gmail.com

avoided in favor of those which carry a positivity.

The Igbo community of Ibusa is built on the old tradition of patriarchal order where men are viewed as the head of the family and women as being subordinate to them (Adesina & Jegede, 2020). Men go out to earn money for the family while women are accorded the role of motherhood and wifehood. Women are involved in domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, taking care of the children and serving their husbands and in-laws. These virtues reflect the women's humble social status and give men absolute power over them, both at home and in the society at large. In a patriarchal society, women are labelled as "weak, feminine, home-oriented and passive while men are labelled as energetic, strong, powerful, courageous, confident" (Nwaefuna, 2008, p. 24). These features of males' positive values show their dominance in the language the society uses to construct them.

There is a paucity of literature on gender and naming patterns among the Igbo community of Ibusa of Nigeria. Onukawa (2000) in his study of naming patterns of the East Niger Igbo, who are the majority in Southern Nigeria, points out that about 90% of Igbo names are gender-specific, while the rest are gender-neutral. He further claims that female names are associated with virtuous qualities while male ones are associated with significant social matters. However, interesting salient linguistic features of Igbo names justify that the world is constructed in favour of males, and this is reinforced by de Beauvoir (1972, cited in Al Otoom, 2016, p. 130.) who argues that man is the absolute sex while woman is the "other sex," a notion which feminists continue to fight against.

Given this background, the current study aims to investigate how linguistic conventions reflect cultural roles that are assigned to both males and females among the Igbo community of Ibusa, and how such roles may result in unequal relations of power. This study is significant because there are no previous studies on gender and naming among the Igbo community of Ibusa compared to other Nigerian regions like East Niger Igbo, which is the majority group. The Ibusa Igbo community, which is the focus of this study, is a minority group. It is known as the West Niger Igbo and is found in southern Nigeria. The language of the Ibusa Igbo community differs from other Igbo dialects in terms of tone, spelling, and pronunciation (Onukawa, 2007). Since there is a dearth of research on naming and gender among the Ibusa-Igbo community of southern Nigeria, this study aims to bridge this gap by addressing the following research questions:

1. How is gender reflected in Ibusa-Igbo names?
2. What is the meaning of the collected Ibusa-Igbo names?
3. What are the attitudes of the Ibusa-Igbo people towards their names?

2.   Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is that of dominance. This is a feminist theory which recognises that males dominate women in

language use (Spender, 2001; Coates, 2013). Coates (2013) avers that men dominate women in conversations since women always asking questions and use hedges to force responses from men, to facilitate the smooth flow of the conversation. Spender (2001) claims that women gossip while men talk less. Labelling women as gossips and men as less talkative tarnishes the image of women and credits men's attitudes against women. However, research findings on dominance contradicts this view. A study of mixed sex groups showed that men talk more than women in settings such as staff meetings or in conversations, in which men are found to interrupt women while women support men (see Tannen, 2007).

Dominance theory is not without flaws. The concept of power, which is the central element in the theory, is criticised. Tannen (2007) claims that power relations do not exist in any linguistic strategy. The reason given for this is that linguistic strategies can be ambiguous, they could mean either power or solidarity or both. That is, what appears as an attempt to dominate a conversation may be intended to establish a rapport. In other words, Tannen's view de-emphasises the theory of dominance while other scholars such as Einspahr (2010) claim that men dominate women in most contexts.

Dominance theory is relevant to the present study because Nigerian society is patriarchal in nature, and patriarchy is connected to dominance. According to Spender (2001, p. 1), a patriarchal society is based on the belief that the male is the "superior sex," "more worthy" and "more deserving sex" than the female. These power relations or inequality between the sexes are manifested in different ways such as in language, which favours men than women (Letsholo, 2009; Van Han, 2014). Therefore, the concern of this paper is to examine how gender inequalities are reflected in the naming practices of the Igbo community of Ibusa, Nigeria, through the lens of linguistic systems.

3.   Literature Review

Previous studies on personal names have accounted for the meanings of names and the situations under which they are given (Mathangwane & Gardener, 1998; Bagwasi, 2012) while a few others studied gender and naming practices within the African context, which the present study is exploring. These are Arua (1992), Rapoo (2002), and Ramaeba, Sebina, and Lopang (2020).

Arua (1992) examined maiden name retention and marital re-naming in the marriage institution of the Ohafia Igbo society (East Niger Igbo) of Southern Nigeria. The findings show that a woman acquires at least three different names throughout her life, and these are names she acquires at birth, an intimate name given to her by her husband during her traditional marriage ceremony, and finally, her husband's first name or last name to which the title *Mrs* is prefixed. The last one is acquired according to the English convention of naming married women. The author claims that such practice of assigning multiple names to women is a problem because women then acquire multiple identities, which means that they no longer exist

autonomously.

Ramaeba, Sebina, and Lopang (2020) examined twin names of different genders in the Botswana context. Their study revealed that Setswana twin names, like other Setswana personal names, reflect some underlying cultural stereotypes that associate certain names with a particular gender. The data indicate that the twin names of Leruo 'livestock' and Larona "ours" for example, are assigned to a male and female, respectively, despite that these children are born almost at the same time and under similar circumstances. The "assumption is that either child could have been given either name because there is nothing in the lexical meaning of the names that is associated with either gender" (Ramaeba et al., 2020, p. 53). Ramaeba et al. (2020) is supported by an earlier study by Rapoo (2002) who claimed that Tswana naming patterns favour males and disfavour females because male names are associated with animate objects, which indicate humans, while female ones do not. Rapoo's study concludes that the Tswana naming practice is a powerful ideological tool that is biased against females.

4.   Methodology

4.1 Research Instruments

The data for this study were collected through the administration of a questionnaire and oral interviews. The questionnaire was administered in two secondary schools in Ibusa, namely, St Augustine College and St Thomas' College Ibusa, and the Otu Ọchiọra social club between the 6th and the 31st of October 2007.

The questionnaire was divided into two major sections. Section 1 solicited respondents' demographic data while Section 2 comprised of questions which required respondents to provide data on the topic under study. The respondents were requested to give their names, state whether they like or dislike their names, and give reasons for their responses. They were also requested to explain if any of their names portray them in a positive or negative light. For the interview, the researcher administered a similar questionnaire orally to the respondents who could not read and write. The additional information provided by the respondents (the elderly, from 50 years and above) during the interview was recorded by the interviewer and later transcribed. For the students, the questionnaire was administered in classroom settings with the help of the class teachers. For the elderly, the questionnaire was administered during their club's social gatherings at their chairperson's home in Umuodafe quarters, Ibusa. The exercise was carried out on two occasions.

4.2 Research sample

The sample for analysis was drawn from a total population of 200 people. This was made up of 120 students (50 males and 70 females), 30 teachers (17 males and 13 females), and 50 elderly men and women above the age of 50 years (23 males and 27 females). The choice of the participants was justified

because they constitute independent and vocal groups that can provide authentic information.

A total of 220 names were elicited. Out of this number, 40 were English names while 180 were traditional names. From the 180 names, the study analysed 160 traditional names since some of the names appeared more than once. The names chosen for the analysis cut across different age groups, from adolescents to adults (ranging between 15 to 60+ years). The aim was to obtain a true representation of the whole community under study. The names from the data were categorized using frames of power and authority, male preference, deities/spirits, occupation, physical strength, beauty, wealth, morality, market days, social significance, and miscellaneous (11 frames).

5.   Results and Discussion

5.1   Gender and name meaning

This section answers the first and second research questions by exploring the meaning of the names and establishing if they are sexist. The sample shows that the 160 Igbo names analysed and discussed consist of gender-specific and gender-neutral names. Gender-specific is an expression that refers to one gender only. Male names can be easily identified by the *oko* or *okei* 'male' and *Nna* 'father' affixes. Examples of such names are *Oko-Obi* 'male is a chief', *Okei-bu-unno* 'male is home', and *Nnamdi* 'my father lives'. The female names are identified by the *Nwanyi* 'female', *Ada* 'daughter', *Mgbo* 'maiden' and *Nne* 'mother' affixes. Examples of such names are *Adaobi* 'daughter of a chief', *Nwanyi-ocha* 'white lady', *Nne-bu-ọgọ* 'mother is a gift' and *Mgbọ-afọr* 'maiden of *Afor* market day'.

Gender neutral names are names which are common to both sexes. Based on the data, some of the names which are linguistically gender neutral are mostly ascribed to males because of the social cultural milieu of the people. Such names are either derived from nouns plus nouns, or nouns plus adjectives, or nouns plus verbs, or are characterized by attaching certain affixes to the gender-neutral base forms of words. An example of such names is *Nwa-bu-eze* 'child is king', the *nwa* 'child' is gender neutral and it is common to both sexes, but the derivational term bu (verb *is*) and Eze (noun *king*) attached to the base word *Nwa* changes the meaning of the name to refer to the boy child.

The data also revealed that Ibusa-Igbo names are meaningful and that male names are associated with objects of social significance more than the female ones, which seems sexist (see section 5.11 for details). The names are categorised and discussed according to the frames in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Classes of traditional names from the data

Categories	Gender Specific Names		Gender Neutral Names		Total	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	No	%
Power and authority	3	3	18	1	25	15.6
Male preference	1	3	14	6	24	15
Deities/Spirits	-	-	25	10	35	22
Occupation	-	-	10	2	12	7.5
Physical strength	1	-	11	-	12	7.5
Beauty	2	2	-	2	6	3.8
Wealth	1	-	-	4	5	3.1
Morality	-	-	-	8	8	5
Market days	4	4	4	-	12	7.5
Social significance	-	-	5	2	7	4.3
Miscellaneous items	-	-	6	8	14	8.7
TOTAL: No.	**12**	**12**	**94**	**42**	**160**	**100**
%	**7.5**	**7.5**	**58.75**	**26.25**	**-**	**100**

5.2 Names denoting power and authority

The category of power and authority is that of names which are associated with leadership and carry the affixes *eze* 'king' and *ob*i 'red cap chiefs'. Men are accorded the power to rule or administer the affairs of the society while women are associated with the role of motherhood or described in terms of virtuous qualities or mundane things. According to Table 1 above, 25 (15.6%) out of the 160 traditional names obtained relate to power and authority. Of this number, 21 (84%) are ascribed to males while 4 (16%) are given to females. Of the 25 names, 6 are gender- specific and 19 are gender-neutral. An example of a gender-specific name borne by men is *Okpalobi;* morphologically, *Okpala* means first son and *Obi* 'chief/land'. Literally, the name means first born son of a chief or son of the land. Examples of gender specific names for females are *Adaeze* 'first daughter of a king', *Adaobi* 'first daughter of a chief or daughter of the land', and *Nne-eze* 'mother of a king'. The gender-specific names show that linguistically, both males and females are treated fairly. The names conform to the western style of calling the first sons and daughters of a royal family princes and princesses. Although females acquire these affixes 'Obi/Eze', they are not allowed to preside over the affairs of the community. The names only show that females are princesses and mothers and not kings,

presidents, or chiefs.

The gender-neutral names assigned to males outnumbered the names given to females only because they carry the affixes which portrayed male as the ideal sex. An example of a gender-neutral name ascribed to men only is *Ezeani* 'King of the land', which asserts that the land is owned or ruled by males alone while a gender-neutral name assigned to females is *Nwa-omu* 'child of palm frond'. *Omu* means palm frond and it is the only chieftaincy title conferred on a female. This name shows that the language of the people of Ibusa does not provide an equivalent social title for women in general or those women whose husbands have taken the chieftaincy title *Obi or Eze*. Women are described in terms of their husbands' achievements or are conferred with the title of motherhood. The names *Nneze* 'mother of king' and *Nwa Omu* 'to give birth to something or palm frond' ascribed to females show that they are represented as the lesser sex because traditionally, such roles are regarded as unimportant.

5.3 Names denoting male child preference

This category highlights the importance of the male child in the society because it is believed that the birth of a male child will lead to the continuation of the family lineage (Adesina & Jegede, 2020). From the 160 names in the data, 24 (15%) show the disparity between male and female names. A total of 15 (62.2%) names out of the 24 names place males in a position of superiority over females, while 9 (37.5%) of the 24 names place women in a subordinate position. Examples of names which show male preference are in the category of gender specific and gender-neutral names.

Names that fall under gender-neutral names are assigned to the male child as a reflection of the society's traditions. An example of a gender specific name is *Okeibunọ* 'male is home', and a gender-neutral name is *Iloechinne* 'my lineage or space should not be closed'. Literally, obstruction prevents development, therefore, the birth of a male child enhances productivity. This conveys the message that the world we live in is masculine and that man has been given the authority to rule over the earth and all that is within it. On one hand, the names ascribed to females reflect societal stereotypes and portray them as less important. Examples of such names are *Nwanyibunwa* 'woman is child' and *Izunwanyibuizujiaka* 'the training of a female is tantamount to fracturing a hand'. This conveys the message that it is unnecessary to train the girl child for a profession since she is bound to get married and leave the family home.

5.4 Personal names denoting occupation

This category shows that names males and females bear reveal their different occupations. The names males bear are associated with occupations that represent male prowess while the female names are associated with roles that portray them as the weaker sex. From the 160 names obtained from the data, 10 (23%) of the personal names belonging to males referenced to careers in medicine, the army, hunting, and farming. None of such names were borne

by females. Only two (1.25% of 160) personal names ascribed to females emphasised petty trading. Examples of such names are *Ezeashia* 'king of the market', *Uzo-onitsha* 'born on the way to the commercial city of Onitsha'. *Uzo* means road and *Onitcha* refers to a big commercial city in Nigeria. These names signify that women occupy roles of less social significance which place them in a negative semantic place, while men are associated with roles of social significance which place them in a positive light.

Some of the names which portray men in a positive light are *Okwudibia* 'the prophecy of a medicine man has come true' and *Akpani* 'shield'. Shield is an instrument of protection in war, and men in this context are seen as protecting their families against the travails of the world. Another example of a name that places men in a high position over women is *Jibu-uno* 'yam is home'. *Jibu-uno* literally means that where there is yam, there is food, and the person behind its provision is a man. Thus, men are seen as providers of food in the home. In sum, names differentiating male and female roles are sexist in the sense that they represent occupations that reflect men's prowess, even though women also engage in such jobs. In today's world, women are single mothers, farmers, soldiers, and doctors. They cater for their families and protect them against danger. In Ibusa culture, such professions are not visible in the names that women bear.

5.5 Names denoting beauty

In this category, both males and females are given names which are associated with positive qualities. From the 160 names in the data, 4 (2.5%) belong to females and 2 (1.25%) to males. The names with the suffix "*ocha*", as in *Okocha* 'white man' and *Nwanyiocha* 'white woman' are given to both males and females. Other names with the suffix "*oji*", as in *Okonji* 'black man' and *Nwanyioji* 'black lady' are borne by both males and females. The data shows that there is equity in gender-specific names denoting beauty. The names indicate that males are handsome while females are beautiful. In addition, names such as *Ododo* 'red' carry the feminine qualities of beauty, tenderness, and softness. A previous study by Ramaeba, Sebina, and Lopang (2020) reveals that Setswana female names are associated with qualities of beauty such as *Bontle* 'beauty' validates the current study.

5.6 Names denoting wealth

Names denoting wealth that are associated with males favour them, while those associated with females disfavour them. Men are represented as commanders or producers of wealth, which portrays them in a positive light, while women are prejudiced because they are viewed as objects of commerce by the bride price offered to parents during marriage. The names in this category are gender neutral. From the 160 names in table 1 above, 4 (2.5%) are ascribed to females and only 1 (0.62%) to a male. Women are subjugated because they are associated with the following names: *Akunna* 'father's wealth', *Ogbeyeanu* 'a poor man will not marry my daughter', and *Egobuokwu* 'money talks or money is the trouble'. These names advertise the

female child to the highest bidder.

The female names convey the notion that having a girl child in the family enhances wealth through marriage. This practice perpetuates the feeling of dominance by men over women. This is illustrated by the name *Egobudike* 'money makes a man'. It shows that a wealthy man commands respect, power, and authority. The adjective *dike* 'brave' in *Egobudike* expresses the men's bravery and their tireless efforts to cater for their families.

5.7 Names referring to morality

According to Sher (2001), morality refers to what societies determine to be the right and acceptable code of conduct which enables people to live cooperatively in a community. From the 160 names in the data, 8 (5%) are gender neutral and are ascribed to females, while none are given to males. The essence of this naming practice is that in the Ibusa culture, a woman is expected to be well behaved before she could be identified for marriage. As a result, having a child outside wedlock is an unacceptable norm. Examples of names in this category are *Eziafakaego* 'a good name is better than wealth' and *Ezinne* 'good mother'. Young girls are advised to be well behaved so that they would be marketable for marriage. They are also expected to be good mothers since mothers with good morals can pass such morals on to their children. Although the above names have positive qualities, they still portray women as subordinate to men.

5.8 Names denoting strength

Strength refers to the quality or state of being physically strong. Gender inequalities are visible in the names that denote physical strength. Men are described in terms of their physical prowess. These names are derived from metaphorical lexical items like wood, water, and animals. In this category, 11 (7%) names out of the 160 are gender neutral and only 1 (0.62%) is gender specific. All the names are given to men. The gender-specific name is *Nnabuenyi* 'father is an elephant'. The gender-neutral names are *Agu* 'lion', *Mmili* 'water', and *Oji* 'a large tree, strong with a thick central stem'. An elephant is a giant animal, very powerful, fearless, and has a good memory while a lion is a wild, strong animal, and very tactical when it is hunting. *Mmili* and *Oji* are indispensable because of their usefulness. Thus, men are seen in society as very useful. These positive images of men as elephants, lions, water, and trees give them power over women because women are regarded as weak, fearful, and incompetent (Letsholo, 2009). Women's qualities in terms of their bravery in battle or endurance during labour pains are not visible in the names they bear, even though they exert as much energy as men to attain success.

5.9 Personal names associated with deities/spirits

Deities or spirits refer to a divine being such as gods or goddesses (Ushe, 2017). The names that members of the Ibusa-Igbo community bear in this section are related to their religious values. The data show that all the 35 names in this category are gender neutral. From these, 25 (71.4%) are given

to males, while 10 (27%) have female recipients. The names ascribed to men are *Nwa̱obo̱sh*i 'child of *Oboshi* river', *Atakpo* 'name the particular river bears', and *Anyanwu* 'the eye of the sun'. The latter name refers to the sun god. *O̱bo̱shi,* for instance, is a river in Ibusa that is believed to be a female and mother of Ibusa. *Nwa* means 'child', which refers to both males and females. However, *Nwa* in this context refers to males only because of the importance of the river to its citizens. The prefix *Anya* in *Anyanwu* describes the panoptical nature of the sun. The rays portray it as all seeing, monitoring its subjects, and keeping them under constant purview. Associating the male child with this imagery of the sun implies that the male child is the ultimate purveyor and judge of other people's actions, thoughts, and feelings, a quality which reveals the domineering nature of men.

5.10 Names attributed to Igbo market days

Personal names attributed to Igbo market days cannot be left out in this analysis because of their significance in society, since market days form part of the Igbo calendar. According to Onukawa (2000), the Igbo calendar is made up of four market days which make a week, seven weeks make one month, and thirteen months make a year. The market days are *Afo̱, Nkwo̱, Olie* and *Eke*.

The data shows that out of the 160 names, 12 names (8%) are associated with market days. The names are both gender-specific and gender-neutral. From the 12 names, 8 (3%) are gender- specific and 4 (2.5%) are gender-neutral. The gender-specific names are derived from *Oko, Oke*, *Mgbo* and *Nwanyi* nominals in the Igbo language. *Oke/Okei* are related to males while *Mgbo̱/Nwanyi* are ascribed to females. Examples of names borne by males are *Okolie, Okafo̱r, Okonkwo̱* and *Okeke*. The names *Okolie, Okafo̱r, Okonkwo̱,* and *Okeke* mean 'male of *Olie, Afo̱r, Nkwo̱*' and *Eke*. The names mean male children born on those market days. Examples of female- specific names attached to market days are *Mgbo̱nkwo̱/Nwanyinkwo̱,Mgbo̱eke/ Nwanyieke*, *Mgbo̱-olie/Nwanyiolie, and Mgbo̱-afor/Nwanyi-afor*. The nominals *Mgbo̱* and *Nwanyi* refer to females. The names mean females born on those market days. There is gender equity in the gender-neutral names because both male and female names are associated with market days which depict that they are valued in society. This is so because both men and women work for their daily bread through farming and the sale of their products.

The data also shows that the gender-neutral names have sexist undertones because they have male recipients only. Examples of such names are. *Nwankwo̱ Nwa-afo̱*, *Nwaolie,* and *Nweke*. The names mean child of *Nkwo̱, Afo̱, Olie,* and *Eke* market days, respectively or a child born on those market days. Child '*nwa*' in this context refers to human male, which portrays sexism. Rapoo's (2002) study on Botswana personal names supports this view that males are considered as real humans while females are not.

5.11 Names denoting social significance

This category has only 8 (5%) out of the 160 names elicited that denote social

significance. Of this number, 6 (4.2%) generally articulate male features, while only 2 (1.25%) are given to females. Ascribing only two names to females conveys the message that females are insignificant in the society. One of the names which is gender-neutral given to both males and females is *Ugochukwutubem* 'God's anointed one' or 'God's grace upon my life'. *Ugo* 'eagle' is a symbol of purity, excellence, and strength. Assigning such names to both males and females shows gender equity. The name assigned to males only which reveals that they are more significant than females is *Ofodile* 'staff is efficacious'. Literally, *Ọfọ-* is a staff used in oath-making while *-dile* means efficacy. *Ofo* 'staff' is highly respected in Ibusa because it is a symbol of justice that reminds people to be just in their way of life, or otherwise face the consequences of their actions.

The name ascribed to women in this section disfavours them because the name is associated with mundane things. An example of such a name is *Nwaukponzu* 'a child of white chalk mound'. Morphologically, *Ukpo* in *Nwaukpounzu* means "heap." It can be a heap of white chalk, soil, or the traditional bed or chair made with a heap of soil. A female child born during the time of coronation of a red cap chief in the family is named *Nwaukpounzu*, whereas a male child born at this period is named *Nwanzeobi* meaning child of a chief. The suffixes *'ukpo* and *'nzu'* in *Nwaukpounzu* represent women as inferior because the objects are inanimate, whereas the suffixes *nwa*, *eze*, and *obi* in *Nwanezeobi* are animate and position men in a high position over women.

5.12 *Names classified as miscellaneous*

Names in this category refer to issues such as disputes, comfort, death, sorrow, and anger. The data shows that 14 (9%) from the 160 traditional names that fall under this category are gender neutral. From the data, 6 (4%) of them have male recipients while 8 (5%) are for females. This implies that both males and females experience the travails of life. Death, for instance, knows no status or financial standing. Thus, the names in this category strike a balance in the study of gender ideologies. Three of the 6 (4%) names reserved for males are related to death while 1 (0.62%) of the 8 (5%) is for females. An example of a name ascribed to males which refers to death is *Onwubiko* 'death, I implore you' and one that is borne by a female is *Onwuyali* 'death stop'. In this context, death is personified by the name giver because of its disastrous nature. Such names are given when there are recurrent deaths in the family. The name giver appeals to death to stop when there is the birth of a new-born child regardless of their gender.

6.   Attitudes of respondents towards traditional names

This section analyses data relating to the attitudes of the Ibusa people towards their traditional names. Since Ibusa traditional names, like other African names, are meaningful and often sexist, this section aims to examine how respondents consider the circumstances in which the names were given fair or unfair, and whether they would like to change or retain their names. An

examination of the data shows that the male and female respondents have both positive and negative attitudes towards their names, and the reasons for such attitudes are discussed in the following subsections.

6.1 Positive attitudes of respondents towards their names

Many respondents expressed positive attitudes towards their names. From the 160 Igbo traditional names, 146 (91.3%) received positive comments. The positive attitudes are based on the following reasons:

Table 2: Positive attitudes of respondents towards their names

No	Reasons for positive attitudes	Statistics
1	Meaningfulness	105 (72%)
2	Religious values	20 (13%)
3	Respect for ancestors	8 (6%)
4	Moral lessons	13 (9%)
Total	**4**	**146 (100%)**

African names are meaningful because they carry messages which may be related to the birth of a child, to the circumstances of the family at the time of birth, or may express religious values (Onumajuru, 2016; Luseko & Mtenga, 2020). In Table 2 above, 105 (72%) of the respondents like their names because of the meanings or circumstances surrounding their births. Examples of such names are *Onyemaechi* 'who knows tomorrow' or *Ogadinma* 'it shall be well'. *Onyemaechi* stated that he liked the name because his mother was oppressed and tormented by her in-laws for being barren. He was born after ten years of his parents' marriage. He loved the name because it proves to the oppressors that they do not have absolute power, God is the giver of life, and all power belongs to him.

Furthermore, respondents appreciated names which are associated with the people's value for life, cultural heritage, and the kingship system. Examples of names associated with value for life are *Ndukaku* 'life is more precious than wealth' and *Ndubuisi* 'life is precious'. For names classified under cultural heritage, respondents affirmed that they liked the names because they helped them to promote their culture and identity. Names classified under the kingship system, occupation, and market days illustrate this point. Examples are *Okeze* 'son of a king' and *Akpani* 'shield'.

Other names which respondents claimed are favourable are classified under religious values. The respondents asserted that they liked their names because they are used to glorify God for his kindness or to express the hopes or wishes of the name givers. Examples of the names are *Chukwuemeka* 'thank God' and *Onyinyechukwu* 'God's gift'. The names are also a means through which the name giver communicates with his/her God. Also, respondents appreciated names that are associated with moral values (13/160 or 9%). An example of such a name is *Agwa-bu-nma nwanyi* 'character is a woman's beauty'.

Finally, respondents also valued the names that are associated with ancestors. The names of the departed relatives are given to children to remind the family of the person's existence. Examples of such names are *Nosike* 'stand firm' and N*mokaogwu* 'spirits are more powerful than medicine'. According to the bearer of the name *Nosike,* he was named after the death of an illustrious son in the family. The name is a reminder of the virtuousness of the ancestor, that although he was gone, his spirit still lingers on.

6.2. *Negative attitudes of respondents towards their names*

In this section, 14 (8.75%) respondents out of 160 disliked their names. They commented that the names portrayed them in a negative light because their peers humiliated them because of the meanings of their names. Names which are related to religious conflict, hardship, gender bias, and emotional stress buttress this point. Table 3 below illustrates this.

Table 3: Negative attitudes of respondents towards their names

No	Reasons for negative attitudes	Statistics
1	Religious conflict	5 (35.8%)
2	Hardship	2 (14.3%)
3	Gender bias	3 (21.4%)
4	Emotional stress	4 (28,6%)
Total	**4**	**14 (100%)**

In relation to religious conflict, Table 3 illustrates that 5 (35.8%) out of 14 respondents disliked their names. This is because the respondents have embraced Christianity, but their names seem to conflict with their faith. The names portray them as idol worshippers, so their fellow Christians think that they are still indecisive about their faith. Examples of such names are *Atakpo* 'name of a river God' and *Abugeme* 'name of a God of protection' which are gods worshipped by a particular clan in Ibusa. The respondent who bore the name *Abugeme* stated that his dislike of his name was influenced by his belief that only the Supreme God has the power to protect or deliver people and not a fetish idol.

In addition to the category of hardship, 2 (14.3%) respondents claimed that they faced hardships in life which may be linked to their names. The names in this category, *Ipontu* 'dustbin' and *Ọkọchi* 'dry season' are both ascribed to males. The bearer of the name *Ipontu* claimed that he faced rejection and humiliation from his peers who addressed him as '*trash'* which is an equivalent of the name in English while the bearer of the name *Okochi* affirmed that he had challenges which he associated to his name because he was born when the family experienced poor harvest due to famine.

Another reason for certain names being criticised by the respondents were because they conveyed gender bias. From the table above, 3 (14.3%) names fall under this category. Examples are *Izunwanyibuizujiaka* 'the training of a female is tantamount to fracturing a hand' and *Nwanyibunwa* 'a

girl is also a child'. The name bearer *Nwanyibunwa* claimed that she disliked her name because she unconsciously behaved like a boy since her parents craved for a son. The name influenced her attitude because she felt obliged to compensate her parents by behaving in such a manner.

Furthermore, emotional stress is one of the reasons respondents complained about the negative effects of their names. In this study, 4 (28.6%) respondents claimed that the way their names were used by their peers was very offensive. The names were too long, therefore people clipped them, in that way, deriving different offensive meanings. Table 4 below illustrates this.

Table 4: Naming and attitudes

No	Name	Gender	Original meaning	'New name after clipping)	New meaning
1.	Onukwuteliobinjo	Male	Mouth brought anger to the heart	Njo and Obinjo	Njo (ugly) Obinjo (bitter heart or ugly heart)
2.	Iwediuno	Male	Anger resides at home	Iwe	Anger
3.	Onwuyali	Female	Death stop	Onwu	Death

In summary, this section has answered the third research question on the attitudes of the respondents to their names. The data show that the majority 146/160 (91.3%) of the respondents feel that their names portray them in a positive light while a negligible percentage, 8.75% (14/160), do not like their names because they portrayed them in a negative light.

7.   Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Ibusa traditional names are meaningful because they carry a wealth of information about the bearer. It has also established that although the names are meaningful, they reflect some underlying cultural stereotypes that associate certain names with a particular gender. The names that both males and females bear reflect the different roles they perform in the society and these roles have elements of male chauvinism. Male names are associated with power, authority, physical strength, Ibusa gods and goddesses, and objects of social significance. However, those of females are associated with objects that are less significant or those that objectify and limit women's participation in domestic spheres. In other words, these names with gender undertones legitimise men to exercise their power over women, leading to the subjugation of women.

On the attitude of the respondents towards their names, it was thought that a greater percentage of the respondents may reject their names because of the negative circumstances under which they were given or because they have sexist connotations. However, the data revealed that the 60 males (86%) of 70, and 84 females (93%) of 90, have positive attitudes towards their

names, while a negligible percentage of males (10%) out of 70 and 7% of 90 female respondents claimed that their names portrayed them in a negative light. This is because names which were thought to be negative were positive because of the context under which they were given.

The study concludes that although the Ibusa naming system is rooted in patriarchy which is biased, name givers need to change their perception or attitudes towards women during the naming process. This is because in the modern day Ibusa society, women also contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of the society as much as men. Therefore, their efforts should be equally recognised by giving them names that denote objects of social significance. Furthermore, the Ibusa kinship system should have lexical items that promote women's achievements, since currently, the language has only one position of authority, *Omu* 'palm frond or to give birth to something', which limits women to the roles of motherhood and objectifies them as domestic workers.

Works cited

Adesina, O. O. and Jegede, O. O. (2020). A feminist's critical discourse analysis of Buchi Emecheta's *The joy of motherhood. Papers in English and Linguistics*, 20 (3 & 4), 72-100.

Al Otoom, M. W. (2016). The second sex: an analytical study of Simone De Beauvoir's influence on Arab feminism. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 52 (1), 127-141.

Arua, E. A. (1992). Marital naming in Ohafia Igbo society. *Women and Language,* XV (2), 8-10.

Bagwasi, M. M. (2012). The influence of multilingualism, Christianity, and education in the formation of Bakalanga identity. *International Journal of English Linguistics,* 2(2),122-131.

Coates, J. (2013). *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender differences in Language*. London, UK: Routledge.

Einspahr, J. (2010). Structural domination and structural freedom: A feminist perspective. *Feminist Review,* No. 94, 1-19.

Letsholo, R. (2009). Patriarchy and aspects of the Ikalanga language. In A. Odebunmi, A.E Arua and S. Arimi (eds.) In *Language, gender and politics: A Festschrift for Yisa Kehinde Yusuf,* pp.151-162. Lagos, Nigeria: Concept publications.

Lusekelo, A. and Mtenga, V. (2020). Historicity of personal names in Tanzania: The case of the Names in the Rombo-Chagga community in Kilimanjaro. *International Journal of Modern Anthropology*, 2 (13), 100-121.

Mathangwane, J. T. and Gardener, S. F. (1998). Language attitudes as portrayed by the use of English and African Names in Botswana. *Nomina Africana: Journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa,* 12 (2),74-87.

Nwaefuna, F. A (2008). *A study of Ibusa names: Gender, meaning and attitude*. A Master's Thesis, University of Botswana.

Ọnukawa, M. C. (2000). The chi concept in Igbo gender naming. *Journal of the International African Institute,* 70 (1), 107-117.

Ọnukawa, M. C. (2007). An anthropolinguistics study of Igbo market day anthroponyms. Journal *of African Cultural Studies*, 11 (1), 73-82.

Onumajuru, V. C. (2016). A semantic and pragmatic analysis of Igbo names. *African Research Review: An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*, 10 (2), 307-324. Retrieved, February 5, 2021, from http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrrev.v10i2.21.

Ramaeba, G. N., Sebina, B. and Lopang W. (2020). Speaking double: A socio, phonological and semantic analysis of naming twins in Botswana. *Botswana Notes and Records*, 52, 42-55.

Rapoo, C. K. (2002). Naming practices and gender bias in the Setswana language. *Women and Language*, XXV (1), 41-43.

Sher, G. (2001). *Moral Philosophy: Selected Readings,* (2nd edition), Belmont. CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Spender, D. (2001). *Man Made Language.* London, UK: Pandora Publishers.

Tannen, B. (2007). *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York, USA: William Murrow.

Ushe, M. U. (2017). God, divinities, and ancestors in African traditional religious thought. In *IGWEBUIKE: AN African Journal of Arts & Humanities*, 3(4),154-179.

Van Han, N, (2014). The relationship between language and gender: A case study in Vietnamese. *Global Journal of interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 3 (3), 96-99.