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The Accusation of Elderly Women as Witches in Nigeria

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List of Acronyms

CEDAW   The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
FGN   Federal Government of Nigeria
HAI   HelpAge International
UN   United Nations
WILPF   Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The research draws on the feminist approach to witchcraft accusations and employs the concepts of power and intersectionality in exploring the causes of witchcraft accusations and persecutions and the social and economic effects on the lives of elderly women in the Otta community in Nigeria. Mostly elderly women with poor economic backgrounds and low social status in the community became the main targets of witch hunts and persecutions in the community.

From this, I have argued that poor socio-economic status of the women, their age, gender, coupled with the social and economic inequalities in the country and the study areas creates room for people to target and accused the elderly women as witches. In so doing the accusers blame the women for social happenings, hardships, and failures in the society. This situation tends to impact negatively on the social and economic lives of the elderly women and the progress of the country at large. The socio-economic effects on the women are seen in terms of long-term marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination of the women, psychological trauma, displacement of the women, as well as the loss of properties, loss of their means of income which is important for their livelihoods and retards economic progress and development.

Relevance to Development Studies

Witchcraft accusations and persecutions on elderly women affects the promotion of gender equality, fundamental human rights, and the empowerment of women. A wide range of studies have been carried out on issues relating to ensuring gender equality and fundamental human rights especially for women who are the most vulnerable in our societies especially in developing countries.

With this research, the use of the feminist approach to witchcraft accusations and the application of concepts such as power and intersectionality has helped to understand the different intersecting factors including age, gender, socio-economic status, power relations and how they come together to explain the accusations of elderly women as witches. This is important because it will contribute to the literature on gender equality, witchcraft accusations and the promotion of fundamental human rights especially in developing countries. Furthermore, the research is relevant for development studies in the sense that it will help programs and policies that are geared towards promoting and ensuring gender equality, women empowerment and the promotion of fundamental human rights. It will also contribute to ensuring development that is human centred which comes within the sustainable development goals.

Keywords

Witchcraft, Women, Power Relations, Intersectionality, Gender, Social Status, Economic Effects, Social Effects, Otta Community, Nigeria.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1   The Accusation of Elderly Women as Witches in Nigeria

This paper examines the social and economic effects of witchcraft accusations on elderly women in the Otta community in Nigeria. In doing this, the paper explores on the multiple intersectional factors that facilitate and exacerbate the accusation of the women and how they negotiate and live in the course of the accusations.

The paper argues that the social and economic inequalities and the hardships in the Nigerian society, coupled with the multiple intersecting factors of gender, age, power, class, social status, poverty etc makes the women vulnerable to the accusations. This together with the cultural norms that makes the women less powerful in the community, position them in a situation that makes them targets of witchcraft accusations; and this in turn creates a number of social and economic effects on the women and the development of the society at large.

1.2   Contextual Background

Belief in witchcraft and the existence of witches has existed in Nigeria and the African continent at large and continues to persist. It is often viewed in most cases as the bases for most social happenings and misfortunes including accidents, sudden death of children and other people, outbreak of diseases and epidemics and the like (Liepe 2016; Chilimampunga 2011). In Nigeria, in most instances is the elderly women in communities and not the men who are accused and persecuted as witches and blamed for misfortunes in the community (Chilimampunga and Thindwa 2011). Women who are often accused as witches are put through abuses including beating, torture, hackling, ridiculing and even sometimes stoned to death (Liepe 2016, Sambe, Yander and Abanyam 2014).

Most accusers of such women have a believe that attacks on these women is a way to relieve them of their problems and the misfortunes that they experience in society and therefore see it necessary to exert and inflict pain both physically and emotionally on the accused women (Chilimampunga and Thindwa 2011; Liepe 2016). Over hundreds of elderly women as noted by the HelpAge International (HAI) were accused of witchcraft and killed with others banished from the community in Burkina Faso (HelpAge International 2010). Some

of these women escaped and looked for refuge in the urban centres and subsequently became beggars and destitute on the streets (HelpAge International 2010).

Also, in recent times an elderly woman accused of witchcraft with the help of a traditional native doctor was convicted by a court in Cameroon (Harrop 2012). In addition, within the Northern part of Ghana over thousand women accused of being witches have been banished from the society and kept in witch-camps to prevent them from having contact in the wider society (Adinkrah 2014; Igbe 2011). Last but not the least, Robert Mugabe during his term of administration dismissed Mrs Mujoro, accusing her as a witch who wanted to kill him (Africa Review 4th December 2014). All this evidence shows the belief, prevalence, accusations and persecutions of women as witches on the African continent.

Nigeria as a country and the Otta community under this study faces the problem of witchcraft accusation and persecution of elderly women as witches. The Otta community is located within the Ogun State in Nigeria with an estimated population of about 163,783 (FGN 2019). Otta also stand as the capital of the Ado-Odo local government area. The community since the late 1990s has remained one of the largest areas with lots of industries and producing enterprises in Nigeria and possess a large market area within the Ado-Odo local government area (Thabiti Willis 2017). Most of the inhabitants in the community are engaged in small-scale farming and trading of agricultural produce and groceries.

The accusation and persecution of women as witches in Nigeria has existed in the past but have become much rampant in recent times. Growing up in the early 2000s, I realize that older women in communities especially those in their late fifty years and above were accused as the causes of misfortunes in the community. With my stay in the Otta community, I realized that the sudden death of a child was mostly blamed on poor elderly women in the family and not the men. Also, lack of employment for the youth and financial hardships were often blamed on these women. In addition, what I noticed during my stay in the Otta community was that, with the death of man, the family members with the aim to take over the properties of the man tend to accuse the widow as a witch and the cause of the death. Brothers in laws of the widow who also show interest in marrying the widow, also in most cases join in to abuse and accuse the widow because the widow had refused their proposal of marriage. This to an extent explains that the accusations on the side of the family of the deceased man may not necessary be because the widow is a witch; but a show of power in order to take her possessions and properties from her. With this, I do not mean to say that the elderly women are witches, but a lack of power and their socio-economic status makes them vulnerable to

the accusations. Also, looking back into history, it could be seen that the impacts of colonialism and its religious doctrines mainly in the form of Christianity and also Islam that was introduced by the colonial administration have to an extent had influence on the accusation and the persecution of women as witches (Ally 2013; Adegoke 2010).

With the coming in of colonialism and the introduction of Christianity as the religion to follow, most of the traditional, cultural norms and practices of the people were looked down considering practices such as, libation pouring to the local gods, etc as outmoded (Eboiyehi 2017; Adegoke 2010; Igbe 2010). This has led the new generation to view such practices as outmoded and therefore see people who practice such acts as possessing evil spirits and charms and having the potential to harm people in their community and families (Adinkrah 2013; 2004; Adegoke 2010). It has also led to intolerance of local traditions and customs within communities across the country.

There is a belief in Nigerian communities that witches are able to change into animals including birds, dogs, insects etc and harm innocent individuals within their families and beyond during the night (Machangu 2015; Secker 2012). Witches in addition are accused of causing disasters and other misfortunes including flooding, drought, and deaths of children (Secker 2012). This to some extent retards socio-economic and political development as no scientific or factual evidence are given to prove that the so-called witches are the cause of such happenings.

The accusations and persecutions of elderly women as witches places them in a disadvantage position and exerts serious consequences and effects on their entire socio-economic life and human development. Some of the effects could be psychological and emotional stress, deprivation and limitation of access to social and economic services, loss of their property, limitation in taken part in social, economic and political activities in the larger society, fear of engagement in social activities (Liepe 2016; Chilimampunga and Thindwa 2011).

Furthermore, it puts the accused women in shame, ridicule within the community, disrespect for the women and their children and overall infringement of their fundamental human rights and freedoms (Secker 2012). In addition, it creates conflicts and unhealthy relations among family members and members of a community which does not usher well for social cohesion and development (Adinkrah and Adhikari 2014; Action Aid 2013; Muchangu 2015).

It should be noted however that the believe in witchcraft and its existence is not only common to Nigeria and other African countries, but also exist in the developed world, including Europe, America and other parts of the World (Liepe 2016). Studies by scholars such

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as Liepe 2016 and Evans Pritchard 1937 have showed evidence of the belief and existence of witchcraft in the developed world including Europe and America (Liepe 2016; Stewart and Strathern 2004; Evans Pritchard 1937). Nonetheless, the belief in and accusation of witches has decreased massively in the developed world but has been prevalent in the African continent. This to some extent confirms why Philip Altson in explaining the agony of the witch in the report to the Council on Human Rights of the United Nations stated that, in some parts of the world, particularly in Africa, when one is accused as a witch it is almost equal to receiving a death sentence (HelpAge International 2010).

1.3   Problem Statement

Witchcraft accusations, allegation, and persecutions particularly among women has existed for a longer time in Nigeria and other African countries (Eboiyehi 2017: 247; 2013). Friday Eboiyehi has noted in his research that the practice continues to exist in Nigeria and in turn poses numerous consequences and effects on the socio-economic lives of the women accused of witchcraft (Eboiyehi 2017:248). In most cases, women who are elderly are been accused as witches within communities and treated badly by their accusers and other people in the communities (Eboiyehi 2017: 248; MacDougall 2011). Girls are also accused of witchcraft in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. However, the focus of this research is on elderly women who are accused as witches. The accusations and persecution of women have been rampant in Nigeria and the Otta community in the last two decades. This makes its very difficult to achieve the declaration by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on the prevention of all forms of violence against women. Also, forms of torture and kinds of inhuman treatments against women in the country affects and infringes on their fundamental human rights. This goes a long way to impact negatively on the lives of the women. Notwithstanding the fact that much research has been carried out on the accusation of women as witches in Nigeria, this paper attempts to add to the literature by considering the specific case of the Otta community. With this paper therefore, I aim to contribute to the literature and fill the gap on how the women handle the accusations and the social and economic effects that the women experience.

The accusations to a larger extent affect the rights of the women in question (MacDougall 2011). It further comes as an obstacle to the promotion of gender equality. Despite the declaration of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1993 regarding the protection of rights of women within Africa and the world at large, and the elimination of any form and

aspects of gender abuse and violence, many women mostly elderly women go through forms of accusation as witches (Eboiyehi 2017: 247-248). Also, despite the ratification of CEDAW in Nigeria, women still go through various forms of abuse which affects their fundamental human rights as citizens (WILPF 2017).

1.4 Justification and relevance of this research

The research paper is important for development studies and the promotion of inclusive development at large. In Nigeria and in the wider African society, many women are deprived of their fundamental human rights. Growing up as girls, females in parts of Africa are infringed on their rights with outmoded cultural practices including female genital mutilation meted on them (The Independence 2009). As women, they are faced with violations such as accusations and persecutions as witches with some beaten, tortured and made to go through serious threats of emotional trauma and physical abuse (The Independence 2009). Several factors that encompasses socio-economic status in society, age, gender, social positioning in the community, poverty and the like are some of the characteristics that come to explain the combined notions by the accusers who accused elderly women as witches in the society.

As such, the research is relevant in that, it aims at exploring the effects that such accusations and persecutions have on the social and economic lives of the accused women and their entire human development. It is also important because the accusations and persecutions on these women infringes upon their basic human rights and freedoms.

The paper will also help when implementing policies and programs to promote gender equality, the rights of women and their freedom as citizens. The paper therefore contributes to the existing literature on witchcraft accusations and persecution on women in Africa and also the need for government to make substantial efforts at ensuring policy measures at controlling the problem and facilitating equal rights and freedoms for all, especially for women who are the most vulnerable in society.

1.5 Research objectives and questions

1.5.1 Research Objectives

With this research paper, I aim to examine how elderly women accused as witches handle the accusations and what is done about it and the social and economic effects that the women

accused experience. This helps in examining how the accusations impacts on the lives of the women with regards to their inclusion in society, as well as their growth and development in the society in relation to social and power relations within the society at large. The research will further help to explore some of the multiple factors that come as reasons for the accusers to accuse these women as witches and violations that are meted on the women.

1.5. 2 Main question

How do elderly women negotiate witchcraft accusations in Nigeria?

1.5.3 Sub questions

1. Why are predominantly elderly women accused?
2. What are the factors behind the accusation of the women?
3. How do witchcraft accusations affect elderly women in Nigeria?
4. What impacts do these accusations have on the women's social and economic situation?

1.6 Methodology and Methods

In this research, I use a qualitative research methodology. With this, I employ qualitative research interviews, which in this case is the use of semi-structured interview with the selected women from the Otta community. Qualitative research interview aims at providing a description, analysis and meanings of key themes within the settings and situations of the subjects concerned (O' Leary 2017; Kvale, 1996). Within this, qualitative research interviews may in turn uncover the meaning as well as the factual dynamics, notwithstanding the point that it might be more challenging in conducting interviews with regards to the level of the meaning (O' Leary 2017).

Qualitative interviews come with the objective of exploring the explanations, meanings, and reasons that explains the experiences and actions of participants for a research. In this sense, conducting of in-depth semi structured interviews on the experiences and behaviours of the women will help in understanding the diverse complexities that encompasses their actions, way of life and how they negotiate their situation of being accused as witches.

1.6.1 Plan for the Interviews

Considering the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic in the study area, it was not favourable for me in conducting a field research and have a one-on-one face to face interviews with the selected research participants. In view of this, I carried out telephone/skype interviews with the research participants. Telephone interviews may come with several challenges especially for a research topic of this sensitive nature. A major challenge that could affect telephone interviews is the building of trust. The trust that come between the subjects and the interviewee is important for obtaining comprehensive information on a sensitive topic. (Chang and Krosnick 2009; Becker, Sims and Schoss 2003).

It is also significant for getting responses that are in-depth from the interviewees. Lack of trust in conducting the interviews could affect the quality and completeness of the information needed. In view of this, I tried my possible best to explain to the participants the nature and the importance of the research and the impacts that it could have on their lives and the entire society.

Despite the difficulty in terms of building trust, telephone/skype interviews on such a topic could be significant for ensuring a high level of anonymity (Block and Erskine 2012). For instance, with sensitive questions been asked, the interviewees are able to save their faces. However, this point is not meant to be misinterpreted with the building of trust, in view of the fact that, the establishment of long-term contacts with the interviewees could be difficult on the telephone (Schweiter and Duxbury 2006). The high level of anonymity may in a way provide space for discussing sensitive issues and could provide more positive interaction with the interviewees.

Furthermore, the emotional distance together with the characteristics of the interviewer could influence the responses and the information gathered using telephone/skype interviews (Block and Erskine 2012). With regards to this, I make critical attempts at remaining neutral in the interview and not to misinterpret and manipulate the reactions and responses of the women. With regards to how I contacted the women for the telephone interviews, I had through my previous stay and contacts in the Otta community and with the help of my brother who is a teacher and lives in the Otta community identified and made links with the women that were interviewed. These women were purposively selected for the interview. The women are people who have been in one way or the other accused as witches in the community and faced several threats of persecution. With this, I scheduled telephone

interviews based on the convenience of the women for each of them. Different time schedules were arranged with the participants for the interviews in line with their time and convenience.

In carrying out the interviews, the ethical guide and procedures for undertaking research interviews via telephone/skype was followed in respecting the rights of the participants and ensuring their anonymity. With this, the purpose and significance of the research and interviews were substantially explained to the participants, in order for them to understand the rationale behind the research and the need for having phone interviews with them due to the Covid-19 situation. Also, they were allowed to willingly decide whether to be part of the interviews and their right to quit from the interviews if they decide to. The names of the women were also not used in the research to allow for their anonymity. Lastly, the data and information taken from the women on their experiences on witchcraft accusation was coded, transcribed, and analysed in the analysis section of the paper (see Chapter 4).

1.7 Chapter Outline

The paper is structured into five chapters. Chapter one looks at the introduction. This comprises of the contextual background, the state of belief in witchcraft and witchcraft accusation in Nigeria. It also looks at the research problem statement, justification of the research, objectives, and research questions. It concludes with how the research paper is structured.

Chapter two examines the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings and the research methodology and methods employed. The chapter also examines the ethical considerations, positionality and limitations of the research. Chapter three reviews relevant literature on the history of witchcraft globally and nationally. It also examines historical overview on the impacts of colonialism on witchcraft accusations and the contemporary view on witchcraft. It further looks at globalization and witchcraft accusations. The fourth chapter looks at the analysis and presentations of the research findings. This considers the underlying intersectional factors that exacerbate the accusations and how the women negotiate the accusations and the different forms of accusations, as well as the social and economic effects of the accusations on the lives of the women and the society. The fifth chapter considers the conclusions, summary of the research findings and some policy recommendations.

Chapter 2

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework for Analysis

2.1 Introduction

This part of the paper looks at the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research. This examines the conceptual explanations namely, power relations and intersectionality. It also looks at the theoretical explanations of the paper which is the feminist perspective on witchcraft accusation.

2.2 Conceptual Explanations

2.2.1 Power relations

Power encompasses a situation where an actor or group in a social relation is able to exert their will on another person notwithstanding the resistance that may come in (Berger 2005). Within the societal landscape, institutions as well as social relations may entail the use and the expression of power to an extent. The behaviours and attitudes of individuals and groups within society is in a way dependent on their level of strengths and their weaknesses in terms of the power that they may possess (Berger 2005).

In considering the traditional foci of power it could be emphasized that the notion of power comes as a central idea that is possessed by individuals, as well as groups. Power may also be coercive and suppressive in nature and in turn employ a top-down structure. Foucault, who is noted for his work on power argues that the notion of power, should be seen as distinct from the system and structures of law, class, and the state (Foucault 1990). This is emphasized by Foucault within the sense that, the traditional foci of power give less attention to the dynamics on the relations of power that is manifested in the micro-societal scope, which facilitates the coercive centralization of structures and systems of power (Foucault 1990).

In view of this, the notion of power is viewed by Foucault as not necessarily possessed but instead being exercised. Within this, the exercise of power encompasses the power relations and not necessarily the related subjects in question (Berger 2005; Foucault 1990). In this sense, power comes not just as a coercive structure but entails a productive element. The position of the women within the society coupled with the societal power structure places the women in a way that may render them less powerful compared to the men (Adinkrah 2004). Power relations therefore becomes an important lens and point of explanation that is

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essential for this research. This opens-up space for making analysis on the accusation of the elderly women and the social and economic impacts that the accusations have on them along the manifold factors that come to play to influence the accusation.

The structure of a top-down system of power indicates the extent to which relations of power within the micro-societal scope come to facilitate and exacerbate forms of suppression, control, and coercion (Foucault 1990: 10). This may be experienced on the level of the global, as well as national and local levels. It is further seen within patriarchal relations, relations of gender, age relations and class (Foucault 1990: 10-11). As such, with this research, drawing the concerns of power relations together with the notion of intersectionality helps in exploring and examining the multidimensional factors including gender, age, class, social status, etc that may explain the accusation of women.

The conceptualization of power as expressed by Foucault comes as significant for unravelling the dynamics of factors that underpins the accusation of women as witches and the actors who are engaged in the accusations. It further throws light on the significance and trend of the relations that are manifested within people who are seen as having a decumbent and crouched power compared with the actors with a higher power, in terms of the accusation of witchcraft.

Last but not the least, the notion of power here draws an intersection with the multifaceted dynamics and factors including age, class, gender, social status and poverty that influences the relations of power within society and determines and exacerbate the problem of accusing women. In the next sub-section, I look at the notion of intersectionality.

2.2.2 Forms of Power

Different forms of power can be identified within a social relation. Among this, four categories of power are identified here namely, power over, power to, power within and power with. To begin with, power over explains that power comes as a finite resource and that some people possess it whiles other do not (Berger 2005: 9). Within this, individuals or groups are able through force to exert their will on others, take control over them and dominate them, through the use of force. Therefore, they are able to have power over those who do not have such power regardless of the resistance that may come (ibid). However, it should be noted that the other forms of power maintain that power is not something which is static or finite but may change over time and space (Starhawk 1990).

The next type of power which is power to has to do with the productive capacity of power, as well as the actions and possibilities which can be manifested by not necessarily employing force or domination (Mathie et al., 2017: 57). This comes as a power to create something new and different in terms of bringing new idea or ensuring the achievement of set objectives.

Power with on other hand, looks at a form of power that is built on coordination and collaborations within social relationships (Berger 2005: 9). It therefore entails a shared power that is created within mutual agreement, solidarity and respect for one another in a social system. Power with helps to bring together groups, individuals, families etc in a social relation and not based on domination or control, through the use of force (Hunjan and Koephilavon 2010).

Lastly power within entails the capacity that people have over their sense of self and their abilities as well as knowledge (VeneKlasen and Miller 2007). This considers the respect for others and the need to identify differences that individuals or groups may have. With this, individuals are able to identify power with and the power to that they may have in ensuring improvement in their lives and making a positive change (Mathie et al., 2017; VeneKlasen and Miller 2007).

From the discussions on the forms of power above, it could be seen that the kind of power that is expressed in the accusation of the women as witches is power over. This to an extent can be explained in the sense that, considering the low socio-economic status of the women, their age, gender etc that makes them less powerful compared to their accusers who may be more powerful than them, and employ the use of force in targeting and accusing the women. In ensuring development therefore, it is important to embrace power within, power to and power with and not capitalizing and using power over to dominate other people.

2.3 Intersectionality

The conception of intersectionality was introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw referred to intersectionality as encompassing the interconnectedness of multiple factors including class, race, age, gender, as well as the diversified structure of experiences that is manifested within and amongst white and black women (Crenshaw 1989). The term came to be explained by the dynamics through which multiple factors such as class, gender, age, ethnicity, social-status and other categories come to interact in influencing how individuals and

certain groups of people are discriminated against. Winker and Degele (2011) have argued that, the notion of intersectionality brings to the point that diverse facets and factors including age, gender, class, sexuality and social status entails an interconnectedness and reinforces one another making each of the categories either more rigorous or fragile.

Furthermore, intersectionality is seen to encapsulate concern for considering and taken into significant focus, the relevance of embracing varying dynamics of suppression and coercion. It also considers the ways through which diverse categories of socio-political factors interact to create social relations and structures of power relations (Collins and Bilge 2016; Anthias 2013). This to an extent draws the attention that, a single category or factor should not necessarily be seen and treated as the means for analysing and interpreting relations that leads to and exacerbates discrimination of individuals, as well as groups within society (Collins and Bilge 2016). In this case, it could be emphasized that, a single factor should not be simply taken as the rationale for the accusation of women. This suggests that gender as a single category should not be basically considered as the sole factor behind the accusation of elderly women as witches, but the need to look into and examine multiple dynamics that interact within an interrelated trend to determine how women are discriminated and accused as witches.

In a similar explanation, Fabrizio has noted that the conceptualization of intersectionality encapsulates a diversified approach for its analysis (Fabrizio 2007). With this, the intersectional discourse is seen to envelop a variegated system of analysis. This variegated system encircles the structural, institutional, individual, and interactional trends of analysis (Fabrizio 2007). In such a situation, the individual come to be placed within manifold of factors and situations that position them in structural, cultural, as well as institutional contexts. As such, employing intersectionality as a point of analysis and lens for examining accusations of women is significant. This helps in explaining the multiple and diversified factors that are interlinked in determining and exacerbating women's accusation and not just the gender and power relations aspect of it. It in addition helps in examining the multiple social and economic effects in view of the intersectional factors that influences accusation of women. This also helps in analysing how different elements interact and intersect to influence women's accusations among other significant factors including gender and power relations within the society.

Also, within feminist theorization, the notion of intersectionality taken gender into consideration is viewed and explained as entailing a structure of power relations, which come to

be encircled by cross-dimensional social categories (Samuels and RossSheriff 2008). Therefore, the need comes to recognize and identify the difference that may manifest between different women at different times and across spaces (Samuels and RossSheriff 2008). The differences may be realized within varying categories such as gender, class, age, race, ethnicity, and social status. Within the societal setting therefore, a trend of variegated factors explains socio-economic occurrences and structures in society (Shields 2008: 303-4).

Additionally, the relevance of intersectionality as a point of analysis within social relations and power structures articulates on the significance of disregarding the homogeneity that women are placed, as well as considering women's race and gender as structural facets and not necessarily features of individuals (Collins and Bilge 2016). Also, the importance of attaching recognition for varying systems through which socio-economic inequalities and discriminatory behaviours are created and shaped comes as a key concern for the intersectional analysis.

This helps in identifying the interrelation of manifold and diversified categories of socio-political relations, the agency of people and the essence of teasing out and understanding dynamics of the interconnectedness of different forms of inequalities that come to be meted on women. It also gives attention to the existence and concerns for looking into specific contextual analysis, local analysis of intersectional categories and the particular historical backgrounds, explanations and analysis within different social settings and their related social relations and power structures (Collins and Bilge 2016).

The intersectional underpinning employed for the research therefore facilitates the comprehension of variegated categories that are drawn within the accusation of women, and not simply placed on a one-handed scope of category that determines and shapes the problem. Further to this, it helps in unleashing the variable and multiplicity of social and economic effects that the accusations have on the women.

In this case, gender is emphasized as interpreted alongside equally significant dynamics of social and economic elements that reiterates and underpins the coercive tendencies and suppressions that come to play (Fabrizio 2007). The interrelated dynamics of gender, and other interwoven categories including poverty, socio-economic factors, age, class, and social status creates varying experiences for diverse individuals and groups of women within the societal landscape.

In considering the accusation of women, it could be emphasized that men may also be accused as wizards, however, the position that is relatively occupied by men, vis a vis women

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in the wider society places the men in a more leverage and convenient point, when it comes to their accusation.

More importantly amongst women, the manifold socio-economic factors and their social status within society may place some women at a more leverage condition in defending themselves when accused. This draws the attention that employment of intersectionality as conceptual lens for the research, provides grounds for unravelling relevance of diverse social and economic factors, alongside elements of social relations and power dynamics that leads to experiences differently between men and women, as well as between women themselves.

Last but not the least, employment of the notions of power and intersectionality for the research becomes significant for explaining social relations of power, social and economic facets and categories of age, poverty and social status within society and how this influences and creates spaces for accusation and suppression of women as witches. It should however be emphasized that, the notions of power and intersectionality used here may in a way depict their own shortfalls, with regards to its employment in the analysis of the accusation of women as witches. This is because the notions may exhibit and display aspects and prospects that are oppositional and modernist in nature. In view of this, the notions are critically employed in drawing ideas and making analysis on the study.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Feminist Perspectives

Feminist approach comes with the promotion of gender equality and the need for gender-sensitiveness in all dimensions of the societal landscape. A feminist lens on witchcraft accusations explains the threat of a gendered relation which is facilitated within powered ideologies which are in many cases patriarchal, as well as shaped by diverse contextual factors such as sexuality, age, gender, class, social status etc that are seen to influence women's accusation and persecution as witches (Rosen 2017; Secker 2012; Adinkrah 2004). This in a way leads to the abuse of women and violence against them which establishes maundering view and motive of gender order that is manifested within a way that characterizes men as more dominant and productive with a characterization of women as mere subjects to the power relation (Ally 2013: 45; Briggs 2002).

With this, religious and socio-cultural beliefs become embedded within the established patriarchal ideologies that puts men within a position that is seen to be superior than that of the women. Implications that come with this kind of positioning creates a situation of power

relations which makes up a structure that becomes hard for women to escape from (Secker 2012; Adinkrah 2004). Within a situation where the belief in witchcraft takes wave, the occurrence of adversities and misfortunes becomes reckoned to a being which is powerful, the witch (Secker 2012).

In most cases women are more often than not accused of witchcraft and the reckoning of this tends to be incited by fear of the supposed dangers that witches may be capable of causing to people and society at large (Baruah and Thakur 2019; Rosen 2017; Sagrista 2015). In view of this and the closed space that is created, witches are labelled and characterised as having the potential to negatively cause calamities and create numerous societal problems. In some instances, women who are seen to be powerful in society and who make attempts at contravening socio-cultural, ideological and religious norms and traditions within the society that determine gender roles face the challenge of being placed in a marginalized arena (Baruah and Thakur 2019; Briggs 2002). This may stem from the point that the women may be skilful, take up roles which, are considered to be men's roles.

Within such a situation, the women are seen to be strange and as a result, their strangeness is explained in a way of accusing them as witches. With the accusation of women, their labelling in society is projected which creates room for such women to be feared with a belief that they could cause problems for people (Rosen 2017; Adinkrah 2004). According to Ally (2013), with such fear created within the society, people then see the women as possessing the ability to cause biological, physical, as well as psychological harm within the society for people.

From a feminist explanation therefore, the witchcraft accusations may result in the first place, an attempt of creating a gendered relation with men taken up power positions within numerous spheres in the wider social, economic, political and cultural landscape of the society and the women subordinated within such a structure (Baruah and Thakur 2019; Ally 2013). Additionally, attempt to bring down the supposed adversities and misfortunes which are believed to be caused by the witches, they may be prosecuted and banished from society by the accusers (Ally 2013; Crawford and Unger 2000). This conveys a message with regards to the gender order and how it operates within the societal structure. Furthermore, within feminist theorization of witchcraft accusations, Crawford and Unger (2000) have noted that it becomes necessary to factor into the analysis of gender relations and gendered violence, variables including class, age, sexuality, and race. In view of the ideological influences which pertains in most societies including African societies of which Nigeria is no exception,

gendered relations are affected and influenced within patriarchal notions of male dominance and this affect the decisions of women. The gendered relation created in this sense may perpetuate the continuous struggle for power within a situation in which men constantly make attempts at reinforcing their dominance over the female counterparts in the society (Rosen 2017; Briggs 2002). It should also be emphasized here that research have also

shown that the violence on the part of men on women, may also come as an expression which is done overtly by men to continuously hold their dominance over women (Boonzaier and De la Rey 2003; Adinkrah 2004). From this, it could be noted that, the accusation of women as witches may underpin dynamics of power within a way which is persistent with a specific social, political, and economic context.

2.5 Conclusion

The chapter has looked at the conceptual definitions and theoretical framework of the paper. This has considered the conceptualization of power and intersectionality and their relations with the accusation of elderly women as witches. It has also examined the feminist perspective on witchcraft accusations. From the discussions, it has been seen that multiple intersectional factors such as the age of the women, gender, class, power interact to explain the accusation of elderly women. The low socio-economic status coupled with the societal norms that makes the women less powerful compared to men, makes them vulnerable and become targets of witch-hunts and accusations.

Chapter 3

Witch Accusations: Origins and History

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores on the history and origins of witchcraft and its accusations. With this, the chapter examines the history of witchcraft accusations on a global scale, and nationally in the context of Nigeria and the Otta community. The chapter further examines the impacts of colonialism on witchcraft accusations as well as the contemporary view on witchcraft. Finally, the chapter looks at globalization and witchcraft accusations.

3.2 The Origins of Witchcraft Accusations.

Hutton (2006: 211) has defined a witch as a person who possesses some form of magical and supernatural powers that can be employed in hurting or inflicting injuries and misfortunes on other people within their communities and beyond. The supposed witches may cause misfortunes mostly to their families, communities, neighbours etc and not necessarily on strangers (Hutton 2006: 211-213). Thus, the supposed witches are characterized as being potential threats to society and could cause a wide range of misfortunes to their communities. Additionally, witches are also attributed with healing powers by some token; that is the magical spells such as the lotions, potions etc that can be used to harm people can also be used for healing (Hutton 2006).

Reflecting and revisiting the history and origins of witchcraft and its accusations in the world, it could be dated back to the early times. Witches in the early times were seen to be characterized as humans who engaged in the practice of witchcraft with the use of spirit invocations, the use of magical spells and other mysterious ways of solving problems or providing help to others (Wallenfeldt 2020: Mencej 2015).

Most of the witches were seen to be engaging in an exercise that was linked to the devil and not for the benefit of humans or the society at large (Wallenfeldt 2020). Nevertheless, it should be noted that many of the witches performed a very important role as natural healers in the early times. A clear example as sated earlier on in the introductory chapters is 'The Wise Women' in the early times in Europe and other parts of the world who performed significant roles as natural healers, but whose career choice were not understood by many

people in the society and as such were accused as witches who were possessed by evil spirits (Adinkrah and Adhikari 2014; Ally 2013).

Although the exact historical origins of witches and the practice of witchcraft is to an extent vague, several traces in history can be linked to show the origins and history of witch-craft. For instance, in the Holy Bible, specifically in Samuel chapter 1, which was published within 931 BC and 721 BC, we are told of King Saul's visit to a sorcerer (witch) in the city of Endor to inquire about the faith of the Israelites by summoning the spirit of Samuel, the prophet in their war against the Philistines during the time. From the Bible story, it was realized that the so-called witch summoned the spirit of Samuel, the prophet prophesying about their defeat in the battle and the death of King Saul and the son's as well.

Furthermore, a look into the 'Malleus Maleficarum' reveals much into the origins of witchcraft and witch accusations. The 'Malleaus Maleficarum' (Hammer of Witches) came as a treatise that was written by Heinrich Krammer, who was a catholic clergyman and James Sprenger (Durrant 2008). The piece was published in the year 1486 in Speyer, Germany. It provided support for the accusation and prosecution of the so-called witches and as such established a comprehensive system for identifying and prosecuting witches in secular courts (Durrant 2008).

Within the periods of 1500 to 1600 many people- mostly women were suspected of being witches and were accused, prosecuted and put to death in Europe (Durrant 2008; Broedel 2003). About 80,000 people who were identified as witches were killed in Europe during this time. Among the greatest numbers of witchcraft accusations and persecutions were found in Germany, with other countries such as Ireland having the least of the numbers (Mackay 2009; Guiley 2008). One other point that is worthy of note here is that women represented the greater numbers of about 80% of people accused as witches during the time (Summers 2012; Mackay 2009). This to an extent goes to explain the origins of witchcraft accusations and the extent to which women have been marginalized and prosecuted as witches in the early times and continues till date.

The 'Malleus Malleficarum' suggested and employed many inhuman mechanisms and strategies in identifying and persecuting people, especially women as witches (Durrant 2008). Strategies including torture and deceptions were employed within the 'Malleus', naming and accusing people as witches. With regards to torture, the accused witches were in certain cases made to go through the pain of torture and beating (Durrant 2008). This was done with the view of making the person concern to confess to the accusation against him or her as a witch. In a situation where an accused after going through torture does not confess of being a witch,

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the torturing is continued on a specified day hoping that the person confesses to the jury. In other circumstances, the strategy of deception is employed by the accusers together with the jury who are deciding on the case of the accused (Mackay 2009). The accused persons are sometimes convinced of not liable to a death penalty if they confess willingly the truth of being a witch to the jury. However, all these as noted by Ankarloo and Clark (2002) are strategies that were employed to make the accused witches to confess to the claim of been witches and causing injuries and misfortunes. They were guilty until 'proven' (Ankarloo and Clark 2002).

Ankarloo and Clark (2002: 240) have argued that, the 'Malleus Malleficarum' was written by Kramer and Sprenger to express their own views on how they viewed witchcraft and to discrete people who made critical arguments with regards to the reality of witchcraft. They further argued that, the book was written to win the support of secular courts to accept the existence of witchcraft and its practice in the society. German courts were persuaded to go along with the propositions of Kramer and Sprenger on how to identify and prosecute witches (Ankarloo and Clark 2002: 241). Kramer and Sprenger also claimed that the practice of witchcraft was mostly seen among women than men (Ankarloo and Clark 2002: 240-241). In some countries, witch trials continued for hundreds of years, including under the Protestant churches (Scotland) (Linder 2005). Elsewhere as in Holland, they ended by the late 1600s (Linder 2005).

Another important area in history that can be revisited and examined within the origins of witchcraft accusations can be seen in the 'Salem Witch Trials' in the New World (Schiff 2015). With a fall in the numbers of witch accusations, trials and persecutions in Europe, the situation was beginning to take shape in the New World with a quite large numbers of witch trails (Schiff 2015; Blumberg 2007). In the colonial city of Massachusetts in the periods of 1692 to 1693 massive trials of witches took place which became known as the "Salem Witch Trials" (Schiff 2015). Within this, about two hundred individuals were identified, accused and prosecuted as witches who were practicing and using the magic and spirits of the devil in causing harms and misfortunes to people in the society (Blumberg 2007). Out of this, twenty of the accused witches were killed by the accusers. After all these accusations, persecutions and the killings of the supposed witches, the colonial administration at the time came out to confirm that the accusations and killings of the women were wrongly done and that the families of the people concerned deserved to be compensated (Blumberg 2007). Despite this pronouncement and the compensations that were offered to the families of the accused witches, the inhuman and unfair trials against the people and killings of the supposed witches

with most of them being women have remained serious insanity, delusions and injustices which have continued to delude ingenuities over many centuries (Schiff 2015).

It could be emphasized that, for many years ago numerous religions particularly the Christian and Islamic religions maintained a very deep belief that, there were individuals within societies who possessed evil spirits that they could use it to harm people and cause destructions in society (Adinkrah 2004). These beliefs are still there and have not necessarily disappeared. These evil spirits were believed to be given to witches by the devil in exchange of their loyalty to the devil. This led to serious accusations, persecutions and execution of many people suspected to be witches mostly between the 1300s and the 1600s (Schiff 2015). Most of these accused witches were women, who in most cases acted as fortune tellers, traditional birth attendants and healers in their communities (Schiff 2015). As stated earlier in the beginning chapters of the paper, the dynamics within the society that tended to favour male dominance over women to an extent explains why many women were accused and executed as witches compared to men. This may also be due to the reason that women were the healers in the society, the midwives and the ones who practiced herbal remedies for the most part (Adinkrah and Adhikari 2014).

With battles emerging between France within the American colonies and the English rulers, namely William and Mary in 1689, serious struggles and rivalries in the colonies came up (Blumberg 2007). This came to be known as the War of King William to the colonies. The war resulted in massive disturbances and hardships within the regions of Quebec, New York and Nova Scotia. This in turn led many of the inhabitants becoming refugees in the colony of Massachusetts, particularly in the town of Salem (Schiff 2015). The town of Salem is known in present times as the city of Danvers in Massachusetts.

Following the displacement of many inhabitants within the region into the town of Sallem, there emerged much pressure on the resources of the place. According to Schiff (2015), as a result of the displacement and the settlement of many inhabitants in the area of Salem, rivalries started to sprung-up on the acquisition of wealth, most especially on the Salem port. It also brought pressure and struggles on the use and ownership of land, particularly for people who depended on the land for farming and other agricultural activities (Blumberg 2007). This resonates explicitly with the situation in the Otta community as many of the inhabitant have to struggle over the possession and ownership of land because most of them are engaged in farming and other agricultural activities.

Additionally, with the appointment of Reverend Samuel Parris in 1689 as the minister in charge of the town of Salem, the struggles, hardships and the rivalries over wealth, land

and properties for survival became intensified in the area (Schiff 2015). The Reverend minister was very greedy, selfish, and took possession of most of the wealth and land areas in the Salem town (Schiff 2015). Due to the greediness of the Reverend, many of the inhabitants were not happy with him and showed signs of hatred towards him.

With the daughter of Reverend Parris, namely Elizabeth who was aged 9 years, and also Abigail who was 11 years old who was a niece to the Reverend starting to make screams that were not controllable and experiencing fits, the people around them claimed that the children were been tormented by the devil with the help of witches in the community (Blumberg 2007). In the course of time, a number of young women in the area were seen to show signs of having fits and uncontrollable screams. Consequently, the problem was blamed on three women namely, Tituba, who was a slave, Sarah Osborn and Sarah Good (Blumberg 2007). Eventually, these women were accused and forced to confess of being witches and the brains that were behind he misfortunes in the community (Schiff 2015).Tituba was particularly forced to confess to been a witch and eventually named other people as also witches and using evil spirits and black magic to create harm and cause misfortunes in the community. Individuals numbering about two hundred were subsequently identified and accused to be witches. They were prosecuted and about twenty were killed by hanging them (Blumberg 2007).

The struggles, hardships and the rivalries led many of the inhabitants to blame the cause of the problem on the devil and witches who they believed were working with the devil to create misfortunes and troubles for the people (Schiff 2015; Blumberg 2007). This come to reemphasize the point that has already been made in the paper that, the accusations of people as witches may not necessarily be due to they being witches; but may result from conflicts between people, social and economic hardships, as well as the struggles over wealth, land and other properties. In the context of Nigeria and the Otta community therefore, as noted earlier, the underlying factors for accusing the supposed witches may not necessarily be because of the women being witches but could be the result of the socio-economic hardships, struggles for properties, land and wealth. It may also be the result of the power that people within a family may have over other members especially over women, to take over their land, properties and in the case of widows to reap them of their belongings and other properties after the death of their husbands. In the next section of the chapter, I explore colonialism with its introduction particularly of the Christian religion and the impacts it had on Africa and in the Nigerian context with regards to witchcraft accusations.

3.3 Colonialism and Witchcraft Accusation

A strong link can be drawn between colonialism and its introduction of particularly Christianity and witchcraft accusations in Africa and in the context of Nigeria. Prior to the colonial administration in Africa, traditional and cultural practices occupied important point of contact in society (Igbe 2011). Within this, traditional healers, traditional birth attenders, etc were seen as very important in the social and economic landscape of communities.

The roles of the traditional healers and birth attendants included the provision of advice and recommendations on health and safe birth practices. This was much significant for community members in accessing health and child-bearing advice from the traditional healers and birth attendants who are mostly elderly women who lived among them in the communities (Eboiyehi 2017; Federici 2010).

With the coming in of colonialism on the African continent, there came in the introduction of Christianity. From this time onwards, the Christian religion most especially Catholicism became the major religion of the day. The same can be said of the introduction of the Islamic religion and its practice in Africa (Masquelier 2008). Islam just like the Christian religion, also looked down on all other cultural practices and traditions in the African society as not in line with the beliefs of Islam and; as such people who engaged in such practice were seen as practicing something devilish and against the will of the religion (Clarisse 2020; Masquelier 2008) As such, all traditional modes of religion and cultural practices which existed were made to look outmoded and gradually made to erode from the religious practices of the people (Ally 2013).

This actually led to the looking down of traditional cultural practices and systems of worship which had existed for a longer period before the emergence of colonialism on the continent. It also led to the banning and the forbidden of their cultural practices, and one had to renounce them to be a Christian and be 'saved' (Eboiyehi 2017; Federici 2010). This explains why such beliefs and practices were pushed underground and had to become secret and therefore subversive of the dominant colonial order. Therefore, traditional healers, traditional birth attendants and all other people who kept to the practice and embracement of traditional cultural practices and belief systems in the case of Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and other parts of Africa were seen as evil and engaging in practices that were not in line with Christianity (Federici 2010). In view of this, such groups of people were characterized of

making use of spiritual powers including witchcraft and sorcery in the society (Eboiyehi 2017). This in a way suggests that the emergence of colonialism and the transfer of the Christian religion and also Islam tended to overshadow the traditional and cultural practices, and eventually gave room for characterizing indigenous traditional cultures and practices as having a link with evil spirits and witchcraft. This to an extent laid the foundations for naming and accusing people who did not follow the Christian values and doctrines as practicing witchcraft and conjuring evil spirits which were not within the teachings and beliefs of the Christian religion (Ally 2013; Federici 2010).

In contemporary times, with Pentecostalism occupying a significant role on the African continent, the rate of witch-hunts and accusations have seen much increase. With particularly young men, who have been so desperate due to they being unemployed, lack of education and a lack of access to agricultural land for farming in making a living, most of these young men have turned into Pentecostal pastors (Eboiyehi 2017; Igbe 2011). In the quest to make money and earn a living out of this, the pastors make prophesies and accuse mostly poor elderly women and children (Return to Africa's Witch Children 2008; Mc Veigh 2007) as witches in the homes of members of their congregation.

Within this, they convince their congregations and make them believe that they possess the power to cast out the evil spirits that are possessed by the witches in their families (Federici 2010). In doing this, church members are made to belief and the pastors in turn make huge sums of money in the form donations to the activities of the church. These pastors have therefore made a living through the huge sums of money they request from members of their congregation with the promises of casting out evil spirits and witches who pursue them in their families (Igbe 2011; Federici 2010). In view of this, members of churches turn on to accuse family members mostly elderly grandparents and mothers and in other cases children as witches who are the forces behind their social and economic hardships. Issues of sudden death and sicknesses of members of the family are also blamed on the supposed witches (Igbe 2011). In some situations, they go to the extent of seizing the properties, including land, houses, and other valuable belongings of people they accuse as witches mostly with the help of their pastors (Adegoke 2010; Federici 2010).

In Nigeria, Pentecostalism have taken much deeper roots and within the last two decades or so have taken a wide coverage in the country. With the use of sermons which are done openly, Pentecostal pastors and evangelists in Nigeria just like other countries in the Sub-region such as Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania have preached and campaigned about witches in the society (Adegoke 2010; Federici 2010). Through this, they have made people to

become aware of how witches operate and continuously educated people on how to expose witches in their families and get rid of their devil-related activities through exorcism and other rituals for which they must pay (Federici 2010).

In the case of Kenya for instance, it has been noted that Pentecostal pastors used their position to preach and campaign to the people on the existence of witches who work with the devil and use evil spirits to cause calamities in the society (Ogembo 2006). Through this, the Pentecostal pastors played a major role in the witch accusations and killings that took place within the districts of Gusii in Kenya (Ogembo 2006).

Another group which has contributed greatly to witchcraft accusations in Nigeria have been the media. In Nigeria, movies and documentaries which depict how witches operate in the nights, and how they harm and cause misfortunes for their family members have frequently been showed on TV (Eboiyehi 2013; Federeci 2010). Such documentaries and movies have taken much root in the Nigerian movie industry, with most movies showing how the so-called witches use demonic spirits to create hardships, misfortunes, illness, and deaths for people. The movies have in addition gained recognition in the Nigerian market with such movies selling more copies even than normal movies (Adekoge 2010; Federici 2010). One point that is important to note here is that, in all these movies elderly women are the ones who are made to act as witches and as such accused as witches in the movies. This paves way to some extent for elderly women to be identified and accused as witches and blamed for social and economic hardships among members in a family.

Traditional witch doctors have also contributed in a way in contemporary times inciting people in the process of witch hunts and accusation of women as witches. In the current sphere of globalization and development, the work of traditional witch doctors in Africa starting from the 1970s have been seen to decrease (Eboiyehi 2013). Notwithstanding this, the current fall in the quality of public health services, and the emergence of diseases including the deadly HIV and AIDS in parts of Africa have created space for traditional witch doctors to operate (Adegoke 2010).

Within this, traditional doctors have acted as points of contact in identifying witches in families. In view of this, the witch doctors have capitalized on this, in collaborating with people who wish to identify and expose witches in their families (Adegoke 2010). They have done this with the concern for making a living in the current economic crisis in the case of Nigeria and other African countries including Ghana, Kenya etc (Adegoke 2010; Adinkrah and Adhikari 2014). This has been possible due to the reason that such witch doctors unofficially enjoy some form of impunity and as such, are not charged for the work they engage

in helping people to identify and expose so-called witches in their families (Abiddle 2013; Federici 2010). The same can be said of pastors in Nigeria, who are in most instances not made to account for their activities in inciting people to create room for witch hunting, fear of witches and the accusation of mostly women and children. This has given much power to most Christian and Islamic groups in Nigeria in accusing people that they see as witches in their families and communities at large (Araromi 2014; Adegoke 2010; Federici 2010). For instance, during a conference that was held in Calabar in Nigeria on child rights and witch-craft accusation in the month of July 2009, some people who worshipped with Christian Faith of the Liberty Gospel Church surrounded the premises, assaulting the people and the General Secretary who was in charge of the humanists movement (Igbe 2013; Federici 2010). This explains how Islamic and Christian groups and their followers have gained impunity in accusing people who fight against witch hunts and accusations among women and children in society.

3.4 Globalization and Witchcraft Accusations

Globalization has been seen to play a major role in the contemporary witch hunting and accusation of women as witches on the African continent (Adinkrah and Adhikari 2014). The hunting of witches in the current times should be seen to be rooted within the economic liberalization and globalization of the economies in Africa, which has gradually eroded and undermined the role and value of women and the African local economies (Federici 2013: 23-4; 2010). The continuous spread of witch hunts and accusations of witchcraft has been facilitated within the current trend of the social reproduction structure with the capitalist economic system (Adinkrah and Adhikari 2014; Federici 2010).

The process of accusation within the global capitalist system in Africa have led to a situation of gendered economic and social conflicts that emerged amongst men and women, between the younger generation and the older people within the struggle for economic re-sources (Federici 2010). It could be emphasized here that the menace of witch hunting and accusation of women as witches was not rampant prior to the 1980s; but became much rampant from the 1980s to the 1990s, precisely the period of 'structural adjustment' imposed by global institutions; and leading to invisible causes of localised suffering as subsidies, public services and education budgets were slashed, and living cost rose far above incomes (Federici 2013).

The accusations became intense with the emergence of the global economic crisis, which came in the form of the structural adjustment programs in Africa and problems of debt for many countries in Africa (Igbe 2011). It also resulted from the devaluation of currencies for a number of countries in Africa including Nigeria. (Federici 2013: 23). It could be seen therefore that, social and economic hardships that have been created within the neo-liberal structure and globalization in the socio-economic and political systems of Africa have in turn generated (Igbe 2011), and made rooms for people in engaging in witch hunts and accusations of mostly women.

I argue therefore that, the accusations and witch hunts come in response to economic downturns and crisis that in a way have been heightened within capitalist economic structure; and created socio-political and economic inequalities among people and groups in Africa. This calls for attention into the social and economic factors and dilemmas which are behind the witch hunts, accusations, and persecution of women as witches in Nigeria.

3.5 Conclusion

The chapter has examined the origins and history of Witchcraft accusation and persecutions. From the discussions, it has been seen that witch hunts and persecutions date back to the early times in relation to the 'Salem Trials' and the 'Malleus Malleficurum'. During this time people especially women who possessed some divine gifts of helping people in the form of healing and treatment of certain ailments were mostly accused and prosecuted as witches. Additionally, in the context of Africa and in Nigeria, colonialism, and introduction of particular kind of religious practices particularly Christianity and Islam came to look down on traditional and cultural practices of the people. Therefore, such cultural practices were banned and people who engaged in the practice were in some cases accused and prosecuted as witches. This has continued to exist in present times and has created a situation whereby people who practice the traditional beliefs and cultures have being seen by the religions which have become dominant namely Christianity and Islam as engaging in a devilish acts.

Chapter 4 Analysis and Presentation of the Study Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter of the research looks at the analysis and presentation of findings of the research. It starts by looking at a brief profile of the study area. It then examines the underlying social and economic factors that facilitate the witch hunts and the different forms of accusations of the women as witches and why women are predominantly accused as witches. It will then look at the social and economic effects that the witch hunts, accusations and persecutions have on the lives of the elderly women and the wider society, and how this affect their social and economic development. The chapter also examines how the women negotiate the accusations.

4.2 Profile of the Otta Community

The community is found in the Ogun State in Nigeria which has a population of around 163,783 (FGN 2019). It also serves as the capital of the Ado-Odo local government (Thaibiti Willis 2017). Majority of the people who live in the community work as small-scale farmers, and also as petty traders in groceries and other foodstuffs. Therefore, the people in the community have to compete and struggle over the limited productive resources especially land for their survival. Thus, the socio-economic inequalities in the community creates a lot of tensions which harbours which hunts and accusations.

4.3 Underlying Factors: Accusations of Elderly Women

The accusation of elderly women as witches is facilitated by a wide of range of socio-economic, political, and cultural factors that characterizes our society. The way in which a society is organized with regards to socio-economic and political activities could shape and perpetuate witch hunts and accusations as witches (Stewart and Strathern 2004). The factors that necessitates this may be multi-dimensional, gendered, and intersectional in nature creating room for the accusations. Witch hunting and accusations in a way have become feminized and gendered in the light of numerous factors (Sanou 2017: 35-6), which will be examined in the rest of the section. It should be noted here that not only elderly women have been

accused as witches in recent times, but children have also being victims to witch-hunting and persecutions in the past few years (Sambe et al., 2017; Sanou 2017: 8-9; Igbe 2011; Secker 2012; Quarmyne 2011; 476-7; Schnoebelen 2009: 15-17). Children with certain characteristics within the society are normally accused as witches. The characteristics may encompass children who have certain mental and physical abnormalities and disabilities, such as albinos, down syndrome, autism, orphans, who live with their step-parent and extended families (Dovlo 2007: 68-9; Schnoebelen 2009: 15-17; Sanou 2017: 36). The focus of this study however remains on the experiences and plights of elderly women who are accused as witches.

It could be emphasized that witchcraft accusations have existed in the Otta community for a long time. As such, the saliency of the belief in the existence and accusations of witches cannot be overlooked. Notwithstanding the long existence of the belief in witchcraft and the activities of witches, the rampant accusation of women in Nigeria and the Otta community gained much strength in the last two decades (Eboiyehi 2017; Sambe et al., 2017). With the global economic crisis that hit the world, particularly developing countries of which Nigeria is no exception to this, and the continues existence of social and economic inequalities, activities of witch hunts and persecution of especially elderly women started to gain strong roots in Nigeria and continue to exist in many parts of the country (Eboiyehi 2017; Sambe et al., 2017; Igbe 2013).

In the light of this, it could be noted that multiple set of factors and characteristics which are gendered and intersects one another acts together with the economic struggles to perpetuate the witch hunts. The factors include adverse health of the women, older age, hunch back, wrinkled-skin, poverty, economic status in society (Eboiyehi 2017; Abbidle 2013; Dovlo 2007: 68). These social and economic characteristics coupled with persisting inequalities within the economy and poverty that older women find themselves in turn to disadvantage them and makes them vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft.

The roots of the rampant accusations of witchcraft as seen in this research could therefore be traced to economic crisis and instability in Nigeria and the Otta community. Considering the unequal economic gains and the struggle for social and economic wellbeing therefore, most people especially the youth who are unfortunately not able to live a life which is well deserving, point fingers mostly to older women within their families as the cause of their failures (Eboiyehi 2017; Igbe 2013; Adegoke 2010). With regards to the Otta community, majority of the inhabitants are predominantly farmers and or petty traders. The inhabitants therefore, have to compete over the scarce resources and productive access especially land

in the light of socio-economic inequalities and hardships. The interviews with the women also pointed to the economic motive as a key factor facilitating their accusation. Almost all the women interviewed made it clear that economic hardships on some members of their respective families and desires to make social, and economic progress in life had led most people especially the younger generation to turn to the elderly; and blame them for their failures. A woman noted during the interview that;

'I was accused by my grandson and the wife for being the cause of their continues economic problems and their failure to secure a permanent job; the accusation was facilitated by their pastor who had supported them through prayers and revealed to them that I was the brain behind their failures'. (Interview; Respondent 1).

This point brings in the role of modern-day pastors and the church in the context of Nigeria and some African countries with regards to witch-hunts and the accusation of women. In the last two decades as stated earlier in the introductory parts of the paper, many young people especially men have taken up the role of pastors and prophets in their communities. This in most cases have been influenced by economic hardships and inequalities which has forced many youths to find alternative ways of making ends meet and survive economically in the country.

In view of this, many churches have emerged with young men occupying leading roles of prophets and head pastors of the churches. These pastors with the view of meeting their economic goals prophesy to their church members who in most cases fall to this. Most of the prophesies tend to point fingers on older women within families and communities as the cause of most of the misfortunes and failures, including unemployment of family members, barrenness, impotency, natural disasters and accidents (Abbidle 2013; Adegoke 2010). Considering the role that religion especially the Christian and Islamic religion occupies in Nigeria and most African countries, church members of the so-called prophets or men of God fall prey to the prophesies they offer and accuse mostly older women in their families and communities (Abiddle 2013). This was also confirmed in the course of the interviews with the women. In the course of the interview, a woman emphasized this;

'With the support of a pastor who prophesied to my daughter, she believed and blamed me for the loss of her husband's new job in Abuja; this I believe was possible because of my poverty and lack of power in the family, as many wealthy women of my age in the family have not been accused as witches'. (Interview; Respondent 2).

This also come in line with a study on witchcraft accusations in the Gusii area in Kenya, by Ogembo (2006), which noted that Pentecoastal pastors played a key role in the accusations and killings of witches as they facilitated the witch hunt process and supported the exposures the supposed witches.

Still on the economic cause of witchcraft accusations, it was been revealed in the study and in the interviews with the women that, traditional witch doctors have played a key role in the accusation of elderly women. This has partly been due to the current economic problems and inequality and the desires that most people, have to move out of their poverty and make ends meet economically. It was noted during the interviews that, most people in the Otta community, especially the youth now consult witch doctors to find out about the cause of their economic failures and their inability to secure jobs, and misfortunes that they experience.

Within this, the witch doctors also with their aim to survive economically, point fingers at people especially older women in the families of their clients as causing problems and hardships in their lives. One of the women interviewed stated that;

'The sudden death of the only child of my house mate was blamed on me; I was accused with the help of a witch doctor who they consulted and claimed that I was the old witch behind the death of their son- I defended myself and explained that I knew nothing about the death, but non of the house mates supported me because I'm a women, very poor'. (Interview; Respondent 3).

Furthermore, witchcraft accusations have been seen in the study to be shaped by the existence of strained relationships among neighbours within a house and the society at large. Mencej (2015: 114), has argued that strained relationships among people, neighbours and members of a community could facilitate witch hunting and accusations. With regards to this, in the course of economic crisis and problems, witch accusation may increase as noted by Hill (1996: 325-6). In the light of social and economic instability, an individual or group may capitalize on a strained relationship with neighbours or rivals and accuse them as being the cause of their problems. Rivals within communities and households, and also in the case of polygamous marriages, accuse one another in times of misfortunes or other bad occurrences (Quarmyne 2011: 479-10). Quarmyne (2011: 479), has noted that in the case of polygamous marriages, people may take advantage of their rivalries and accuse each other with sudden misfortune including deaths, illness, accidents. The study findings also revealed some

of these issues as facilitating accusation of women in the community. A woman noted during the interview that;

'My neighbour and his family came together to accuse me when he had a serious motor accident; this was because I had a previous rival with him over the payment of utility bills; this led to the two of us not being in good terms; as such when the accident occurred the family members of the man came together and throwed insults at me of being the cause of the accident'. (Interview; Respondent 4).

Similarly, family members of deceased men were found during the interviews to be also part of the accusation of women. This confirms the point by Federici (2010), that in the light of economic instability and hardships, members of a family may accuse each other of being witches with the view of having some economic gains at the expense of the accused. A similar point is made by Eboiyehi (2017), that in the course of social and economic problems and the struggle for limited economic resources, members of a household or family may accuse and point fingers at others and tag them with witchcraft to gain or take over land and other properties. This was emphasised by woman during the interviews;

'When my husband died, the brother of my late husband and some other members of the family came together, harassed and accused me of killing their brother; this continued for more than a month when I could no longer stand the accusations and had to leave the house that my husband and I built together, the farmland and other properties'. (Interview; Respondent 5).

The woman further emphasized that some opinion leaders in the community were consulted to intervene, but this resulted in nothing fruitful giving the family of the deceased husband to gradually throw her out of the house through the accusations and continues insults.

Also, moving on to consider rivalries that emerges among business professionals, leaders of religious groups, and even at the level of political leaders, it could be seen that struggles for economic gains and power perpetuate witch hunts (Secker 2012; Quarmyne 2011; Dovlo 2007: 69). In this context, witchcraft accusation may be used as a means of exposing and pointing out the rivalries between groups of this sought. The accusation could also exist prior to the tensions and rivalries that may emerge among these groups of people. According to Mencej (2015: 115-5), with regards to this, witch hunt could be capitalized on as a way of expressing and showing the frustrations, the hostilities and repressed activities, labelling witchcraft on people with whom the accuser might have strained relationships prior to the occurrence of failures and misfortunes.

From the discussions on the prevalence and menace of witchcraft accusations, it could be seen that economic factors which are embedded within the struggle for social and economic gains coupled with the state of inequality in the context of the study area, perpetuates witch hunts This exacerbates witchcraft accusations and places elderly women in a situation that makes them the victims of accusations. This does not just work in isolation but is facilitated by numerous dynamics encompassing factors which intersect; and in a way reinforces each other. The factors encompass gender, social status, older age, poverty, power and the vulnerability of the women. In the next part of the paper I turn to examine the effects of witch hunts and the accusation of women as witches.

4.4 Effects of the Accusations

Accusation of women as witches within families or at the level of the community leads to a wide range of negative effects on the accused and the society at large (Eboiyehi 2017; Sambe et al., 2017; Asamoah Gyadu 2015: 23). The effects could affect the social and economic development of the individuals and the wider society. With this part of the paper, I examine the multiple social and economic impacts that the accusations bring on the women and its consequences within the Otta community.

4.4.1 Social Effect of Accusations

One major social effect of witchcraft accusations is that it leads to long term stigmatization and the marginalization of the women (Igbe 2013; Mgbako and Glenn 2011: 389). This partly creates a kind of traumatic experience on the accused, as well as their close family members (Nyabwari and Kagema 2014: 12; Secker 2012; Akrong 2007; 54-5). The stigmatization becomes something that comes to stay and continuously retards and prevents the social progress and development of the women, as they continue to be looked down by members of their neighbourhoods and wider community and fingers are pointed at them wherever they try to go in and around their vicinities.

Within areas and spheres where witchcraft is believed to have the potential of been inherited, it creates further stigmatization for the children of the accused person, as they also turn to receive ridicules from the accusers and other community members as being children of a witch and also possessing witchcraft (Quarmyne 2011: 480-1). Results from the study

and the interviews with the women also revealed this this kind of social effect as evident on the lives of the accused and their children. It was noted by a woman in the interview that;

'After being accused as a witch by my neighbour of being responsible for the death of his child, because I had rivalry with him on the use of electricity in the house, myself and my children have become the ridicule of the community and been seen as the witch family and fingers pointed on us on the streets'. (Interview; Respondent 3).

Furthermore, witchcraft accusations lead to the displacement and in the worse scenario the killing of the accused. This creates a situation where people who are accused as witches in some cases have to leave their homes of residence and seek refuge in other places outside their original place of residence and even in some instances their places of work within their communities (Eboiyehi 2017; Sambe et al., 2017; Dovlo 2007). For instance, in Ghana research on witch hunts and women accused as witches in the northern part of the country, which is predominantly Muslim society, women who are accused with witchcraft are taken to designated camps where they are isolated from the wider community (Adinkrah and Adhikari 2014; Dovlo 2007: 72-3). This is done with the aim of exorcising the witches and getting rid of their so-called evil spirits and powers; and making them harmless to the society (Dovlo 2007: 75). One point which should be noted here is that many of these witch camps have most of the inmates as older women, with few of them being men (Asamoah Gyadu 2015; Dovlo 2007: 75). This partly explain why witch hunts, accusations and persecutions have broadly being seen as gendered and feminized in scope. This kind of effects on the parts of the women was also noted by the women during the interviews as it was emphasized by a woman that;

'Following the accusation as a witch by my neighbour and the continues insults that emerged, I could not bear the pains again but had to relocate; leaving my small shop that I was operating'. (Interview; Respondent 4).

Also, the accusations of witchcraft facilitate the disintegration of families. In most instances because the accused are largely women, for many of them they relocate and move out of their homes and neighbourhoods. This in many instances is for them to avoid their accusers beating them up and lynching them in the process. In such a situation, the accused women may even lose their children and their husbands in the process, as their husbands could divorce them in the process to avoid the fear of being characterized as the accomplices (Eboiyehi 2017; Sambe et al., 2017; Dovlo 2007: 81-2). Additionally, the effects of the accusation extend to the close family members and the children of the accused as they are in

many cases characterized as potential witches and face a continued stigmatization within their community. In the African family system, women occupy a stronger role when it comes to nurturing and parenting children and as such, with the disruption of the family system through the displacement of the women, their role and position as parents and agents of the socialization process is eroded and undermined (Quarmyne 2011: 483-4; Igbe 2013; Dovlo 2007: 82). This effect was much evident and emphasized in the study through the interviews with the women. A woman in the course of the interview stated that;

'After being accused as a witch of causing the accident of my neighbour with whom I had a rivalry with, I was continuously insulted in the neighbourhood; and had to leave and join my extended family in a different community'. (Interview; Respondent 4).

Further to this, through witchcraft accusations inter-personal relations between neighbours and community members are eroded. This is because with the belief in witchcraft and the powers of witches to cause harm to other people of a neighbourhood are seen to easily pointing fingers to close neighbours and families in times of misfortunes (Adegoke 2010; Ntloedibe Kuswani 2007: 205-6; Nyaga 2007: 257). As noted by Asamoah Gyadu (2015: 23), neighbours and friends who are very close to one other tend to suspect and accuse each other in case of failure in their lives, and this disrupts the social life that exist between friends and relatives.

Last but not the least, it could be emphasized that witch hunts and accusation of women as witches infringes on the fundamental human rights and that of their children. From the study, it was realized that most of the women who are accused are prevented from public places, including community centres, recreational areas and parks within their communities. In addition, children of the accused are discriminated against and prevented in some instances from accessing schools, health facilities and even churches in their neighbourhoods as they are ridiculed and labelled as children of witches given all sorts of names. Cimpric (2010: 1), has argued that infringement on the rights of the accused and their children and their discrimination from churches, the mosque, the community, social centres and the like creates a situation where such children end up on the streets; and take refuge in alcohol and other kinds of drugs. A similar point is emphasized by Secker (2012: 27-8), that bad treatment which is often meted on women accused as witches and their children, and the disruption of social life in the process leads the children to leave on the streets and become victims of hard drugs and risk of exploitation and child trafficking.

4.4.2 Economic Effects on the Accused

A number of economic effects are experienced with the existence and accusation of elderly women as witches. The impacts are meted on the accused women as well as the wider society. Considering the point that women accused as witches are in most cases stigmatized and discriminated, their economic progress and status become adversely affected. In some instances, the accused are forced by their accusers to relocate their homes and leave their properties behind, and even in worse scenarios some have their belongings burned and destroyed (Eboiyehi 2017; Mgbako and Glenn 2011: 389; Dovlo 2007). Others even have their personal properties confiscated by their accusers and other relatives who support the accusation. This goes a long way to retard the economic development of the women and their children; and renders them in absolute poverty for the rest of their life. The result from the study and the interviews with the women confirmed this effect on the economic lives of the women who are accused. It was noted by a woman during the interviews that;

'After I was accused of killing the child of my neighbour, I was looked down on in the community, lost my means of income with the petty trading that I was engaged in because people in the community refused to buy from me as they considered me to be a witch; this led to my gradual relocation from the community'. (Interview; Respondent 3).

From this, it could be seen that the accused are placed in s situation of losing their economic status and their means of livelihoods. It also affects their entire economic progress in the wider society.

Furthermore, the accusation of witchcraft create room for undermining the initiatives that individuals may have with regards to economic development and productivity. In relation to this, people who are economically and socially active are in a way limited and retarded by belief and existence of witches and their accusations in making progress in their capacities of ensuring their development and that of the society (Igbe 2013; Kgatla 2007: 270). In such instances and as seen in the study, people who are not very active economically and socially, capitalize on the accusation of witches in undermining active people in progressing and making economic development impacts. This partly explains why women who are powerful and economically take up active roles, which are considered to be meant for men are seen by some people as being witches. This explains why in certain circumstances, some people may decide to refrain from taking up tasks and works that are challenging which will enhance their economic development to avoid claims of witchcraft accusations from other people in the society (Baloyi 2014: 4; Stabell 2010: 461).

In addition, it was found out from the study that, accusations of witchcraft on women retards and adversely affect economic productivity. This is because in many context of the family and the societal life, the elderly women occupy and take up the roles of caring for kids of their children; which allows the younger generation to go out and take active economic activities that facilitates productivity and yield income for the family (Eboiyehi 2017; Igbe 2013; Quarmyne 2011: 483). However, with the accusations in place, the women are taken out of the homes and the society, leaving a wide gap on the social and economic productivity. This was confirmed by a woman in the course of the interview;

'When I was accused as a witch by my late husband's brother and some other members of the their family, I had to leave the home and the community; leaving my elder daughter to baby-sit and care for her kid on her own'. (Interview; Respondent 5).

It could be seen from the analysis that the situation of accusing women as witches creates an economic gap where active and productive human resources are lost. Also, the accused and their immediate families in turn become limited in their social and economic status, progress and overall development in the society. The women in a bid to survive and escape from the accusations, negotiate through relocating from the community in question.

Some of the women in the face of the accusations and persecutions are forced into coerced confessions against their own will (Secker 2012; Cimpric 2010; Dovlo 2007). This is mostly done by inflicting pains on the women through beating (Eboiyehi 2017; Dovlo 2007). This coerced confessions and forced accusations come against the fundamental human rights of the women and deprives them of their liberties as citizens and social beings.

4.5 Conclusion

This part of the paper has examined the experiences of the women who are accused as witches. This has looked at the underlying factors that facilitate and exacerbate the witch hunting and accusations. It has also examined the social and economic effects on the lives of the women and the community at large. With regards to the factors that trigger witchcraft accusations and its prevalence in Otta community, it could be seen that despite the existence of the practice and its belief in the past, the accusations have been rampant mainly due to economic factors. The economic factors have been embedded in economic instability and high rates of inequality in the country and in the study area. This has created a situation whereby most people use witchcraft accusations as a means of blaming other people

especially elderly women for misfortunes and failures that they encounter economically and socially.

Furthermore, the effects of the accusations on the women and the society have been manifold encompassing social and economic impacts. Socially, it has been realized that the accused women lose their dignity, stigmatized, and marginalized; and restricted from many social activities and gatherings in the society; which are essential for their development. It also disrupts social relations and affects the societal structure. Economically, the women are deprived of their economic progress and development as the accusations limits their economic activities and in some cases their properties and means of livelihoods taken from them.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I look at the conclusion of the study. The study has examined witchcraft accusations on elderly women in the Otta community in Nigeria. This has examined the multiple intersecting factors that perpetuate and exacerbate witch hunts and accusations of women as witches. The paper has also explored on the social and economic effects on the women and the wider society. It has in addition looked at how these women negotiate the accusations and make resistance on the conditions they find themselves in the course of the accusations and after the accusations.

5.2 Summary and Key Findings

From the study it has been seen that the accusations and persecutions of women as witches is gendered and feminized in scope. Notwithstanding the fact that men are also accused as wizards in some instances, it could be seen that many of the people who are accused with witchcraft are women. A major factor facilitating the accusations of the women have been noted throughout the study to be economic motives within the social and economic inequalities of the society.

With globalization and the current state of economic instability and inequality in Nigeria and the Otta community, as well as some other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa in the last two decades, struggle for economic and social survival has led to a prevalence in the accusations of witches. Within this, elderly women in most cases are blamed for causing misfortunes, hardships, and failures in the lives of people in families, communities, and the society at large.

The economic inequalities and struggles of the people coupled with multiple intersecting factors and characteristics of the women, including gender, social class, older age, economic status, poverty etc interact with each other and position the women in a situation of being accused as witches. With this, the women are labelled in the community as possessing evil spirits and powers which they used to cause fear, harm, destruction, accidents, failures and misfortunes in the lives of their families and other members of the community. This explains that, the characteristics of the women as seen here which are intersectional acts and reinforces one another together with the economic factors to render the women powerless and vulnerable to witch hunts and accusations. Power in this sense becomes very important as

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many of the people who are accused as witches are women and not the men. Considering the traditional settings and culture of the Otta community which is patriarchal and gives more power socially and economically to men compared the women, the women in such a situation with the intersectional characters discussed earlier on, are placed in a situation that makes them vulnerable in the face of the accusations. This comes to explains why predominantly women are accused of witchcraft and blamed for disasters, harms, and failures of people in the community and not the men. The type of power that is seen here is 'power over', which the accusers have on the women, who in this case lack such power due to their socio-economic status in the community.

Furthermore, the effects that are meted on the women and the society encompasses negative social and economic impacts. Socially, the social development of the women is disrupted as they become exposed to a wide range of long-term ridicule, stigmatization, and discrimination. Also, the accusations create a permanent mental illness and traumatic experience on the part of the women. This affects their mental development which continuously affects their psychological and emotional development for the rest of their lives.

Additionally, most of the women who go through this painful accusation are forced to move out of their communities. This leads to the displacement of these women, which retards them in making any social progress and limits their social engagement and ties with families and friends. On the level of the society, it has been realized that community living, and social relations are destroyed. This also destructs and disrupts the family systems. With the family structure been very important for children's upbringing and entire socialization process, this affect the support and care that children are supposed to get from elderly women who are regarded as very key when it comes to child care and development within the socio-cultural structure of the community.

Economically also, it has been observed that the witch accusations create several effects on the women. This is because many of the women who find themselves in this situation are forced out of their communities; and this renders them to lose their properties and other sources of income and ways of making a living in the community. As such, they are unable to effectively engage in economic ventures and activities which is significant for making a living and enhancing their entire livelihoods and progress.

The economic impact on the societal level has also been seen to entail loss of potential human resources who are significant for ensuring development. With the belief in and accusation of witchcraft, the women are deprived in many cases of working and this impacts

negatively on the productivity and growth of the community and the country at large. Further to this, it has been noted from the study that when elderly women who are seen as important caregivers and takes care of the children of their younger ones are made to forcefully leave their homes and communities, it retards the socialization and development of children. In taken up the role of child-caring, their younger generations have a lot of time to engage in economic activities which provide adequate means of living and income for the family; however, in the case of the accusations, all these are lost.

5.3 Some Policy Recommendations

In addressing the problem of witchcraft accusations and its consequences on the women and the society, it becomes necessary to first and foremost to address the root causes of the situation. In this sense, it could be emphasized here that major policy makers and stakeholders, including the government and its Gender and Human Rights Ministry, local and international NGOs should make it a point to effectively deal with the economic factors which facilitates the witch hunts and accusations. The economic factors which are rooted in socio-economic instability and inequalities need to be given significant attention, providing equal and fair grounds for people to go about their daily activities in making decent and well-deserved living.

Also, it is important for key stakeholders and policy makers to initiate, implement and enforce effective measures and policies that will see to the elimination of social and cultural norms that undermines the fundamental human rights of women in the face of witchcraft accusations. This will help in eliminating situations where women are deprived and seen as less powerful in the societal landscape when compared to the men. It will further create room for treating men and women equally and avoid situations where women are the ones who are mostly blamed and accused of misfortunes and failures on the lives of people in the community.

Additionally, it is relevant for implementing policies on the parts of the government and its Ministry of Justice to regulate the activities of churches, mosques, and witch doctors who in recent times have sprang up in Nigeria with the aim of making economic gains and not necessarily to propagate the gospel. Considering the fact that the accusations, stigmatization, and marginalization on the women come as an infringement of the liberties and fundamental human rights of the women, justice should be provided for the women by making the accusers especially the churches, mosques, and witch doctors who have for a long time enjoyed

an impunity in the country to face the full rhythm of the law and be made to account for the abuse of rights that they engage in.

Finally, efforts should be put together on the part of the government, non-governmental organizations, and the civil society to promote measures of rehabilitating, counselling, and ensuring the reintegration of alleged witches. This will help women who have been accused and prosecuted as witches to recover psychologically, socially, economically, and create room for their reunification with their families, community, and the larger society. Further research could look more into the experiences and plights of women accused as witches across the country, and the different infringements that are meted on them by the accusers. This will help in making comparison of the experiences of women in different parts of the country.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview Questions for Research Participants

Socio-demographic information
1. Age of Participant
2. Marital Status
3. Level of Education
4. Occupation

Interview questions
1. How do people relate with elderly women in the community?
2. In what ways do you perceive elderly women?
3. Which people are normally accused as witches in the family/community?
4. Why are predominantly elderly women accused as witches?
5. Does your gender as a woman play a role in witchcraft accusations?
6. What factors facilitate the accusations of women as witches?
7. How often are women accused as witches?
8. How often are men accused as witches?
9. What circumstances led to your accusation as a witch?
10. How did your socio-economic status influence your accusation?
11. How did your gender play a role in your accusation?
12. Who were the key players in your accusation?
13. How did your age play a role in your accusation?
14. Who made the final decision in your accusation?
15. How were you accused as a witch?
16. Did social and power relations within the society influenced your accusation?
17. Did you receive any support from any family members or any other groups during the accusations?
18. Were any of your properties taken from you during and after the accusations?
19. Were you taken out of the community during the accusation?
20. Did you report to any authorities including the police during your accusations?
21. Do you know of other women who have been accused as witches?
22. How did you resist the accusations?
23. How did you cope the stress during and after the accusations?
24. Were you able to reside in the community during and after the accusations?
25. In what ways were you able to manage and negotiate the accusations?
26. How are you able to live a normal life in the course of the accusation?
27. How are your able to move on with your life after the accusations?
28. How does the accusation affect your economic development?
29. How does the accusation affect you socially?
30. In what ways does the accusations affect your rights?
31. What do you do think should be done to help women who are accused as witches?

Appendix 2 Profile of the Women Interviewed

Research Participant	Age (Years)	Occupation	Level of Education	Marital Status
1	60	Trader	None	Married
2	55	Trader	Basic	Married
3	50	Farmer/Trader	Basic	Widow
4	52	Farmer/Trader	None	Widow
5	54	Farmer	None	Widow