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Gender, age and context in the use of sex-related verbal taboos in traditional Igbo society

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Abstract

The study investigated how gender and age disparities, and situation/ context shape the use of sex-related verbal taboos. It adopted the qualitative orientation which involved semi-structured interviews with a total of 20 participants drawn from four purposively chosen communities or Igbo areas namely, Edda/Afikpo, Owerri, Uzuakoli and Awka. It was framed around the taboo theory of gender differences. The study identified some terms relating to sex and other parts of the body which constitute verbal taboo, and highlighted how gender and age disparities, as well as contexts shape the use of the verbal taboos. It also observed more female restrictive use of the taboo terms/expressions than male which speaks to the culture of patriarchy. Varied contexts or situations of use of the taboo terms were identified including 'closed' and 'open' contexts. It was concluded that gender and age disparities as a feature of verbal taboos depend on the culture and their underlying beliefs and values.

Keywords: Taboo, verbal taboo, gender, age, sex-related taboos, Igbo

1. Introduction

In many cultures, there are certain restrictions on what people are allowed to say or not to say in certain contexts and times. This restriction and constraint to verbal freedom is referred to as linguistic or verbal taboo. As in most other African societies, sex is a taboo subject among the Igbo. This paper focuses on sex-related verbal taboo in Igbo culture, and highlights the contexts or times of the use of sex-related verbal taboo.

The Igbo recognize sex difference in its thought, conviction and world view, and this shows totally different ways counting verbal expressions or imperatives. Wardhaugh (2000) clarifies that the suggestion of phonetic limitations or shirking is that certain words are not to be utilized and certain objects are not to be alluded to, but in certain circumstances and by certain or authorized people or through think circumlocutory setup of words. Wardhaugh (2000) certain situations and certain persons are utilized to state that the boycott forced on unthinkable words is both situational and individual. It is situational within the sense that such words are not anticipated to be utilized in open places or amid interaction including other individuals. In private, individuals are free to use unthinkable words and expressions; there's nothing prohibiting one or two from utilizing unthinkable words for sex organs within the throes of sexual intercut. It is additionally individual within the sense that certain people, by ideals of age or status may be permitted to utilize unthinkable words in open more than others. This consider inspected sexual orientation, age and setting within the utilize of sex-related verbal unthinkable

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