



# THE EFFECTS OF SOME CULTURAL PRACTICES ON THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN BALI NYONGA, NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated the effects of some cultural practices on the social integration of women in Bali Nyonga, North West Region of Cameroon. It sought to specifically examine traditional taboos that impact the social integration of women in Bali. The qualitative research approach was used and the design adopted was phenomenological and ethnography. A sample size of 40 women was selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data were analyzed thematically and grounded. Findings showed that Traditional taboos hinder the social integration of women negatively in Bali Nyonga as women do not eat certain food and beef such as gizzards, goat meat, egg, chicken, prepared by men and they are not allowed to enter into juju houses. The study generally revealed that while there exist some cultural practices that hinder the social integration of women, there are some positive perspectives of these cultural practices. The study recommends that the traditional councils should sensitise, and carry out enlightenment campaign to educate the Bali indigenes on the necessity of women's social integration in the community.

## KEYWORDS

Cultural Practices, traditional taboos, Social Integration, Bali Nyonga, Women.

## Introduction

Cultural practices influence the social integration of women and affect their psychological, emotional, social and economic state Ajila and Olutola, (2000). According to Mutthegheki, (2012), cultural practices are common in Sub Saharan Africa and others parts of the world, with Cameroon not being an exception. Cultural practices are some of the most crucial social mechanisms through which women are subordinated. Cultural practices reflect the values and benefits held by members of a community for a period often spanning generations. Every social group in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others have become harmful to a specific group of women (Mutthegheki, 2012).

Some of these cultural practices include: widowhood rites, taboos, deprivation of land ownership just to mention these few. Despite their harmful nature and violation of national and International Human Rights (2016), these practices persist because they are not questioned or challenged. Thus, take on an aura of morality in the eyes of those practicing them to know the effect of such practices on their social integration. It is because of this that United Nation in the Universal Declaration of Human Right (1948), recognized the need for empowerment of all, through education especially that of the women so that they can be knowledgeable on the effect of cultural practices.

Historically, the word culture comes from a Latin word “cultura” which means “Cultivation” it is a modern concept based on a term first used in classical antiquity by the Roman Orator, Cicero: ‘Cultura Animi’. The term culture appeared first in its current sense in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, to connote a process of cultivation, as in agriculture or horticulture (Muscato, 2003). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term development to refer first to the betterment or refinement of the individual, especially through education and then to the fulfillment of national aspirations or ideals in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, some scientists used the term Culture to refer to a human capacity (Muscato, 2003).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, culture emerged as a central concept in anthropology, encompassing the range of human phenomena that cannot be attributed to genetic inheritance. The term culture in American anthropology as purported by Dumber, (1999) depicts the following:

- i. The evolved human capacity to classify and represent experience with symbols , and to act imaginatively and creaturely and
- ii. The distinct way that people living in the different part of the world acted creatively, and classified or represented their experiences. Distinctions are currently made between the physical artifacts created by a society, it’s so called material and culture and everything else,

including in intangibles such as language, customs etc that are the main referent of the term culture (Dumbar, 1999).

Drawing from the African continent gender profile produced by the African Development Bank (ADF) (2008), the traditional societies of Africans were formed in the pre-colonial era and sustained and integrated into the modern-day socio-economic and political systems. The traditional system has diverse social organizations, but the two main kinship and lineage systems are matrilineal (in the South), where descent and inheritance are traced through the female figure, and patrilineal (in the North), where descent and inheritance are traced through the male figure. These systems are influential factors in the socio-economic and political context of African, and understanding them is essential in defining the cultural and development perspective of the continent. This is because the traditional socio-economic systems of kinship, economics, politics, and governance were carved to promote specific forms of social functioning and positioning and are visible in the consequent social, economic, and political systems with profound implications for gender (Mupanduki, 2007).

Accordingly, the inherent social and gender divide in Africa today emanate from the colonial system, which excluded some of the roles women played in society and reinforced their subordinate position (ADF, 2008). For instance, even though women were responsible for most of the farming activities in rural areas, ownership and control of land were firmly vested in men due to the colonial policy endorsement of the patriarchal relations of ownership, inheritance and law. This is evident in African today, as the land ownership system is governed by the customary law which still operates in a social structure that favours men (Mupanduki, 2007).

However, it is important to note that women in matrilineal communities are at an advantage as they can inherit land from their female ancestors or father. Those in patrilineal communities can own that of their son or husband but lose custody upon a husband's death or divorce. Moreover, there is currently no legislation concerning married women's property rights. The different position of women's ownership of land can be seen between the North (patrilineal), with 2% of women owning land, and the Ashanti region (matrilineal), with 50% (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2014).

Cameroon has a rich and diverse culture made up of a mix of about 250 indigenous populations and just as many languages and customs. The country is nicknamed "Little Africa" as geographically, Cameroon consists of coastline, mountains, grass plains, forest, rainforest and desert, all of the geographical regions in Africa in one country. This also contributes to its cultural diversity as ways of

life and traditional food dishes and traditions vary from geographical region to geographical region (Dauskardt, 1990).

Cameroon has 250-300 distinct groups, and an estimated 300+ languages. These languages include the Akoose language, the Gbaya languages, the Fula language, the Gyele language, the Koonzime language, the Mundang language, the Ngiemboon language, and the Vengo language, the Mungakaa language, the Mubakoh. (Miller,2008). Others include Ewondo, Bassa, Bamileke, Duala and Arabic in the North and Far-North regions. Cameroon is divided into several Regions, which are dominated by specific ethnic or religious groups. Ethnic divisions often correspond to geography, which is also widely varied. Religious differences often correspond to colonial or other historical influence (Wang, 1996).

At colonialism, Cameroon inherited two languages and two cultures from Britain and French, which made up the French speaking Francophone and the English speaking Anglophones. These inherited cultures are reflected in institutions like the school, the multiparty political system, family, shared history of colonialism and a national love of football (Koopman, 2003).

Conceptually, the notion of culture was explicitly normative; representing, more often than not, eighteenth and nineteenth-century understandings of socio-psychological sophistication. Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* epitomized this belief. Arnold (1993) held that culture is a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits. For Arnold (1993), culture was a remedy to such human failings as the want of sensitiveness of intellectual conscience, the disbelief in right reason, the dislike of authority. The goal of culture was, therefore, to overcome barbarity and realize higher goods, such as intellectual conscience, reason and deference to authority, encapsulated in a broad, neo-classical understanding of civility and civilization. Culture became, therefore, associated with products which were seen to embody these goods such as classical music, opera, literature and haute cuisine.

In trying to explain the shift from polytheism to monotheism, Edward Tylor suggested that culture amounted to that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired... as a member of society' (Tylor 1871). This totalizing description of culture, which has long been employed in both academic and non-academic circles, removed the explicit normative dimension of the concept. By this definition, any member of any society has a culture, with any normative discussion shifting from the presence to the content of

culture. Geertz (2000) notes that culture is the total way of life of a people or the social legacy the individual acquires from his group. Also, culture is a way of thinking, feeling, and believing, an abstraction from behavior; a storehouse of pooled learning; a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems; learned behavior; a precipitate of history and turning, perhaps in desperation, to similes, as a map, as a sieve, and as a matrix. Each of these aspects is subject to cultural variation and each of them is seen to be a defining characteristic of Western culture. For Taylor (1948) culture is a mental phenomenon, consisting of the contents of minds, not of material objects or observable behavior. Behaviour and produce are secondary and tertiary phenomena, constituting physical enactments and objectifications of the primary phenomenon of culture, which is both unobservable and non-material (Taylor, 1948).

Geertz (2000) argues that humans without culture would not recognizably be human that being Icelandic or Aztec or Roman is an essential precondition of being human. To him, culture is the key determinant in human behaviour, such that men build dams or shelters, locate food, organize their social groups, or find sexual partners under the guidance of instructions encoded in flowcharts and blueprints, hunting lore, moral systems and aesthetic judgments. There is the notion that culture, itself, is a means by which humans realize their intrinsic features. When seen as a set of symbolic devices for controlling behavior. Culture provides the link between what men are intrinsically capable of becoming and what they actually, one by one become.

Becoming human is becoming individual, and we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point, and direction to our lives (Geertz, 2000). And the cultural patterns involved are not general but specific. For example, not just "marriage" but a particular set of notions about what men and women are like, how spouses should treat one another, or who should properly marry whom. As culture shaped us as a single species and is no doubt still shaping us, so too it shapes up as separate individuals. This, neither an unchanging subculture itself nor an established cross-cultural consensus, is what we really have in common (Geertz, 2000).

Delaney, Lupton and Tooth (1988) submit that menstruation is a taboo, though a biological function of women's body and the media reinforce menstruation as a taboo. In line with this view, kissing (1996) confirms that media portrays menstruation in a negative light that influence how some women view themselves and their bodies. The literature regarding menstruation as a taboo in U.S. is extensive. Some studies including the history of menstruation as a taboo in U.S. show the embarrassment surrounding menstruation and the social stigma of discussing it in public (Robert 2004). Similarly, the study of Sharma et al (2018) in India reveals that menstruation has been

interpreted in different ways. Religion and culture in India for instance, considered menstruation to be a time of impurity.

Ebere (2016) posits that bride price is an essential component of the marriage institution that exists in different forms in many regions of the developing part of the world, and is widely practiced in sub-Saharan Africa. While several hypotheses have been advanced to explain its existence and processes, some are very critical of the practice, and arguing that the outcome-apart from being gendered and bent toward reinforcing masculinities and femininities-also create and reinforce male dominance. Further to this is the contention that the practice has been commercialized to the extent of becoming an issue for legislative control and reform across many regions.

This study was guided by the social learning theory by Bandura (1997), the historical roots of sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (1917), the radical Feminist theory (1988) and the Pearson's framework (1992). Bandura (1977) in his Social learning theory posits that, people learn from one another via observation, imitation and modeling. People learn through observing others' behaviour, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviours. Children's models can be their parents, peers and children go a long way to pick characteristics from several different models, whom they choose on the basis of how much powers a person seems to have and how nurturing, or caring, the person is.

Bandura's(1997),theory emphasizes that for effective modeling to take place the following processes must take into play: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. In relation to this work, nurturing women who are secure in the standards they hold for their culture provide models of caring concern as well as confident, self-controlled behaviour. A Bali Nyonga woman's modeling of these cultural practices provides emotional development, emotional understanding, social understanding and belongingness. Women see how their peers display emotions and interact with other people, and they emulate what they see their peers doing.

The work of sociocultural theory by Vigotsky (1917) is to explain how individual mental functioning is related to cultural, institutional, and historical context; hence, the focus of the sociocultural perspective is on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organized activities play in influencing psychological development. While much of the framework for socio-cultural theory was put forth by Vygotsky (1931/1997), extensions, elaborations, and refinements of socio-cultural theory can be found in writings regarding activity theory (Chaiklin& Lave, 1993; Leontiev, 1981) and cultural-historical activity theory (Cole, 1996; Cole & Engestrom, 1994). Socio-cultural theory aimed to create an account of human mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical, and instructional settings (Cole &

Scribner, 1978; Wertsch, del Rio & Alvarez, 1995). At a general level, this perspective asserts that action is mediated and that it cannot be separated from the social environment in which it is carried out (Wertsch, Del Rio & Alvarez, 1995).

This study also employs the radical feminist theory by Tong (1989) that focuses on the theory of patriarchy as a form of male dominance exercised by society (men) over women. The universality in female subordination has urged the radical feminists to analyze the social interpretation of human nature based on biology from a historical trend (Tong, 1989). Tong emphasizes that according to radical feminists, women are oppressed due to their anatomical difference to men. Karki and Espinosa support that social control on menstruating girls internalize the notion that women are inferior to men and that their own biology defines their weaker and subordinated position at home and in society. These authors stress that this situation lead to low self-esteem, shame and guilt which usually builds up when girls and women are restricted and segregated during menstruation. The cultural settings from a gender perspective seem patriarchal in nature and are characterized by male domination that subordinates' women and girls. This is as a result of the socialization that already took place at home between boys and girls, then triggers down to society in almost all social arenas; with an already conceived notion of boys growing to be future breadwinners, leaders and the head. This is reinforced in all social milieus where men are always at the head, and women at the tail. This has made it very difficult for women to socially integrate in almost all domains of culture as men build very strong patriarchal barriers, depriving women to act or speak freely in their midst. This theory suits this study as it appropriately integrates those cultural taboos and practices that hinder the social integration of women into the Bali Nyonga culture

Contextually, according to Taiwo (2015) no degree of stereotype against women existed in traditional Africa in the past. In traditional Africa, the responsibilities of both men women were seen as complementary to one another. There was co-independence and a balance that existed (ST, Clair 1994 as cited in Taiwa 2015). Similarly, Egyptian men and women during the pre-colonial period were legally equals. The position of women in Egyptian society was unique in the sense that they enjoyed the same legal and economic rights as Men. Social stratification was not based on gender, but on social class. Women could manage and dispose of private property, including land, portable goods, Servants, livestock and money as well as financial instruments. This is in support of Art 17 (1) of (MWPA) 1882 which states Every Women has the right to own and dispose of her property without the concern of any trustee or third party. A Woman could conclude any legal settlements and appear as contracting partner in a marriage or divorce. She was also entitled to sue at law (Tydesley, 1995).

Tydesley, points out that there were Women who had the right to bring law suits against anyone in open court and there was no gender-based bias against them.

In addition, Uwa (2008), asserts that in traditional Africa, women had recognized the vital role in the economic well-being of their communities. Among the KIKUYU of the Kenya, women were the major food producers and thus not only had ready access to land but also had authority of how the land was to be use and cultivated. Therefore, the values of women's producing and processing food established and maintained their rights in the domestic and other spheres. This author continues to reiterate that during the pre-colonial era, African bride wealth gave women a certain amount of economic independence as women in some society retained a measure of control over their bride wealth, which economically, empowered her to a certain extent.

On the contrary Aunobi (2012) argues that women in Zimbabwe during the pre-colonial period were excluded from access to land in their own rights although they could invest in livestock which of course required gazing. In the same view, beach (1980 and Mackenzie 1975) in Angela supported that the reason for exclusion of women from direct production and the family production lay in the payment of bride wealth, which not only transferred right in a woman's labour and reproductive capacity from her own family to that of her husband, but also indemnified her family for this loss.

Literature has revealed that many Africans inherited European cultures that distorted their tradition. To confirm this view, Harris (1987) notes that colonialism changed the status quo of the indigenous political system. He saw colonialism as totalitarian as it ruled every aspect women's lives, from the economic to political and social. in the same vein, St Clair (1994) explains that upon contact with European, indigenous people in African were confronted and stated interacting with a society that had markedly differed moral and value systems from their own as the colonial perspective of gender roles was fundamental that women were subordinate to men and that their role were less important because they were confirmed within the family unit; it was the men that had the decision making powers in addition, Hunter (1973) narrated this ordeal;

But since the era of colonialism women have been placed on the lower rungs of the proverbial ladder by the dominant force of capitalism, and how globalization, which emphasis this need for power, superiority and compartmentalization of role and responsibility with different values attacked to them.



## Statement of the Problem

Despite the rapid wind of modernization in society regarding women's efforts in social integration as per many cultures, women still need to be liberated from oppressive mechanisms constructed by some of these cultures. Every social group in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others have become harmful to a specific group of persons(women) (Mutthegheki, 2012). This study therefore sets out to investigate and identify those traditional taboos that effect the social integration of women in Bali Nyonga North West Region of Cameroon. The study answers specifically to the following research question. Which are those traditional taboos that hinder the social integration of women in Bali Nyonga?

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Cultural Practices

Tylor (2004) defines culture as a set idea, beliefs and ways of behaving of a particular society or race. This writer further explains that culture is important for every society because it serves as a guideline for everything that they do and this is prominent in the way the members of the different sexes are perceived. Brown (1995) proposed that seven elements that make up a culture. These are: artifacts, stories, heroes, rituals rites, ceremonies celebration symbols and symbolic action, beliefs and attitudes.

Artifacts are the physical things that are found having a particular symbolism for a culture. They may even be endowed with mythical properties. The artifacts act as reminders and triggers. It equally reminds the people of a culture of their identity as a member of that culture.

Culture is often embedded and transmitted through stories, whether they are deep and obviously indented as learning devices, Or whether they appear subtly, for example in honour and jokes. Sometimes these stories are true. Sometimes nobody knows. Sometimes they are elaboration on a relatively simple truth. The power of the stories depends on when and how they are told and the effect they have on their recipients (Brown, 1995).

Heroes in a culture are names of people who act as prototypes, or idealized examples, by which cultural members learn of the correct or perfect behaviour. The classic heroes are the founders of the organization who often portrayed as much whiter and perfect than they actually are or were. Heroes may also be seen as janitors who tackled a burglar or a customer-service agent who went out of their

way to delight a customer. In such stories, they symbolize and teach people the ideal behaviors and norms of the culture (Brown, 1995)

Rituals are set of action which is repeated in specific circumstances and with specific meaning. They may also be associated with everyday events such as Christmas. Whatever the circumstance, the predictability of the rituals and the seriousness of the meaning all combine to sustain the culture (Brown, 1995).

Mead (2002) notes that culture means the whole complex of traditional behaviour which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation. However, this writer explains that for specificity of the notion of culture with respect to a given human society, culture can also mean the form of traditional behaviour which are characteristic of a given society, or of a group of societies or of a certain race, or of certain area or of a certain period of time.

In the same vein, Keesing (1981:68) holds that culture is learned, accumulated experience. He equally sees culture as those socially transmitted patterns for behaviours characteristic of a particular social group. The origin of the Latin word cultura is clear. It is a derivative of the verb colo meaning to tend, to cultivate, and to till. It can take objects such as ager, hence agrucultura, whose literal meaning is 'field tilling, another possible object of the verb colo is animus (Character'). In that case, the expression would refer to the cultivation of the human character. Consequently, the Latin noun cultura can be associated with education and refinement (Tucker 1931). The culture of any society consists of the sum total of ideas, conditioned, emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour which the members of that society have acquired through instruction or imitation and which they share to a greater or less degree (Linton 1936:24). According to Harris (1975), Culture is the total socially acquired life-style of a group of people. it consists of the pattern, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of a society.

Kroeber and Parsons (1958) define culture as transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in shaping of human behaviour. Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional and selected ideas and especially their attached values (Kluckhohn, 1951)

Taylor (1958) sees culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, moral, customs or any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Bello (1991) holds that culture is the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms thus distinguishing a people from their neighbors. Culture serves to distinguish a people from others. Aziza (2001) asserts that culture refers to the totality of the pattern of behavior of a particular group of people. This writer further explains that culture includes everything that makes them distinct from any other group of people for instance, their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philosophical beliefs.

Culture is passed on from one generation to generation. The acquisition of culture is a result of the socialization process. Fafunwa (1974) states that a child grows into his or her culture and within the cultural heritage of the people; he or she imbibes it. This writer explains that culture in traditional society is not taught, it is caught the child observes, imbibes and mimics the action of his elders and siblings. He watches the naming ceremonies, religious service, marriage rites, and funeral obsequies. He witnesses the coronation of a king or chief, the annual festival, the annual dance and acrobatic display of guilds and age groups or his relations in the activities. The child in traditional society cannot escape his culture and physical environments. Idang (2009) explains that culture has been classified in to material and non-material aspects. This writer holds that material culture are visible tactile objects which man is able to manufacture for the purposes of human of human survival; non material culture compresses of the norms and more of the people. While material culture is concrete and takes the form of artifacts and crafts, non-material culture is abstract but has a very pervasive influence on the lives of the people of a particular culture. Hence beliefs about what are good and bad, together with norms and taboos, are all example of non-material culture. According to Etuk (2002) culture are not static, they change. Culture is carried by people and people do change their social patterns and institutions, beliefs and values and even skills and tools of work, then culture cannot but be an adaptive system. Idiong (1994) opines that there are some misconceptions that are widely held about culture as a word. Such misconceptions can and often lead some persons to have a negative perception of culture and all that it stands for. This write continue that such persons raise their eyebrows and suddenly frown at the word culture as their minds' eyes visualize masquerades, idol worshipping, traditional jamborees and other activities they consider bizarre that go with culture.

Culture is a construct. A construct is not directly accessible to observation but inferable from verbal statements and other behaviors and useful in predicting still other observable and measurable verbal and non- verbal behaviors. A construct can also be thought of as a complex mental idea that reflects objectively existing phenomena (Levitin 1973). In another view, Ezedike (2009:455) stipulates that culture is the sum total of shared attitudinal inclinations and capabilities, art, beliefs, moral codes and practices that characterize Africans. It can be conceived as a continuous, cumulative reservoir containing both material and non-material elements that bear socially transmitted from one generation to another.

Cultural practice is the manifestation of a culture or sub-culture, especially in regard to the traditional and customary practices of a particular ethnic or other cultural group. The term is gaining in importance due to the increased controversy over "rights of cultural practice", which are protected in many jurisdictions for indigenous peoples and sometimes ethnic minorities (Orebech, 2005). It is also a major component of the field of cultural studies, and is a primary focus of international works such as the United Nations declaration of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Cultural practice is also a subject of discussion in questions of cultural survival (Romero-Daza, 2002). If an ethnic group retains its formal ethnic identity but loses its core cultural practices or the knowledge, resources, or ability to continue them, questions arise as to whether the culture is able to actually survive at all (Wang, 1996).

### **Social Integration**

The Latin word 'integer' can be translated as 'whole' and essential' while integration means connecting parts into a large whole. The parts are individuals, groups or more large-scale social categories like classes. The social wholes can be groups, classes, nations, states or 'world society' (Osterberg, 1985).

Ferguson (2008) defines social integration as the process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all people to participate in social, economic and political life on the basis of equality of rights, equality and dignity. This writer further explains that promoting social integration requires attention to three different, but inter-linked, processes that shape the extent to which people are able to live and work together on an equal basis: these are;

- 1) Recognition of diverse social group, cultures, and identity in order to promote respect, dignity and co-operation.

- 2) Representation of political voice in order to ensure that the interests of different groups are taken in to account in decision-making and resource allocation.
- 3) Redistribution of socio-economic resources between individuals and group in order to prevent deep disparities and fragmentation on the basis of wealth, ethnicity, region, gender, age or other social identity.

Cummins (2017) sees social integration as a situation where minority groups come together or are incorporated in to mainstream society. He further explains that social integration is largely agreeing on a shared system of meaning, language, and culture. This writer holds that increased social integration helps reduce conflict in society, and help us feel more connected to our community.

Durkheim (1892) holds that society is a collective consciousness of people that is the way we think, feel, and behave is influence by society in a major way. This writer highlights a couple of difference types of social integration which he referred to as kind of solidarity; He believes that mechanical solidarity binds more primitive or smaller societies together. He equally holds that a complex division of labour requires us to rely on each other more. This kind of interdependence creates increased social integration instead of simply our similarities.

### **Traditional Taboos and Social Integration of Women in Society**

Traditional taboo refers to a prescription of behavior for a specifiable community of one or more person at a specifiable time in specifiable contexts (Allan & Burried, 2006). Freud (1920) notes that the origin of taboo is largely unknown; as he points out that taboos include a wide range of topics and behaviors such as menstruation, illnesses, sexual behaviors and food preparation.

Traditional taboo is a prohibition against performing certain acts and it is motivated by magical or social sanction. (Balandier and Magnet, 1974) define taboos as the way in which a society expresses disapproval of certain kind of behavior believed to be harmful to its members, either for supernatural reason or because such behavior violates a moral code (Wardhaugh, 1986). Taboo is common to all civilization but it is systemized in many African countries. Among the Yoruba for instance, taboo are used to enforce moral rules. Whether or not they can stand the test of empiricism and logicity is another issue that has not escaped the attention of scholars. Familusi (2010) holds that some of those taboos limit the rights of women and for this reason some taboos have been understood as a way of enforcing patriarchal dominance. For instance forbidding women from entering certain '*juju*' houses. Cultures around the world have created prohibited behaviors when woman are menstruating. Menstruation is a biological process but the way people perceive menstruation is developed from

their cultural context. With similar situation from Leviticus 15:25-27 in the Bible regarding menstruation as unclean, Hasidic Jews ride separate buses from menstruation women in Manhattan to remain clean (Chrysler, 2013, Delaney et al 1988). Munhall (2016) carried out a research on menstruation hygiene taboos and found out that a 15 year –old Nepal girl called Rosanne Tiruwan was suffocated to death, after she was made to sleep in a shed because she was menstruating. This writer further explains that the girl was banished to a shed because she was menstruating. She probably died of suffocation from smoke of a fire she lit to keep herself warm. According to the writer, some Hindus view menstruating women as impure and, in parts of Nepal, they are forced to remain in hut or cow shed for a practice as champed

Accord (2002) argues that women during pre-colonial era had limited access to education. There were a lot of social and cultural barriers that prevent women from integrating fully in to the peace building processes and peace-making initiatives during this era. According to Sembene (1974), socio-cultural and religious structures during the pre-colonial period created barriers against women social integration in to their society making it difficult for them to be recognized at the negotiation table. Women are usually disempowered, as compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, Nibigira (1999) holds that social and cultural factors resulted to women having less education as compared to men and this limited their access to leadership. Women are usually victims resulting from cultural activities on violent conflict, yet they are not given the time and opportunities to get involved in the peace negotiation process. Nagashima (1978) states that culture during the pre-colonial era sees the father as the head of the family; and all the other including the wife or wives have to get instructions from him. A wife and her children form a property unit belonging not to her but to the husband. Though she might have some autonomy, she has no control over livestock, leadership, or family rituals. This mean she has to rely on the husband for ever thing including her own body. For instance, men among the Somali community force their wives to cover their bodies completely in black cloths, despite the hot climatic condition (Zallah, 1979). Cultural support structure like polygamy and male supremacy over women which is common in patriarchal society relegated women to a class which is lower than the ordinary man. Johnson (1999) asserts that religion which is inseparable from cultural practices among the Samali community is a big impediment to the emancipation of Samali women. Since men are the custodians of tradition, it becomes very difficult to have a clear-cutline between cultural practices and religious norms among the Samali of Kenya.

In Africa, African society is essentially patriarch; hence men are understood to be more privileged than women. Such a society is described by Ubrurhe (1999: 82) as that which is characterized by male super ordination and female subordination. Men show superiority over their women counterparts,

who are usually relegated to the back ground. Therefore, socially, political, economically and religiously women are to a very large extent; disadvantaged since decision were taken mostly by the males. According to Adetunji (2001), the cultural and gender problem, which African women have been facing dates back to their birth in many homes the birth of a baby girl does not receive the kind of enthusiastic reception that is usually given to that of a baby boy. Thus, if somebody were treated with inferiority right from birth, that person may be perpetually caught in the web of such a treatment. Olabode (2009) also affirms that on one hand, immediately a child is born, the question that will be posed centres on sex, irrespective of the health of the women. If the baby is a female, the mother will be scolded and treated as a lazy, 'good for nothing woman'. On the other hand, if the child is a male, praises will be showered on the mother, not considering the fact that biology has shown that it is the father who determines the sex of an offspring. Oduyoye's (2001) view is that African culture is replete with language that enables the community to diminish the humanity of women. She believes that African culture has been a long tale of discrimination and injustice to women as there has not been equality in the opportunity, dignity and power between men and women. Her reason is that there are various aspects of African culture which restrict them from attaining equal status with men.

Mifumi (2016) points out that during the pre-colonial era, men were at a high status vis-a-vie the women. Men determined the 'dos' and 'don'ts' in Tororo society of Eastern Uganda and biasness was tilted in favour of the men. Activities like splitting firewood, cooking, collecting water from the well and sweeping a house and just to mention a few was considered too demeaning for a man. Women had very little say in society especially in public affairs. Women were supposed to be submissive especially to their husbands. They were expected to greet the man while sitting down or kneeling. During social gatherings they were to find seats on mats or grass as chair and stools were preserved for the men. Women were barred from eating some nutritious food such as chicken, egg, pork or some parts of the carcass of a cow or a goat.

Delaney, Lupton and Tooth (1988) argued that menstruation is a taboo, though a biological function of women's body and the media reinforce menstruation as a taboo. In line with this view, kissing (1996) confirms that media portrays menstruation in a negative light that influence how some women view themselves and their bodies. The literature regarding menstruation as a taboo in U.S. is extensive. Some studies including the history of menstruation as a taboo in U.S. show the embarrassment surrounding menstruation and the social stigma of discussing it in public (Robert 2004). Similarly, the study of Sharma et al (2018) in India reveals that menstruation has been

interpreted in different ways. Religion and culture in India for instance, considered menstruation to be a time of impurity.

It is equally reviewed in this study that menstruation is strongly associated with religious sentiments where girls are not allowed to visit religious places and offer prayers. These scholars also found out that there are restrictions for women and girls during their period to go to the temple, share beds, enter the kitchen and eat certain types of food because their bodies emit some specific smell or ray that poisons food. It is believed that if a girl or a woman touches a cow while she is on her period that cow will become infertile, leading women and girl to associate their own bodies with curse and impurity. Hyatt (2014) conducted a study in Nepal and found out that 41% of girls globally do not attend school during menstruation; 70.7% of girls missed school during menstruation; in Malawi circa 90% of girls had missed school due to menstruation related causes and in India, over 20% of girls drop of school after reaching puberty. These girls miss during their menses because of lack of privacy for cleaning and washing at school compounds.

In some African culture like Nigeria, it's a taboo for menstruating woman to participate in the sacrifice to Obalala-Yoruba divinity of fertility and other religious activities. This is because they belief that menstrual period is a time of impurity or defilement. Women are equally forbidden from entering in to any sacred places because they could render all objects there ineffective. This taboo apart from depicting women as being unclean equally reduces their relevance in religious activities (Familusi, 2010). In the same vein, it is a taboo for women to watch "oro" (a Yuroba deity in Nigreia). The "Oro" religious activities are exclusively preserved for men. In order to prevent women from having it knowledge, they are traditionally not allowed to see or get involved in to it so as not to see its nakedness. These taboos seriously affect the freedom of movement for women. In Hindu culture, menstruation is seen as religiously impure and ceremonially unclean. Once menstruation began, it is a taboo for women to participate in day to day activities (Montgomery 2001). She is expected to take bath soon after she wakes up from sleep for which there is a separate place for her to bath. She has to use separate mat for sleeping which should be washed every day along with the cloths she used. It is also a taboo for her to go to *pooja* room as referred to in Hindu. This scholar emphasizes that the female on her flower should use separate vessel, should not throw out her dress with blood stain, allow the dog to eat the food remaining after eating, see men and touch flowers before bathing, or see birds during menstruation (Young & Bacdayan, 1965 as cited in Tamil, 2012).

Karki and Espinosa (2018) highlight further that menstruation in many parts of the world is still associated with misconceptions and taboo practices that have an adverse effect on the well-being of girls and women. The perception of women's blood being polluting and dirty creates a range of



restrictions on their physical mobility and activities that affect their self-esteem and limits their agency and capabilities. Social control on menstruating girls make them believe that a girl is different and inferior to their male peers, which has physiological impact on women in terms of feeling ashamed, embarrassed, even angry and negative about their own body functions.

In continuation, Oke (2001) opines that inheritance as cultural practice within the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria is not women friendly. This writer explains that traditionally, the issue of will was non-existent. Thus after the burial of the deceased, the oracle was consulted to fix a time for the sharing of the property (human-wives, offices and materials). Even sharing of offices is male centred as it is a taboo for a woman to be made the head of the family. No matter how young a male child is, he is superior to female children in this regards no matter how old they are. However, in Igbo land still in Nigeria, it is a taboo for a woman to inherit anything from their fathers.

Tydesley (1995) revealed that during the colonial era, the situation of women in Western Europe was deplorable. They ran the household, were nurses, child bearers, wives and care givers. In France, for instance, females in society were always hidden behind the men in their lives. Other historians even argue that in spite of all the progress made during the enlightenment, the condition of women in the society was not improved. Women face the same situation in Germany. Her role in society was summed up and circumscribed by the three 'K' words: Kinder (children), Kirche (church), and Kuche (Kitchen) (Martin 1995 as cited in Segued, 2015). In the Ancient Greece, a woman was defined through her relationship with the man, while her status depends on her being a mother, sister or daughter to the man. These women were regarded as perpetual minors who could not even give evidence in public courts. In Ancient Rome as well, women citizenship was referred to as 'civisromana', meaning citizens with only private, not public right (Dochin, 1999).

However, other research analysts provide similar reasons, affirming that almost all colonial masters, political leaders and military figures were all men Njoku (1981) reveals in the British Legislative Council of the colonial masters that there was no record of a single woman appointed to represent her country by any of the Government bodies throughout the colonial period. He adds that an economic system was introduced by the Europeans, which was structured in a way that men had more opportunities than their women counterpart.

In Africa, precisely in Nigerian, Okome (2002) notes that during the colonial era, structures that created inequality which led to discrimination against women were institutionalized as a new legal structure like native laws and customs. The imposition of colonialism involved the construction of a system where women had less opportunity to participate in administration. To him, these elements

of institutionalized male supremacy stemmed from the Victorian ideology where women were generally restricted from full participation in the public spheres.

Njoku (1981) holds that looking at the intersections of Western Victorian life and its extension to Africa; it becomes clear that the gender inequalities we find in modern African societies cannot be attributed to African traditions alone, but a replica of their various colonialists. This author insists that imported religions, culture and colonialism decisively shaped the current mindset in Africa which has a negative impact on the current gender issue in African countries.

Although cultures across borders affect women negatively, literature shows that during the pre-colonial times, respect for women was inherent in most African cultures. Many natural processes related to women, such as childbirth, were considered mysterious, so women enjoyed great prestige. Finch (1971) carried out a private research on African antiquities, comparative myth and religious stating that early African men did not know the link between sex and birth. Therefore, it was believed that new life was created by the women. It was perceived that all life in nature emerged from women alone because of her motherhood tendencies. Women thus, were highly respected, which was an interesting factor for gender cohesion in society. In the pre-colonial kingdom of Dahomey, which is present-day Benin, shows how women exercised political power in Africa. The Queen mother called “*Kpojito*” in the local language, was the female reign-mate of the king of Dahomey. She was the richest and most powerful woman in the kingdom. She also helped to bring kings to power in the first place. No one could reach the king without securing the approval of the powerful palace women. It was they who spoke directly to him. And only they knew when a king died, which gave them time to position themselves so as to have an influence on who would be the next chosen king (Berger & White, 1999) similarly, historical records in Africa have shown the existence of little or no significant gender inequality in traditional Africa society, rather the complementary role of women to men. Traditionally, women have served as queen mother’s queens, and in some areas were political chiefs holding offices in towns and villages, and they have served in high position in the economic life of their societies and engaged in farm or trade. For the most part, Ghanaian women are singularly autonomous, self-reliant and achievement-oriented (Machakanja, 2015) Asi and Teri (2016) Conducted a study on the influence of food taboos on nutritional patterns in rural communities in Cameroon. The objective of the study was to examine how culture (food taboos) influences consumption patterns in traditional communities and the impact of disobedience on the people. A total number of two hundred and fifty (250) people were randomly sampled for the study. Participants were purposively selected to cater for mixed schools, boys’ and girls’ schools. A questionnaire was designed by the researchers to measure the effects of food taboos on nutritional

patterns in rural communities in Cameroon. Using Independent t-test for analyzing the hypotheses results arrived at were that, there is no significant difference between food taboos and nutritional patterns in rural communities. The findings showed that food taboos have dietary rules and regulations govern particular phases of life which is associated with special events like pregnancy, childbirth, lactation etc. In traditional societies, festivities such as hunting, wedding, and funeral are marked by specific food items.

Goldern and Comaroff (2015) conducted a study on the social change on wildlife consumption taboos in the Northern Madagascar. The main objective was to describe the food taboos of the local Malagasy living in the Northern Madagascar. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. The study made use of quantitative study using and empirical review. Hypothesis driven approach with rich ethnographic material was used for integration. Additionally, quantitative method was use to explore the meaning the mediating effects of migration, modernization, and spread of western religion on number of taboos and level of adherence. The result showed that the presence of extra local groups and migration did not decrease the number of taboos abided by local locally, but did increase rate of non-adherence the study investigate the temporal stability of taboos and local adherence. Modernization accompanied by general shifts intended to increase rather than erode the number of taboos, and younger individuals adhered to taboos to the same degree as the older individuals.

Ajonina, Abugiche, Terence, Egute and Atud (2017) conducted a study on the use of traditional taboos and custom in wildlife conservation in the Mount Cameroon National Park. A purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 13 villages from the 41 villages surrounding the park. A total number of 130 respondents were randomly selected for the study and data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. From the results, majorities (76.67%) of the respondents were male and, fall within the age range of 50–59 years (62.5%), attained secondary education and 80.83% were Christians. As the results reveal, a good percentage of the respondents were conversant with cultural practices and its impact in wild animal conservation as 70.83% and 20.83% of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that cultural practices are used for conserving wildlife species. Religion, migration and westernization were found to be responsible for the decline of cultural practices in wildlife conservation within the study area. One animal, the African forest elephant is revered as a deity throughout the study area, although there were taboos forbidding indigenes/residents from killing or eating some particular wildlife species (Chimpanzee, Western bush pig, African python, Preuss monkey, Blue duiker, Drill, African civet, African wild dog, Black kite, White-face owl and snail spp). Illegal communal hunting is still practiced in the area. It is

recommended that new and holistic wildlife conservation policies that will blend traditional systems of regulation, myths, rituals, and perceptions with existing wildlife legislation in the country be implemented to enhance conservation in this area.

Irwin (2007) conducted a study on “What’s bad is easy: Taboo values, affect, and cognition” in the University of Texas, USA. The research was to better understand taboo responses, and to distinguish choices that are truly taboo from those that are merely difficult or confusing. Using 22 scenarios that describe potentially taboo issues; Experiment 1 explores reasons for disapproval of the scenarios. We measure a large number of possible reasons for disapproval and a variety of preference responses (including willingness to accept), in order to test for subtleties in taboo responses. We also test cognitive and affective responses to the scenarios. Experiment 2 further explores the interaction, found in Experiment 1, between affective and cognitive factors. Taken as a whole, our results show that people are able to indicate their disapproval consistently across a variety of preference elicitation methods, that their disapproval is better understood as an attitude measure than as an economic valuation (even when the measure is in monetary terms), and that taboo responses are driven primarily by affect.

Cornell and Welch (1996) conducted a study on Taboos, agriculture and poverty in Madagascar. The study focus on the impact of work taboos (faddy days) on agriculture and poverty. Using cross-sectional data from a national household survey for Madagascar, the study found that 18% of agricultural households have two or more fady days per week and that an extra fady day is associated with 6 percent lower per capita consumption and 5 percent lower rice productivity. To address the possible endogeneity of fady days, we present instrumental variable estimates and heterogeneous effect regressions using village fixed effects. We find that smaller households and those with less education employ less labor in villages with more fady days.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research approach research adopted for this study was qualitative. The research design was phenomenological and ethnographic.

This study was carried out in Bali Nyonga Sub-Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. Bali Nyonga is among the five Administrative Units that makes up Mezam Division. Bali Nyonga became an Administrative District in 1966 following the Presidential Decree No. 66DF/433 of 26<sup>th</sup> August 1966 and gained the status of Sub Division in 1997 by Decree No79/469 of 14<sup>th</sup> November 1979. (Titanji, Gwanfogbe, Ndangam&Sema 1988:9). The Bali Nyonga Sub Division is found between the Bamenda-

Mamfehighways, with 18 villages. Bali Nyonga is situated on latitude 5.4 North of the Equator, longitude 10 East of the Greenwich Meridian, with the growth of 2.6 per annum. The people of Bali Nyonga are descendants of the Chamba between Nigeria and Cameroon being migrated around the 1600 and settled where they are today.

Succession dispute occurred in Bali Chamba after the death of their leader Gawolbeduring the battle of Bafut-fondongs in 1835 and, led to the founding of the seven Balifondoms today namely; Bali Nyonga, was led by Nyongpasi, the son of princess Na'nyonga wife of Samjewa. Bali Gangson, known as Donep, Bali Gasoh (Gashu) otherwise known as Gasonep led by Ga-Nyam. Bali Gham, known as Nepgavilbi was led by Ga-Sanga. Bali Kumbat otherwise known as Nepkolbi was led by Galega, Bali Muti, and Bali Nkontan. Bali Muti remained in the Northern part of Cameroon while the other five settled in the grass field in the North West Region of Cameroon. Bali Nkontan moved with the Bali Nyonga and settled where they are today, Bali Nyonga accommodated Bali Nkontan later to make up the present Bali Nyong of today.

Bali Nyonga, like any other tribe in Cameroon or Africa at large has a diversified culture which is highly respected. They have their annual festival called "*lela*" festival. It is an annual festival to commemorate the wars that the Chamba people in general and the Bali Nyongain particular fought and conquered other tribes through their migration path. The ceremony usually takes place in December and last for four days. It begins with launching titled "*pop lela*". There is the first day, which is called the "*ShuhFuh*" in other words the day of the purification of the flags. The second day is known as "*Lehti*". This is the day the Bali people remember the victories they had over a great number of groups or tribes as they advanced from their Chamba land to their present settlement, skills in gun firing or use of arms are displayed on this day

The third day of the '*lela* ceremony is called the '*Nchuh Ben*' (*Ben Mfon*). This day has little or no significance as far as the *lela* cult is concerned, for it is not preceded by any solemn ceremony. The fourth day which is known as '*Nchuh nun Kong*' is the last day of the *lela* ritual festival which is believed to be the day which the evil forces that might have been sent to try the powers of the flag or "*Tutuwan*" are sent away. Bali Nyonga has a handicraft Centre that attracts local visitors and tourists across borders. There is also a District Hospital with a mortuary, a Catholic hospital, Sub-division Office, a Paramount Fon Palace, Vitenary, Water by gravity, SONEL, a daily ma1aqarket, a prison, excellent numbers of schools ranging from nursery, primary, secondary and other higher institution of learning. Some of these schools include the Cameroon Christian University, Government Bilingual High School, Government Technical High School and Cameroon Protestant College. For primary schools, there exist government schools, Baptist, Presbyterian and lay private schools. There are

equally a good number of the villagers involved in different businesses like storekeeping “bayam sellam,” to mention some. Bali Nyonga has the various denominations, like Presbyterian, Catholic, Baptist, Apostolic, Full Gospel and many other Pentecostal Churches where marriages are solemnized. The Bali Nyonga people accepted polygamous marriage, but many young men today prefer monogamy. There is also a Customary Court, a Court of First Instance, and a District Council where marriages are contracted. They equally have hotels like Heritage Hotel, Safari Lodge Hotel and Belavie Hotel. However, the cross sections of the indigenes are farmers. They cultivate varieties of crops like maize, cassava, beans, cocoyams and other food crops. The main and favourite delicacy of the Bali Nyonga people are “fufu-corn” and njama-njama”.

The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting a sample size of 40 participants made up of, 40 women: 10 married women, 10 widowed women, 10 divorced women and 10 single women between the ages 18 years and above. Describing the 40 respondents by age range, 8 of them are within 20-30 years of age, 6 of them are within 31-40 years of age, 8 of them are within 41-50 years of age, 4 of them are within 51-60 years of age, 8 of them are within 61-70 years of age and 6 of them are above 71 years of age. The instrument used for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussions. Data was analyzed thematically and grounded.

## FINDINGS

### Identification of those traditional taboos that hinder the social integration of women in Bali Nyonga

**Table 1: Food that women of Bali Nyonga do not eat of**

The type of food	Grounding	Quotations
Food from Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe” and “Nda Voma” <b>(Names of the different jujuhouses)</b>	40	<p>“Yes, women are restricted from eating certain food from certain juju houses like “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe”. These are associations formed by group of men who came together and make laws that binds their association. They assigned women to prepare fufu corn and they are the ones to prepare the soup because they don’t want women to eat it”</p> <p>“We are not allowed to eat food from the juju houses like “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe” All the men in this association are men and women are not allowed to eat from there”.</p> <p>“Yes, women are restricted from eating certain food from certain juju houses like “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe. It is a secrete tradition and they inherited from their ancestors. Again from origin our ancestor had the believed that association is good only for men”.</p> <p>“Yes, my father is a member of Nda Ngumba. She told me that women are not supposed to eat food from that house and also</p>

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		Nda Njuankwei. When my mother prepares food, only my brothers are allowed to eat”..
<b>Goat meat prepared by men in association</b>	9	<p>“Women are not allowed to eat goat meat from juju houses”.</p> <p>“Those “Juju” houses mentioned about do not allow women to be part of them. They play their “Njangi, carry out refreshment, prepare food and goat meat. Women only prepare the food then the men prepare their goat meat.</p> <p>“Women are not allowed to eat goat meat coming from Nda Tuu Nyankwe, Nda Ngwei and others in the palace”</p> <p>“Today, women are not allowed to eat goat coming from certain juju houses in Bali Nyonga. The men who are part of the association prepare their goat and women prepare fufu corn for them”.</p>
<b>Gizzard Chicken</b>	2	<p>“A woman is not allowed to eat gizzard. This explains why men eat all the gizzards in Bali cultural associations”.</p> <p>“When my mother prepared chicken in the house, she will not allow me to eat the gizzards. She will either give it to my brothers or father that only men eat gizzards”.</p>
<b>Egg and chicken (Before)</b>	2	<p>“Before we were not allowed to eat egg and chicken. The men were the only ones eating it”.</p> <p>“Before, women were restricted from eating egg and other parts of meat. It was a belief that when a woman eats certain part of meat when pregnant, it will affect the baby”.</p>

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Findings showed that all the 40 respondents sampled for study said that women of Bali Nyonga do not eat food from “juju” houses like “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe” “Nda Voma” as depicted in some of their statements *“Yes, women are restricted from eating certain food from certain juju houses like “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe”. These are associations formed by group of men who came together and made lawas that bends their association. They assigned women to prepare fufu corn and they are the ones to prepare the soup because they don’t want women to eat it”, “We are not allowed to eat food from the juju houses like “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe” All the men in this association are men and women are not allowed to eat from there”, “Yes, they are not allowed to eat any food that has entered “Nda voma”, “Nada Negwei”, and “Tuu Nyankwe”. Etc.*

However, while some of the respondents were not specific, others did by saying that women do not eat goat meat prepared by men in associations like Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe” and

“Nda Voma as depicted in some of their statements *“Women are not allowed to eat goat meat coming from Nda Tuu Nyankwe, Nda Ngwei and others in the palace”, “Today, women are not allowed to eat goat coming from certain juju houses in Bali Nyonga. The men who are part of the association prepare their goat and women prepare fufu corn for them”* .

Furthermore, findings also showed that some of the respondents said women are not equally allowed to eat Gizzards as reported by two of the respondents *“A woman is not allowed to eat gizzard. This explains why men eat all the gizzards in Bali cultural associations” and “When my mother prepared chicken in the house, she will not allow me to eat the gizzards. She will either give it to my brothers or father that only men eat gizzards”* .

Additionally, findings showed that before, women of Bali Nyonga were not allowed to eat egg and chicken as reported by two (02) of the respondents, a woman and a man *“Before we were not allowed to eat egg and chicken. The men were the only ones eating it”.* *“Before, women were restricted from eating egg and other parts of meat. It was a belief that when a woman eats certain part of meat when pregnant, it will affect the baby”* .

**Table 2: Reasons women are restricted from eating certain food**

Themes	Groundings	Quotations
Ego	12	<p>“I feel that their reason for not allowing women to join or eat food from these houses is because of ego”.</p> <p>“For me, is just because of ego because they can not give any reason”.</p> <p>“When I asked my friend while women are not allowed to eat in juju house, he did not say anything and from there I concluded that is just ego and greed”.</p> <p>“Women were not allowed to enter into juju houses and I feel it is because of ego”.</p> <p>“The reason to me is because they do not want women to eat because of ego “.</p>
Greed	5	<p>“The reason for me is just because men are greedy. This is because there are men in the same house who collect their own share and take it home. My husband was a member, he used to bring his share at home and all of us will eat it”.</p> <p>“Is because of greed”.</p> <p>“The reason to me is because they do not want women to eat because of greed “.</p> <p>“For me, is just because of greed and power. This is because when I asked why women are not allowed, they said because women are not part of them which I did not understand what they meant by that”.</p>



Associatio n only for men	2	<p>“This is because this association is only for men mostly to the notables and not all men can be ma member but all men can eat food from there”.</p> <p>“This is because these associations belong only for men. Women are not allowed to be part”.</p>
Rituals been performed on the food	2	<p>“This is because some traditional rituals are been carried out on those food. That is why women are not allowed to eat it”.</p> <p>“The reason is because it our secret. Women are not part of it”.</p>

As far restriction of women are concerned, findings showed that many of the respondents said men of those associations could not give any concrete reasons. Thus, many of the respondents concluded by saying that is just ego as reported by some of them *“When I asked my friend while women are not allowed to eat in juju house, he did not say anything and from there I concluded that is just ego and greed”, “Women were not allowed to enter into juju houses and I feel it is because of ego”.*

Greed was also another reason that some of the respondents perceived men who are restricting women from eating food from Juju houses as reported by some of the respondents *“The reason for me is just because men are greedy. This is because there are men in the same house who collect their own share and take it home. My husband was a member, he used to bring his share at home and all of us will eat it”, “Is because of greed”.*

Also, other reasons while women are prevented from eating food from “Juju” houses are that the association is meant only for men and that some rituals are always been carried out on the food.

**Table 3: Places women from Bali Nyonga are restricted from entering**

The type of places	Groundin gs	Quotations
Juju houses “Ndaa Ngwe, Nda Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe”.	40	<p>“There are certain places in Bali where women are not allowed to enter like “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe”.</p> <p>“Yes, women are not allowed to enter the Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe. The women do not need any explanation as to why they are not allowed to enter”.</p> <p>“Women are not allowed to enter “Nda Ngumba”.</p> <p>“Yes, men do not allow us to enter their secrete association house like Nda voma”, “Nada Negwei”, and “Tuu Nyankwe.”.</p> <p>“Women are not allowed to enter into any of the “juju” association. It is meant for men not women”</p> <p>“Yes, women are not allowed to enter the associations like Nda voma”, “Nada Negwei”, and “Tuu Nyankwe.”.</p> <p>“Yes, women arec not allowed to enter the juju houses. When my father is oing there he goes with my brother”.</p> <p>“It is a taboo for a woman to enter Nda voma. During</p>

Nda voma dance there are some women who are selected to dance but are not allowed to see the voma. Only men and boys can see it”.

“Yes, women are not allowed to enter in “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe. Women do not need to know what are doing there. So the association is strictly for men”.

Based on places that women are restricted from entering, findings showed that the restrictions are linked to that fact women menstruate. One of the places that all the respondents said women are not allowed to enter is juju houses like “Ndaa Ngwe, Nda Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe” and “Nda voma” as reported by some of the respondents *“There are certain places in Bali where women are not allowed to enter like “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe”, “Yes, women are not allowed to enter the Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe. The women do not need any explanation as to why they are not allowed to enter”, “Yes, men do not allowed us to enter their secrete association house like Nda voma”, “Nada Negwei”, and “Tuu Nyankwe.”*

**Table 4: Reasons women are restricted from entering certain places (Juju houses)**

Themes	Groundin gs	Quotations
Kill power	16	<p>“Because when women enter such places during menses, they will kill the power powers of those things that help to protect the place or compound. These explain why you will normally see two ways to enter those restricted places, one when you are on your period and the other one when you are normal”.</p> <p>“They belief that the women under their menses will kill their powers”.</p> <p>“They belief that if a woman pass there during menses, it will kill their powers”.</p> <p>“Men belief that the menses will kill whatever is there to protect the compound”</p> <p>“Yes, majority of the men in Bali believe that a man is not supposed to sleep with the wife during menstruation for fear of losing powers”.</p>
Unclean	2	<p>“There reasons are because women are considered unclean”</p> <p>“The reason is that there are unclean during their menstruation”.</p>
Ego	1	<p>“I feel is ego and nothing else”.</p>
Association only for men	1	<p>“This is because the associations are for men and not for women. Women do not need any explanation but have to understand that is a secrete association for men only”.</p>

No right to speak in the midst of men	1	"This is because women have no right to speak in the midst of men".
Prevent pregnancy	1	"The reason they gave me is that it will prevent the women from getting pregnant which is doubt if it is true".

The following reasons were advanced as to why women are restricted from entering certain places (juju houses). The first reason is that fact women entering places like juju houses might kill the powers of the men as reported by some of the respondents *"Because when women enter such places during menses, they will kill the power powers of those things that help to protect the place or compound. These explain why you will normally see two ways to enter those restricted places, one when you are on your period and the other one when you are normal"*. Other reasons are that women are unclean, the association is only for men, have no right to speak in the midst of men with some of the respondents linking the restriction to ego of the men. Preventing of pregnancy was also another reason advanced for such restriction.

**Table 5: Restrictions faced by women from Bali Nyonga when menstruating**

Themes	Groundings	Quotations
Not allowed to enter the palace	31	<p>"Women are not allowed to enter the palace during menstruation or to dance "lela" round the palace".</p> <p>"A woman cannot enter the palace during menstruation".</p> <p>"Menstruation is bad luck and so, women are not allowed to enter the palace during menstruation."</p> <p>"Yes, they are restricted from entering the palace".</p> <p>"Yes, women are not allowed to enter the palace during menstruation".</p> <p>"Yes, they are not allowed to enter the palace".</p> <p>"A woman under menstruation is not allowed to enter the palace".</p>
No entering into the husband room	25	<p>"The women are not allowed to enter into their husband room".</p> <p>"Yes, when my wife is menstruating, she cannot enter into my room or sleep on the same bed with me till the menses is over".</p> <p>"A woman with her menses it not supposed to sleep with her husband on the same bed. I divorced my wife when I invited her into my room and she did not tell me if she was menstruating until I noticed it when I stated making love with her. That is what separated us. She claimed she did not discover it until when we were making love. She wanted to kill my power. That is why I divorced her".</p> <p>"Yes, my cousin was married to the Fon. She could not have a child and had to live the palace. The reason was because the only way she could be pregnant was during her menses and since she could not enter their husband</p>

		room it was a big problem. She had no choice but to live the palace and got married to another man. Today she is a mother of three. She would have been become barren because of culture".
Restriction from passing through main compound of notables	20	<p>"They are restricted from entering the compound of notables using the main entrance during menstruation as their menses can kill their powers".</p> <p>"They are restricted from entering into certain compound especially those of notables".</p> <p>"Women in menstruation are not allowed to pass through the compound of the notables in Bali".</p> <p>"A woman under menstruation is not allowed to enter into the main compound of the notables. This is because they belief that the menstruation will kill their powers".</p> <p>"Yes, women are not allowed to pass through the compound of notables and sub chief in Bali Nyonga. That is why most of those compounds have two ways, one for those who are not menstruating and other one for those who are menstruating".</p>
Restriction from "Lala" rituals	19	<p>"They do not take part in the "lala" rituals because of menstruation.</p> <p>"They are restricted from dancing the "lala" round the palace".</p> <p>"The women are not allowed to dance the "lala" round the palace".</p> <p>"They are not also allowed to dance the "lala" round to the palace".</p> <p>"A woman under menstruation is not allowed to dance the "lala round the palace. She does not follow men to go where the "lala" ritual is being performed".</p>

**Continuation of Table 5: Restrictions faced by women from Bali Nyonga when menstruating**

Themes	Groundings	Quotations
Not to have sex with their husband	7	<p>"Yes, majority of the women do not sleep with their husband during menstruation This is because they are considered during this period as unclean and bad lock. This explains why most men in Bali Nyonga have their rooms separated from their wives and you only come when you are safe or free from menstruation".</p> <p>"Some are not allowed to have sex with their husband".</p> <p>"The woman is not supposed to sleep with her husband during menses. The bible too forbids that".</p>
No sharing of bed with the husband	2	<p>"Some are not allowed to enter into their husband room or sleep on the same bed".</p> <p>"Some women do not share room and bed during their menses with their husband".</p>

Findings also showed that women are faced with the following restrictions when menstruating. One of such restrictions as indicated by many of the respondents' women under menstruation are not allowed to enter the palace as depicted in the statements of some of the respondents *"Menstruation is bad luck and so, women are not allowed to enter the palace during menstruation."*, *"Yes, they are restricted from entering the palace"*, *"Yes, women are not allowed to enter the palace during menstruation"*, *"Yes, they are not allowed to enter the palace"*. Also, findings showed many of the respondents said women under menstruation are restricted by some men and notables from entering into their bed room as depicted in some of their statements

*"During my menstruation I was not allowed to enter my husband room or prepared food for him. When I am under my menses, my maid will prepare food for him and other duties"*, *"Women under their menses can not enter into some notable room"*, *"Those are a married to notables cannot enter into their husband room during menses for the fear of killing their powers in the palace"*. Etc.

Findings also showed that many of the respondents said women under menstruation are not allowed to pass through the main entrance leading to the compound of notables with some saying that women under menstruation are not even allowed to enter the compound of notables as depicted in some of their statements *"A woman under menstruation is not allowed to enter into the main compound of the notables. This is because they belief that the menstruation will kill their powers"*, *"Yes, women are not allowed to pass through the compound of notables and sub chief in Bali Nyonga. That is why most of those compounds have two ways, one for those who are not menstruating and other one for those who are menstruating"*, *"A woman under her menstruation cannot pass through my main compound that is why I made the second entrance for those under their menses"*.

Restriction from the "lala" rituals was also another restriction faced by women when menstruating as reported by some of the respondents *"They do not take part in the "lala" rituals because of menstruation. , "They are restricted from dancing the "lala" round the palace"*, *"The women are not allowed to dance the "lala" round the palace"*. Etc.

Not having sex with their husband and sleeping on the same bed with them are other restrictions that some women are faced with when menstruating.

**Table 6: Reasons women from Bali Nyonga do not share the same bed with their husband when menstruating**

Themes	Groundings	Quotations
Destruction of powers	29	<i>"During menses, some men see them as capable of destroying their powers"</i> . <i>"Those are a married to notables cannot enter into their</i>

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<p>Seen as unclean and bad lock</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>husband room during menses for the fear of killing their powers in the palace”.</p> <p>“This is because she can kill my powers”.</p> <p>“No, my wife cannot enter into my room or share bed with me during her menses because she can easily kill my powers”.</p> <p>“No, some notables in Bali d not allow their wives to enter their room during menstruation for fear that it will kill their powers”.</p> <p>“Some share while others do not for the fear that they will loss their powers”.</p> <p>“No, a woman is not supposed to share bed with her husband during menstruation. That is why women have their rooms and men have their. When I was growing up my father had a separate room form my mother and my mother never enter his room during her menstruation. Menstruation kills the power of the men”.</p> <p>“Yes, majority of the women do not sleep with their husband during menstruation This is because they are considered during this period as unclean and bad lock. This explains why most men in Bali Nyonga have their rooms separated from their wives and you only come when you are safe or free from menstruation”.</p> <p>“When I was menstruating it was a taboo to sleep with my husband because it was considered as a bad lock that is why majority of the men and all notables in Bali have their rooms separated from their wives and you can only come in when you are free”.</p> <p>“Some due share while others do not. Women married to notables cannot share the same bed or pass through some compound in Bali. This is because during their menses men see them as unclean people “.</p> <p>“No, my wife cannot enter into my room or share bed with me during her menses because she is unclean”.</p>
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Two reasons were stated by the respondents as to why some women under menstruation do not share bed with their husband. The first was the issue of power destruction of notables and some other men as depicted in the statements of some respondents *“During menses, some men see them as capable of destroying their powers”, “Those are a married to notables cannot enter into their husband room during menses for the fear of killing their powers in the palace”, “Some women share bed with their husband while those married to notables do not for fear of reducing their powers”*. Etc

The second reason is that women under menstruation are unclean as reported by some of the respondents *“Yes, majority of the women do not sleep with their husband during menstruation. This is because they are considered during this period as unclean and bad lock. This explains why most men in Bali Nyonga have their rooms separated from their wives and you only come when you are safe or free from*

menstruation". "When I was menstruating it was a taboo to sleep with my husband because it was considered as a bad luck that is why majority of the men and all notables in Bali have their rooms separated from their wives and you can only come in when you are free".

**Table 7: How leaders in Bali Nyonga are selected in cultural associations mixed with men and women**

Themes	Groundings	Quotations
Through election but president must be a man and woman the vice	40	<p>"Leaders are selected through election and the man must be the president and the woman the vice. A woman can ever role the men in the history of our village".</p> <p>"Leaders are selected through election and the man must be the president and the woman the vice. A woman can never be a president then the man vice. If we do that it means we have given our rights to the women".</p> <p>"The man must be the president and woman the vice. I have never seen a case where a woman is the president. This is just because of powers and nothing else".</p> <p>"The man must be the president and woman the vice. This is our culture".</p> <p>"Men are always at the top and women follow suit. That is the president must a man and woman the vice. In Bali Nyonga if a woman gives birth to twin and the girl comes out first, they will reverse their names and give the power to the boy".</p> <p>"Leaders are selected through election and the man must be the president and the woman the vice. If we allow a woman it means we are giving them our right which is not our culture".</p> <p>"Leaders are selected through election and the man must be the president and the woman the vice. This is because women are under men".</p> <p>"We select leaders in Bali through election. The man must be the president and woman the vice. I have seen that in all the Bali Nyonga associations, women are under men".</p>

Based on how leaders are selected in Bali Nyonga mixed cultural associations, finding showed that leaders are selected through election and that the man must be the president and woman the vice as stated by all the 40 respondents with reasons being that the culture demands so, women must be under men, men are the head of families and to show that men are powerful than women as depicted in the statements of some respondents "The man must be the president and woman the vice. This is our culture", "Men are always at the top and women follow suit. That is the president must a man and woman the vice. In Bali Nyonga if a woman gives birth to twin and the girl comes out first, they will reverse their names and give the power to the boy", "Leaders are selected through election. The man must be the president and woman the vice. This is because the man is the head of the family". Etc.

**Table 8: Reasons women are not allowed to hold the same position as men in mixed cultural meetings**

Themes	Groundings	Quotations
Man seen as the head of family	22	<p>“No, women can not hold the same position with a man because men are considered as the head of family”.</p> <p>“No, women cannot hold position the same like the men in Bali cultural association made up of men and women. This is because they are seen as the head of the family. Women can only hold the same responsibility like men only in an association that concerns only women”.</p> <p>“No, a woman can never hold the same position as men. The man must be the president and the woman vice. This is because the man is the head of the family and has full rights to control a woman”.</p>
Men perceived as powerful/superior than woman	18	<p>“No, it can only happen in the midst of women. This is because men are powerful than women”.</p> <p>“No, a woman cannot hold the same position and act in like men in the midst of men and women. She can only do so in the midst of women. This is because men are more powerful than women and again, a woman cannot control a man”.</p> <p>“No, this is because men are considered by the culture as superior to women”.</p> <p>“No, women can not hold the same position as men because the men have more powers over the Bali culture”.</p>
Women under men control	8	<p>“No, a woman can never hold such position. This is because women are under the men”.</p> <p>“No, she can not act in the midst of men. She can only act in among women. It is the men that have control over women”.</p> <p>“This is because women are under men”.</p> <p>“No, women can not hold the same position and act like a man in the midst of men. This is because the culture of Bali Nyonga put women under the men”.</p> <p>No, women can not hold the same position and act like a man in the midst of men. This is because the culture of Bali Nyonga out women under the men”.</p> <p>No, women can not hold the same position and act like a man in the midst of men. This is because women under the men”.</p>

**Continuation of Table 8: Reasons women are not allowed to hold the same position as men in mixed cultural meetings**

Themes	Groundings	Quotations
Pride price paid by men	6	<p>“This is because the men are the ones that paid the pride price of their wives thus given them the power to take decision wherever they go”.</p> <p>“This is because men are the once paying the bride price</p>



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		and we have right over the women”.
		“This is because men pay the bride price but women do not”.
		“No a woman has no right to control the man because they are not the one paying the bride price”.
Giving rights/ power to women	3	<p>“No, a woman can not hold the same position and act in the midst of men. Majority of the men can never allow a woman to do that. To them is means giving the woman their powers and this explains why in Bali Nyounga gathering of men will eat and drink first before the woman just to show their power over women”.</p> <p>“No, women can never hold the same position and act in the midst of men and women. She can only do so in the midst of women. The men feel that if they allow a woman to act like a man it means they have given their powers to the woman which is wrong”.</p> <p>“No, a woman cannot hold the same position ad act in the join meeting where you have men and women. If we accept that it means we are giving our rights to women. The culture demands that a man must be the top and the woman follows”.</p>
Taboo by the culture	1	“It is a taboo for a woman to hold the same position as men. Women cannot control me. If we allow a woman to act like a man in the midst of men it means we are given our powers to them”.

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Findings showed that all the 40 respondents said that women are not allowed to hold the same position as men in Bali mixed cultural associations. The first reason is that men are the head of the family as reported by some of the respondents *“No, women can not hold the same position with a man because men are considered as the head of family”, “No, women cannot hold position the same like the men in Bali cultural association made up of men and women. This is because they are seen as the head of the family. Women can only hold the same responsibility like men only in an association that concerns only women”*. Etc.

The second reason is that men are powerful than women as depicted in the statement of some respondents *No, it can only happen in the midst of women. This is because men are powerful than women”, “No, a woman cannot hold the same position and act in like men in the midst of men and women. She can only do so in the midst of women. This is because men are more powerful than women and again, a woman cannot control a man”*.

The third reason is that women must be under the men as depicted in the statements of some respondents *“No, a woman can never hold such position. This is because women are under the men”, “No, she*

*can not act in the midst of men. She can only act in among women. It is the men that have control over women”.*

The fourth reason is that men are those who paid the price of the women as some of the respondents said *“This is because the men are the ones that paid the pride price of their wives thus given them the power to take decision wherever they go”, “This is because men are the once paying the bride price and we have right over the women”.*

The last two reasons are that allowing women to hold the same position as men in Bali mixed cultural associations implies that men are giving their powers to a woman which is a taboo as reported by some of the respondents *“No, women can never hold the same position and act in the midst of men and women. She can only do so in the midst of women. The men feel that if they allow a woman to act like a man it means they have given their powers to the woman which is wrong”, “No, a woman cannot hold the same position ad act in the join meeting where you have men and women. If we accept that it means we are giving our rights to women. The culture demands that a man must be the top and the woman follows”.*

**Table 11: Women opinion on how taboos affect their social integration**

Themes	Groundin g	Quotations
Limit social interaction	3	<p><i>“This limits our interaction and capabilities”.</i></p> <p><i>‘This restriction due to taboos limits my interaction with my husband and among men during my menstruation because of inferior status”.</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes in school, because of my menses, I am unable to play with my friends”.</i></p>
Shame of self	2	<p><i>“The fact that women are considered unclean makes me to feel ashamed during menses.</i></p> <p><i>I always feel ashamed in the midst of men during my menses. That is why I am always at home during my period”.</i></p>
Feeling of inferiority complex	3	<p><i>“The fact that we cannot associate with men during menstruating shows that we are inferior to men and that our biology make us to be weaker and subordinate at home and in society which thus leading to low self-esteem, shame, and guilty”.</i></p> <p><i>“The restriction or social control on menses makes me belief that we woman and our girls are different and inferior to our males which has physiological impact on us in terms of feeling of shame, embarrassed, even angry and negative impact about our body function”.</i></p> <p><i>“Just the fact that men command more respect than women in the Bali Nyonga makes women to feel inferior in the midst</i></p>

of men”

Low self-esteem	2	<p>“The fact that our blood is polluting and dirty creates a range of restriction on our physical mobility and activities that affect our self-esteem”.</p> <p>“I am not happy with our culture because all the powers are in the hands of the men. The men command more respect than the women. They take all decision making us to feel less important”.</p>
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**Continuation of Table 11: Women opinion on how taboos affect their social integration**

Themes	Groundings	Quotations
Self hate	2	<p>“The fact that I can not enter my husband room or share bed with him during my menses creates a feeling of helplessness and of being treated unfairly because of nature. When I am about to see my menses I turn to hate my self because I will not go closer to him”.</p> <p>“When I started seeing my menses as a young girl, my mother told that I can not enter into my father room or pass through the main entrance to our compound. So, during menstruation, I started cursing my self and regret why I am a girl and not a boy. I was always sick because of the feelings I had”.</p>
Feel rejected	2	<p>“My husband compound was a very big compound. My husband was there with his five brothers and their wife. These men were not involving us in any decision making that concerned the family. They sit and take decisions on matters that concern the family and children without the knowledge of their wives. We could only get the information from our sons. This makes me feel rejected”.</p> <p>“When we the women are not given the authority of power to be a president in Bali mixed associations, we feel rejected”.</p>
Increase dependency on men	1	<p>“In the Bali associations, the fact men are the most respected and again the men are responsible for making all decisions make us to feel that our rights have been violated. It also limits our access to leadership thus making us depend on them”.</p>

Based on respondent’s opinion on how taboos affects the social integration of women in Bali Nyonga, findings showed that all the respondents said taboos negatively affect the social integration of the women by limiting their social interaction and capabilities as stated by some of the respondents “*This*

*limits our interaction and capabilities”, “This restriction due to taboos limits my interaction with my husband and among men during my menstruation because of inferior status”.*

Another effect of the taboos on the women is that some of them they feel ashamed of their self be the fact that they are considered as unclean during menstruation as reported by two of the women *“The fact that women are considered unclean makes me to feel ashamed during menses, “I always feel ashamed in the midst of men during my menses. That is why I am always at home during my period”.*

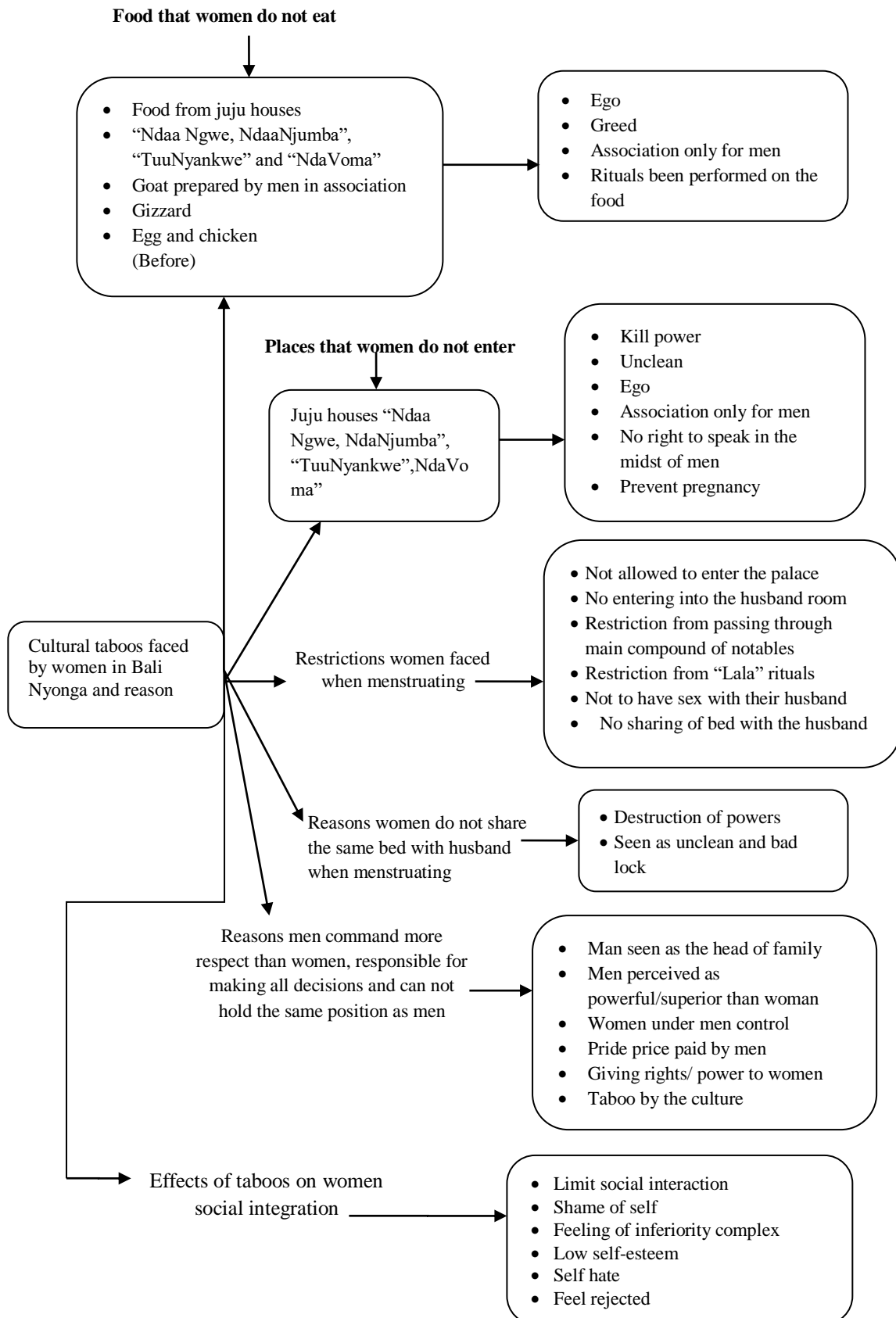
Also, some of the woman said they feel inferior as depicted in their statements *“The fact that we cannot associate with men during menstruating shows that we are inferior to men and that our biology make us to be weaker and subordinate at home and in society which thus leading to low self-esteem, shame, and guilty”, “The restriction or social control on menses makes me belief that we woman and our girls are different and inferior to our males which has physiological impact on us in terms of feeling of shame, embarrassed, even angry and negative impact about our body function”.*

Low self-esteem was also another effect of these taboos on the social integration of the women as reported by some of them *“The fact that our blood is polluting and dirty creates a range of restriction on our physical mobility and activities that affect our self-esteem”, “I am not happy with our culture because all the powers are in the hands of the men. The men command more respect than the women. They take all decision making us to feel less important”.*

Findings also showed that some of the women hate themselves because of some of taboos as reported by two of them *“The fact that I can not enter my husband room or share bed with him during my menses creates a feeling of helplessness and of being treated unfairly because of nature. When I am about to see my menses I turn to hate my self because I will not go closer to him”, “When I started seeing my menses as a young girl, my mother told that I can not enter into my father room or pass through the main entrance to our compound. So, during menstruation, I started cursing my self and regret why I am a girl and not a boy. I was always sick because of the feelings I had”.*

Finally, findings also showed that some of the woman said they feel rejected and highly dependent on men because of the cultural taboos as reported by some of them *“My husband compound was a very big compound. My husband was there with his five brothers and their wife. These men were not involving us in any decision making that concerned the family. They sit and take decisions on matters that concern the family and children without the knowledge of their wives. We could only get the information from our sons. This makes me feel rejected”” “In the Bali associations, the fact men are the most respected and again the men are responsible*

*for making all decisions make us to feel that our rights have been violated. It also limits our access to leadership thus making us depend on them”.*



**Figure 1**

**: Conceptual diagram showing summary of findings on how cultural taboos effects the social integration of women in Bali Nyonga**

## DISCUSSIONS

Findings showed that women of Bali Nyonga do not eat food from “juju” houses like “Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe” “Nda Voma” which hinders their social integration negatively. This is supported by Familusi (2010) who holds that some of those taboos limit the rights of women and for this reason some taboos have been understood as a way of enforcing patriarchal dominance. For instance, forbidding women from entering certain ‘juju’ houses. He argues that cultures around the world have created prohibited behaviors when woman are menstruating which influence their social integration negatively.

Findings equally revealed that women do not eat certain foods and meat such as Gizzards, goat meat, egg chicken, prepared by men in associations like Ndaa Ngwe, Ndaa Njumba”, “Tuu Nyankwe” and “Nda Voma which influence their social integration negatively. This is in line with Mifumi (2016) who points out that women were barred from eating some nutritious food such as chicken, egg, pork or some parts of the carcass of a cow or a goat which influence their social integration negatively.

The findings are also in line with Accord (2002) who argues that women during pre-colonial era had limited access to education and were restricted from eating some certain food that influenced them negatively. There were a lot of social and cultural barriers that prevent women from integrating fully in the peace building processes and peace-making initiatives. Despite being the major victims of gender based violence such as domestic violence and rape, they rarely get involved to negotiating conflicts (Accord, 2002). According to Sembene (1974), socio-cultural and religious structures during the pre-colonial period created barriers against women social integration in to their society making it difficult for them to be recognized at the negotiation table. Women are usually disempowered, as compared to their male counterparts. In the same light, Nibigira (1999) holds that social and cultural factors resulted to women having less education as compared to men and this limited their access to leadership. Women are usually victims resulting from cultural activities on violent conflict, yet they are not given the time and opportunities to get involved in the peace negotiation process.

Based on findings, restrictions of women from eating certain food and entering certain houses are linked to that fact women menstruate which makes them unclean. The reason is that women entering places like juju houses might kill the powers of the men. This is in congruence with Leviticus 15:25-27 in the Bible regarding menstruation as unclean, Hasidic Jews ride separate buses from menstruation

women in Manhattan to remain clean (Chrysler, 2013, Delaney et al 1988). This is equally in congruence with Munhall (2016) who carried out a research on menstruation hygiene taboos and found out that a 15 year –old Nepal girl called Rosanne Tiruwan was suffocated to death, after she was made to sleep in a shed because she was menstruating. This writer further explains that the girl was banished to a shed because she was menstruating. She probably died of suffocation from smoke of a fire she lit to keep herself warm.

Findings also showed that women are faced with the following restrictions when menstruating. They are not allowed to enter the palace, not allow entering into their husband room, restricted from passing through main compound of notables, Restriction from “Lala” rituals, not to have sex with their husband and no sharing of bed with the husband. This is supported by Delaney et al (1988) where they submit that menstruation is a taboo, though a biological function of women’s body and the media reinforce menstruation as a taboo. In line with this view, kissing (1996) confirms that media portrays menstruation in a negative light that influence how some women view themselves and their bodies. The literature regarding menstruation as a taboo in U.S. is extensive. Some studies including the history of menstruation as a taboo in U.S. show the embarrassment surrounding menstruation and the social stigma of discussing it in public (Robert 2004). Similarly, the study of Sharma et al (2018) in India reveals that menstruation has been interpreted in different ways. Religion and culture in India for instance, considered menstruation to be a time of impurity.

Based on respondents opinions on how traditional taboos affects the social integration of women in Bali Nyonga, findings showed taboos negatively affect the social integration of the women by limiting their social interaction and capabilities. This is in line with Mifumi (2016) who points out that traditional taboo influence women social integration negatively since during the pre-colonial era where men were at a high status vis-a-vie the women. Men determined the ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ in Tororo society of Eastern Uganda and biasness was tilted in favour of the men. Activities like splitting firewood, cooking, collecting water from the well and sweeping a house and just to mention a few was considered too demeaning for a man. Women had very little say in society especially in public affairs. Women were supposed to be submissive especially to their husbands. They were expected to greet the man while sitting down or kneeling. During social gatherings they were to find seats on mats or grass as chair and stools were preserved for the men.

Karki and Espinosa (2018) highlight further that menstruation in many parts of the world is still associated with misconceptions and taboo practices that have an adverse effect on the well-being of girls and women. The perception of women’s blood being polluting and dirty creates a range of restrictions on their physical mobility and activities that affect their self-esteem and limits their

agency and capabilities. Social control on menstruating girls make them believe that a girl is different and inferior to their male peers, which has physiological impact on women in terms of feeling ashamed, embarrassed, even angry and negative about their own body functions.

The findings are related to the Lev Vygotsky sociocultural theory (1979) in that women will participate in a broad range of joint activities and internalize the effects of working together, they acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture. Typically this tenet has been illustrated by examining the interactions between individuals with disparate knowledge levels; for example, women will acquire culture base on cultural practices by more knowledgeable adult which will help them in social integration in the society. However, as Tudge and Scrimsher (2003) note, Vygotsky was not only interested in what more knowledgeable others brought to the interaction, but also in what the child himself or herself brought to the interaction, as well as how the broader cultural and historical setting shaped the interaction. Therefore women will learn some taboos from their culture through social interaction with more knowledgeable others which will influence their social integration.



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