



## Mind Your Attitude: The Impact of Patriarchy on Women's Workplace Behaviour

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – By conceptualising patriarchy in the workplace as a social situation, this study examines the prevalence of patriarchal attitudes and their impact on women's workplace behaviour among Nigerian organisations.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study uses a qualitative research approach, drawing on data from 32 semi-structured interviews with female employees and managers in two high-street banks in Nigeria.

**Research Limitations** – The extent to which the findings of this research can be generalised is constrained by the limited sample and scope of the research.

**Findings** – The study finds that patriarchy shapes women's behaviour in ways that undermine their performance and organisational citizenship behaviour. Furthermore, the study finds that patriarchal attitudes, often practised at home, are frequently transferred to organisational settings. This transference affects women's workplace behaviour and maintains men's (self-perceived) superior status quo, whereby women are dominated, discriminated against, and permanently placed in inferior positions.

**Practical Implications** – The challenges posed by the strong patriarchy on women's workplace behaviour are real and complex, and organisations must address them in order to create a fairer workplace in which employees can thrive. It is therefore essential for organisations to examine periodically their culture to ensure that all employees, regardless of gender, are involved in the organisation's affairs. Furthermore, organisations need to help women become more proactive in combatting patriarchal behaviour, which often affects their performance and organisational citizenship behaviour. This requires organisations to affirm consistently their equal opportunities, equal rights, and equal treatment policies. It is essential that organisations take this problem seriously by attaching due penalty to gender discrimination, as this will go a long way in ensuring positive outcomes for women and providing a fairer workplace.

**Originality/value** – This study provides empirical evidence that a more egalitarian work environment (in Nigerian banking) will result in improved performance from female employees and organisations. It calls for greater policy and organisational interventions to create a more inclusive work environment and an equal society.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, job performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, patriarchy, workplace behaviour, women

## Introduction

Women in developing countries such as Nigeria are continuing to accumulate skills and participate in the labour force at an unprecedented pace (Klasen et al., 2018). However, women are also continuing to struggle against patriarchy and patriarchal norms both at home and in the workplace (Adisa, Abdulraheem and Isiaka, 2019; Makama, 2013). According to Aina (1998), patriarchy is a feminist concept that is used to understand and analyse the systematic organisation of male supremacy and female subordination, or the domination of women by men. Patriarchy is hugely entrenched in most African settings (such as Nigeria) in norms, values, and customs, such that separating it from African culture in particular and life in general is unthinkable for many people (Bvukutwa, 2019).

Gender discrimination in the workplace has been a universal phenomenon, with some workplaces and countries worse than others (Burke and Richardsen, 2016). In the African setting, this problem is particularly acute; here, men are considered superior to women and thus behave as such (Makama, 2013). Among many African societies, there are cultural specificities, which include patriarchal, social, and cultural structures in which women are marginalised and are at disadvantage in several aspects of life (Tuyizere, 2007). Individual and group behaviours are often influenced by the way in which they have been socialised (Gelfand, Erez and Aycan, 2007; Menon, 2014). People tend to behave in work organisations based on scripts learned through organisational socialisation, work experience, and a multiplicity of other interrelated factors, such as cultural beliefs and norms (Ashforth and Fried, 1988; Menon, 2014). These behaviours make peaceful co-existence as a community of equal individuals difficult at times (Sandelands, 2002).

This study is framed by the concept of patriarchy as a theoretical background given its usefulness as a tool in explaining gendered relations and analysing gendered communication behaviours in the social public sphere (Nash, 2009). Patriarchy is a social structural phenomenon that affects women at home (private patriarchy) and at their various places of work (public patriarchy) (Atwell, 2002; Walby, 1990). In Nigeria, rhetoric and action to mitigate the impact of patriarchy on women's lives are often frustrated by the dominant patriarchal ideologies that underpin gender perceptions across all domains of work and life. This study investigates the impact of public patriarchy as opposed to private patriarchy on women's workplace behaviour. It aims to advance the understanding of workplace behaviour from a patriarchal standpoint. In pursuing these objectives, this article draws on the everyday

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3 experiences of working women in Nigeria. In so doing, it unveils systematic group-based  
4 inequality behaviour that stems from gender-based status hierarchies and draws attention to an  
5 under-researched area of enquiry and locale for human resource management (HRM) studies.  
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7 According to Johns (2006, p. 388), 'researchers in organisational behaviour (OB) should study  
8 and report context for a number of reasons...if we do not understand situations, we will not  
9 understand person-situation interactions'.  
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14 Given the growing number of women in the workforce and the organisational importance of  
15 workplace behaviour, it is rather surprising that research that examines the impact of patriarchy  
16 on women's workplace behaviour in an extremely patriarchal environment such as Nigeria  
17 remains scarce. This study intends to fill this gap by addressing the following research  
18 questions: (1) What is the nature of gendered relationship in the workplaces within the Nigerian  
19 context? (2) To what extent, if any, do female employees' experience gender inequality? And  
20 how may this experience impact their workplace behaviour and performance?  
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28 This study makes three contributions to the field. Firstly, it illuminates our understanding of  
29 workplace behaviour by positioning patriarchy and patriarchal norms as a unique context for  
30 examining women's workplace behaviour in Sub-Saharan Africa, a distinctive research context.  
31 Secondly, understanding women's behaviour in a patriarchal environment provides direct  
32 insights into the cultural elements of classic patriarchy prevalent in Nigeria, which often  
33 determine women's proactivity and/or passivity at work. Thirdly, this theoretical lens adds a  
34 novel perspective to research on employees' workplace behaviour by developing a gender-  
35 based view of OB within this context. Insights from this research have important implications  
36 for organisations and reveal the reality of workplace behaviour in a non-western context. We  
37 argue that the prevalence of patriarchy in Nigerian workplaces is 'man made', thus perpetuating  
38 inequitably gendered organisations and the high social dominance orientation among Nigerian  
39 men. Social dominance orientation is the individual tendency to support social hierarchies such  
40 as patriarchy (Pratto, 1999; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999).  
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### 51 **Gender Role and Workplace Behaviour**

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53 Appropriate workplace behaviour is critical for the good functioning and success of an  
54 organisation (Lynch, 2002). Researchers have studied workplace behaviour from many  
55 viewpoints, which have provided multivariate perspectives on the subject. These include  
56 multidisciplinary (Zald and Ash, 1966), systematic research (McShane and Von Glinow, 2018),  
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3 contingency (Greenberg and Baron, 2008), and open-system (Cook and Hunsaker, 2001)  
4 perspectives. Other researchers have highlighted the multilevel analysis of workplace  
5 behaviour and have emphasised the importance of studying OB at individual, group, and  
6 organisational levels (McShane and Von Glinow, 2018). Organisations comprise individuals  
7 who are central to workplace behaviour; groups who interact with and influence each other;  
8 and organisations in which interactions and various activities take place (Cohen and Bailey,  
9 1997). Different levels of analysis are therefore necessary for understanding individual  
10 behaviours within organisations, because people always act within the context of their  
11 environment.  
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20 Gender role ideology, which stipulates behaviours, norms, and attitudes and assigns roles to  
21 people based on their gender is more prevalent in Nigeria than in countries in the West (Glick  
22 and Fiske, 2001). An average Nigerian man is patriarchal in nature (Adisa et al., 2019) and  
23 often regards women as his 'subjects' (Makama, 2013). For example, some men find it difficult  
24 to work under the supervision of females (Adebayo and Udegbe, 2004). This often affects  
25 workplace interactions and professional relationships between men and women. Social  
26 learning theory (Cook, 1976; Mischel, 1973) explains the social interaction between males and  
27 females in the work setting. The theory posits that differential gender role socialisation  
28 observed in the behaviour of males and females can be explained by the successful socialisation  
29 of individuals to their culturally appropriate gender roles.  
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38 A strained workplace relationship between males and females may predict strongly  
39 counterproductive workplace behaviour (CWB). Over the years, researchers have focused on  
40 CBW (Jones, 2009; Spector, 2011; Yang and Diefendorff, 2009), which is referred to as  
41 workplace deviance, anti-social behaviour, organisational misbehaviour, and more, all of  
42 which are harmful to the relevant organisation and/or employees (Robinson and Bennett, 1995;  
43 Roberts et al., 2007). Research has shown that CBW results in the loss of several billions of  
44 dollars annually (Bennett and Robinson, 2000, 2003; Mount et al., 2006).  
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51 Bennett and Robinson (2000) identified two underlying dimensions of CWB: individual-  
52 directed and organisation-directed CWB. The former is CWB that is directed at other  
53 employees. This includes physical or verbal aggression and other forms of interpersonal  
54 mistreatment that can be described as harmful. The latter is CWB directed toward the  
55 organisation. This includes theft, sabotage, withdrawal of work effort, and any other types of  
56 behaviour that are harmful to the organisation (see also Mount et al., 2006). While the two  
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3 behaviours have been found to be interrelated (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Robinson and  
4 Bennett, 1995), they could also be provoked by patriarchy and patriarchal norms. Researchers  
5 have found injustice/unfairness (Hershcovis et al., 2007; Jones, 2009), a desire for revenge  
6 (Jones, 2009), and abusive supervision (Detert et al., 2007) to be major precursors to and  
7 stressors concerning CWB.  
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12 Since situational stressors often provoke negative emotions among employees (Fox, Spector  
13 and Miles, 2001), it is essential to understand the situation in which the behaviour occurs as  
14 well as the forces and conditions acting on the individual at a specific time in order to  
15 understand their behaviour (Lewin, 1943). In the context of this study, therefore, we contend  
16 that the ability and tendency of male employees to dominate female employees due to the  
17 preconceptions of the Nigerian patriarchal culture contribute to female employees engaging in  
18 CWB.  
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### 26 **Conceptualising Patriarchy**

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28 Patriarchy is a feminist concept that is used to understand and analyse the systematic  
29 organisation of male supremacy and female subordination on the one hand or the domination  
30 of women by men on the other (Aina, 1998). Patriarchy is probably the most overused feminist  
31 theory, but it is also the most under-theorised (Kandiyoti, 1988). Walby (1990) described  
32 patriarchy as a social system in which men hold authority over women, children, and property.  
33 The values of a patriarchal culture include control and domination, and it is male-centred and  
34 male-identified (Becker, 1999; Kalabamu, 2006). Patriarchy is a system in which women are  
35 subject to economic dependence, violence, domestication, and the peripherals of decision-  
36 making. Existing research evidence shows that patriarchy, often existing in developing  
37 countries and Islamic contexts, is the prime obstacle to women's advancement and  
38 development (e.g. Abalkhail, 2017; Lekchiri et al., 2019; Karam and Afiouni, 2014; Sidani et  
39 al., 2015; Sultana, 2011).  
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50 **Kandiyoti (1998) argued that different forms of patriarchy present women with different kind**  
51 **of challenges – African patriarchy, which is laced with insecurity of polygamy and inordinate**  
52 **women subordination; and classic patriarchy that characterised South and East Asia as well as**  
53 **Middle East. This implies that women require different strategies to deal with different forms**  
54 **of patriarchy, depending on the context. Kandiyoti (1998) thus called for various strategies that**  
55 **will help women to maximise security and optimise life options with varying potential for**  
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3 **resistance in the face of wicked subordination and oppressions.** Patriarchy imposes structures  
4 that categorise some types of work as ‘men’s work’ and others as ‘women’s work’, and vests  
5 authority in the male as the head of the family (Reardon, 1996). This means that he superintends  
6 the ownership and earnings of the household, and that he controls the preferences for work,  
7 leisure, and the overall affairs of the family (Heath and Ciscel, 1988).  
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13 Patriarchy and culture are interrelated and are intricately linked conceptually to one another  
14 (Kang’ethe, 2014), with gender regarded as the core of patriarchy (Razmerita, Kirchner and  
15 Nielsen, 2016). Gendered behaviours are a product of cultural factors, promoted by patriarchal  
16 ideology, and institutionalised through policy and legal frameworks (Hovorka and Dietrich,  
17 2011). Patriarchy’s gendered basis, with privilege invested in being male rather than female, is  
18 thus culturally significant (Kalabamu, 2006), and different cultures give different degrees of  
19 significance to such issues (Ebert, 1988). For example, preference for the male gender is  
20 strongly held among Nigerians, and its perception is rooted in the culture and psyche of the  
21 people (Adisa et al., 2019; Nnadi, 2013).  
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30 Patriarchal ideology determines and informs behaviours, practices, and laws within society  
31 (Crittenden and Wright, 2013). It works through written and orally transmitted formal and/or  
32 informal rules and regulations (Thakadu, 2018). This ideology is so powerful that ‘men are  
33 usually able to secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress’ (Sultana, 2011, p.  
34 3). Through various institutions, such as the academy, church, and family, women’s  
35 weaknesses and subordination to men are justified and reinforced (Millett, 1977).  
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41 Patriarchal systems and institutions are ‘man-made’ (Brownmiller, 2013). The patriarchal  
42 construct imposes masculine and feminine character stereotypes in society, which strengthen  
43 the unequal power relations between men and women (Crittenden and Wright, 2013). In some  
44 societies, culture and religion impose certain responsibilities on women regardless of their  
45 employment status and career (Nash, 2009). In many African cultures, for example, women,  
46 regardless of their social status and professions, carry the weight of domestic responsibilities.  
47 Feminism is characterised by ‘awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation, and oppression at  
48 the material and ideological levels of women’s labour, fertility, and sexuality, in the family, at  
49 the place of work, and in the society in general, and conscious action by women and men to  
50 transform the present situation’ (Rawat, 2014, p. 43).  
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Walby (1990) suggests two forms of patriarchy (public and private) and argues that the different forms of patriarchy are predicated upon six key patriarchal structures: the patriarchal mode of production; patriarchal relations in paid work; patriarchal relations in the state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions, including religion, media, education. According to Walby (1990, p. 94), ‘private patriarchy is based upon the household, with a patriarch controlling women individually and directly in the relatively private sphere of the home...while public patriarchy is based on sites other than the households’. Females who have entered into the public sphere are not on equal terms with their male counterparts. They are subordinated within the various public institutions.

### **Patriarchy in the Nigerian Context**

Like most African countries, patriarchy is prevalent in Nigerian institutions, from places of religious worship (e.g. churches and mosques) to the home and family domain, extending to work organisations. This is accompanied by unequal gender relations, which place women in a subordinate position (Abara, 2012; Akintan, 2013; Makama, 2013). Patriarchy, as a dominant framework in Nigeria, therefore tends to govern everyday interactions. It is manifested in gender differences across socioeconomic and political sectors, practices, and behaviours (Adisa et al., 2019; Makama, 2013).

Makama (2013, p. 115) succinctly explains the Nigerian mindset about women: in Nigeria, ‘it is observed that the womanhood is reduced to a mere infidel and a second-class citizen, hence, there is the commonality of general belief system that the best place for women is in the ‘kitchen’. Ovadje and Ankomah (2013) also pointed out that although there is an equal opportunity policy in place to promote women’s employment and career advancement, the organisational reality for women remains extremely challenging, as attested by accounts of lived experience in our study reported below. It is important to note that organisations now have a duty to implement and main equal opportunity policies that effectively prevent employees from been discriminated against on the ground of gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, and sexual orientation (Equal and Human Right Commission, 2019; Perrons, 2009). This is evident in the equality legislation and reflected in the establishment of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (see Equal and Human Right Commission, 2019).



## Research Methodology

This study examines the impact of patriarchy on women's workplace behaviour. **To understand better** this complex issue, the study deploys a qualitative research approach. We have adopted this approach because it is concerned with life as it is lived, activities as they unfold and situations as they occur in day-to-day activities (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In this study, our focus is on exploring lived experiences, particularly, the accounts of the lived experiences of the female participants in the research. We seek to understand, explain, and articulate what these experiences uniquely infer for our participants in the sociocultural context of the society in which they live and work. It is for this reason that we believe a qualitative research paradigm is best suited to this study given its fundamental emphasis on intentionality, rationality, and meaning in human social relations as well as on the social construction of meaning in a way that cannot be statistically measured in terms of quantity, amount, or frequency (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Walliman, 2006).

The study was designed to be open-ended (i.e. participants were allowed to give free-form answers – they were allowed to express their subjective views without limitation) in order to allow unexpected themes to emerge. In-depth semi-structured interviews with 32 women in Nigeria were conducted and analysed using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The participants in this qualitative study were women working in two well-known-high street banks in the city of Lagos. Participants were sought by means of emails among the existing contacts of the researchers. Emails were sent out to prospective participants, explaining the purpose and the detailed process of the study. Out of the 62 emails that were sent to the potential participants, 41 indicated their intention to participate in the study, and 32 eventually participated in it.

### Insert Table 1 about here

Research ethics were given full consideration. The participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. In order to fulfil this promise, anonymity has been used to protect the participants. In reporting the results, pseudonyms have been used to report the accounts of the participants in order to keep their names confidential. The interviews took place at the participants' location of choice and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Five participants declined to give permission for their interviews to be audio recorded. In these

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3 cases, detailed notes were taken and compared by the researchers to ensure that nothing was  
4 omitted.  
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8 The participants occupy various positions in their organisations (15 in various management  
9 positions; 17 in middle and junior positions), and the sample comprised only women (see Table  
10 1 for the participants' descriptions). 'Female' was chosen as the sole gender for this study  
11 because it is females who are most adversely affected by patriarchy. The participants were aged  
12 between 22 and 40 years old and reported an average of six years of work experience. Data  
13 was collected between February and June 2018. The questions used in the semi-structured  
14 interviews were based on the literature review and aims of this study.  
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21 The interviews targeted two key areas (Bacharach, Bamberger and McKinney, 2000): (1) the  
22 participants' background, knowledge, work, and private life contexts; and (2) descriptions of  
23 how patriarchy has affected individual workplace behaviour and performance. We commenced  
24 by ensuring that each participant understood the meaning of 'patriarchy'. This action was taken  
25 to ensure that the participants had an adequate understanding of what the interview and the  
26 research is all about. Open-ended questions were used for the interview. Participants were  
27 asked whether patriarchy exists and about the nature of the impact of patriarchy on their  
28 workplace behaviour. This question was not strictly adhered to, because we recognised that  
29 new questions might emerge during the conversation (Myers, 2009). In this way, the  
30 participants were able to share their experiences, express themselves better, and provide  
31 examples of scenarios.  
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41 Data was analysed inductively (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) using an 'open coding' technique  
42 (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). All the transcriptions were carefully studied to identify the  
43 recurrent themes across all transcripts. This process ensures that the themes are logically  
44 selected and that they are guided by inductive epistemology (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002). The  
45 coding was done independently with the emerging themes being frequently and intensely  
46 discussed among the authors during the entire process of data analysis. After the coding process  
47 had been finalised and agreed, the findings were crosschecked thoroughly again. This was done  
48 to ensure the consistency and reliability of the study. Subsequently, reports on the themes were  
49 prepared.  
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## Research Findings

Four major themes related to the impact of patriarchy on the women's workplace behaviour were identified: (a) levels of patriarchal display – an indicator for workplace behaviour; (b) patriarchy and organisational performance; (c) patriarchy and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB); and (d) the idealism and reality of patriarchy in organisational practice. Each theme is characterised by ingrained patriarchal norms that reflect the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society and its impact on the participants' workplace behaviour. Participants drew on their experiences of working in organisations in which patriarchy is an established norm. The overall findings show that the embedded practice of patriarchy does indeed shape women's work behaviour. More interestingly, patriarchy in this context is nuanced, where the levels of its display (ranging from 'weak' or 'liberal', to 'strong') present as different, depending on each man's own individual personality and in some cases on the organisational position of the women with whom these men interact. We address this nuanced representation in the next sections.

### Level of Patriarchal Display – An Indicator for Workplace Behaviour

Examining their organisational lives in depth, the participants described patriarchy as a contextual force that shapes their workplace behaviour. One participant observed: *'let me put it this way: In Nigeria, masculinity and patriarchy are regarded as a "birth right" for men rather than an ascribed status...therefore it is only natural that they exhibit their "patriarchal authority" wherever they go'* (Suzanne, 31 years old). The participants noted that the level of patriarchy that their male managers and peers exhibit towards them has a strong influence on their workplace behaviour. One interviewee remarked:

*Nigerian men are extremely patriarchal in nature, and most of them tend to bring their patriarchal attitudes to the workplace. However, the propensity to display patriarchal attitudes varies among them: some strong, some weak. Working with men with 'weak' patriarchal attitudes makes working life easier for me and brings out the best in me, because they treat me with respect, seek my opinions on issues, carry me along at work, and apologise whenever they need to. Unfortunately, you don't get that all the time* (Patricia, 27 years old).

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3 This revelation implies that women tend to work well when they are treated equally and with  
4 respect. Another participant shared her experience of working with men with a strong  
5 patriarchal attitude and high social dominance orientation:  
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9 *Working with men with liberal attitudes towards patriarchy has made my*  
10 *working life pleasurable. With them, I think straight and work well. I have*  
11 *worked with men with strong patriarchal attitudes in the past, and my*  
12 *working life was terrible. I was always very sad to go to work and even at*  
13 *work (Maria, 32 years old).*  
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19 This account appears to suggest that the men considered to be more ‘liberal’ displayed a lower  
20 level of patriarchy as opposed to their counterparts who, in Maria’s experience, tended to  
21 exhibit ‘strong’ patriarchal behaviours. This account equally demonstrates the effect of the  
22 level of patriarchal display on workplace attitudes, as demonstrated by her comment ‘my  
23 working life was terrible, I was always sad to go to work and even at work’. Similarly, another  
24 participant commented on how working with men who displayed weak patriarchal attitudes  
25 encouraged her to become more innovative, in what she described as a slightly more egalitarian  
26 organisational environment:  
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34 *I have been a little lucky; most of the men I have worked with exhibited a*  
35 *weak patriarchal attitude towards me, and that not only made life easier for*  
36 *me, but it also had a positive impact on organisational outcomes. I’m always*  
37 *buzzing with ideas when I work with men with weak patriarchal attitudes. I*  
38 *have worked with men with very strong patriarchal attitudes before and trust*  
39 *me, working with them is horrible. (Hillary, 38 years old).*  
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45 All the participants acknowledged that patriarchy affects their behaviour. They also mentioned  
46 that the level of patriarchy displayed by men often has a huge impact on their innovative  
47 behaviour; ability to think straight; and general workplace social exchange and engagement.  
48 The key insight here is that women tend to behave well and are more productive and innovative  
49 when working with men with relatively weak patriarchal attitudes and vice versa. In other  
50 words, a strong patriarchal behaviour towards women inclines them to behave negatively  
51 towards their work in terms of performance and OCB, and a mild or weak patriarchal attitude  
52 tends to bring out the best attitude and performance in them.  
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## Patriarchy and Organisational Performance

Patriarchy traditionally undervalues the social conditions of women in Nigerian society and empowers men to dominate women at work, which ultimately affects their performance and that of the organisation. Participants tend to associate patriarchy/being patriarchal with managerial attitudes of ‘bossiness’ and other forms of disrespect and high-handedness. They commented on how this phenomenon negatively impacted their work-related activities. One participant remarked:

*It really nauseates me. My manager is, irritatingly, very bossy. He likes to order me [and other women] around, and he talks to me with disdain. I have complained to him a few times about his patriarchal attitude...he was upset and told me: ‘How dare you complain about my attitude. I have someone like you as a wife at home. You don’t query what I do or what I say’. His attitude affects my performance because he always upsets me. Many times, I will complain to my colleagues, and other ladies also express having experienced similar encounters with him. His patriarchal attitude [which happens quite often] always upsets and unsettles me and sometimes causes me to make mistakes (Joy, 40 years old).*

The above narration from Joy reveals the dynamics of classical patriarchy prevalent in the Nigerian organisations, wherein men tend to import private patriarchal behaviour/mentality prevalent at home to the organisation. Another participant narrated a similar story to Joy’s. She commented on how the patriarchal attitudes impacted her work performance, organisational performance, and overall employee commitment to the organisation:

*The majority of the workers in this section of the bank are women. The manager is so patriarchal that the ladies don’t get on well with him. He talks to us anyhow. His domineering attitude is affecting the overall performance of the staff, which is negatively affecting the organisational performance. For example, I don’t go the extra mile to do anything at work, and his attitude is even affecting my basic performance...same thing for the other ladies. You may say that we are not fully committed, and I will say yes, I am sorry (Becky, 29 years old).*

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3 In this comment, it is clear that the display of patriarchy is strongly associated with the  
4 women's feelings of being dominated and disrespected by the men with whom they work.  
5 Participants who occupy managerial positions reported different experiences with their  
6 manager, whom they describe as liberal and good for their own and the organisation's  
7 performance. Here, although being treated equally and with respect should be the  
8 organisational norm in a fair society, these women feel that being treated in a non-patriarchal  
9 way is a bonus and that they are obliged to reciprocate with good performance in order not to  
10 disappoint their male boss, as illustrated below:  
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18 *My manager is a man, but he has a liberal attitude. He is strangely not*  
19 *patriarchal, and this makes me and all other ladies in this department go the*  
20 *extra mile to make sure that our work performance is always 100%. We hate*  
21 *to disappoint him (Melinda, 35 years old).*  
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26 *The manager is not as patriarchal as others. He treats me and all the ladies*  
27 *well, and we also put in our best for him. Our commitment is unshakable.*  
28 *This is the third year running that our department has been awarded the best*  
29 *performing department in the company, courtesy of the manager's liberal*  
30 *attitude, which has positively impacted the staff performance, especially that*  
31 *of the ladies. (Natasha, 31 years old).*  
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38 This account also depicts the consistent link between 'liberal' and 'less patriarchal' (and vice-  
39 versa) with the manager who has a liberal attitude seen as being 'not as patriarchal as the others'.  
40 We equally note the seemingly positive effect of this on work performance. There are more  
41 male managers in Nigeria than female managers. This may be due to a high preference for male  
42 leadership in Nigerian organisations. However, the few women in management positions often  
43 struggle with dealing with men with a strong patriarchal attitudes and high social dominance  
44 orientation. For example, one manager commented on the difficulties associated with managing  
45 a group of men whose brains and minds have been conditioned to be patriarchal:  
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52 *...most male subordinates make organisational effectiveness and overall*  
53 *outstanding performance really difficult to achieve. They perceive me as a*  
54 *peripheral, someone who should be under their control [two of them have*  
55 *actually said that to me in the past]. This makes interpersonal relations*  
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3 *somewhat difficult among us. They always oppose what I say, even though*  
4 *they will later obey my instructions. (Ana, 39 years old).*  
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8 Other managers commented on how patriarchy and patriarchal norms often frustrate their  
9 leadership and negatively impact organisational performance:  
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12 *I am dealing with people [men] who are not used to getting instructions from*  
13 *women. These are men whose minds have been conditioned to believe about*  
14 *and behave towards women as subordinate and peripheral. So, relating to*  
15 *me as the head and abiding by my instructions is contrary to their belief*  
16 *system. I have had to deal with this problem many times. For example, a man*  
17 *was sacked last year because he always shouted at me and he would not*  
18 *follow simple instructions...because he is not used to taking instructions from*  
19 *women. I still have men in my team, they are extremely patriarchal...often,*  
20 *they are reluctant to follow instructions because the instructions are coming*  
21 *from a woman. This always causes friction in interpersonal relationships and*  
22 *organisational efficiency (Daniella, 38 years old; three other participants who*  
23 *are managers shared the same experience).*  
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34 The above quotations demonstrate that patriarchy is an integral part of the Nigerian social  
35 system such that Nigerian men freely exhibit both private and public patriarchy. This often has  
36 a negative consequence on women's workplace behaviour.  
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39 Another participant lamented:  
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42 *Patriarchy and its norms are very annoying [for me]. Let me quickly take you*  
43 *through a few examples of men's patriarchal attitude which I have to cope*  
44 *with every day. Male colleagues [not all of them] find it really difficult to say*  
45 *sorry to a woman when they are wrong. They find it unbecoming to greet a*  
46 *woman first [a woman must initiate the greeting] or to take instructions from*  
47 *a woman. For me, it has a strong negative impact on interpersonal*  
48 *relationships and organisational performance. (Alexis, 36 years old).*  
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55 The above quotations illustrate that patriarchy and patriarchal norms, which encourage the male  
56 domination of females, negatively affect employee and organisational performance.  
57 Participants find it challenging and frustrating to lead men who exhibit extremely patriarchal  
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attitudes. It is clear that managers in our study have yet to develop their political skill in order to combat patriarchal attitudes and behaviour at work and tend to be limited and frustrated in their roles.

### **Patriarchy and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour**

OCB is important for both individual and organisational success. OCB include actions that are 'discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate, promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organisation' (Organ, 1988, p. 4). Such behaviours range from performing extra duties without complaint to helping other employees within the organisation. Highlighting the impact of patriarchy on women's workplace behaviour, the participants reported that their male managers' and colleagues' patriarchal attitudes often negatively affect their OCB. All of the participants perceived patriarchy as a deterrent to OCB. The accounts of several participants highlight this fact:

*I do not owe anybody, not even my extremely patriarchal and rude manager, 100% of my performance or loyalty. The atmosphere is very patriarchal. The manager and even my male colleagues do not relate to me [and other women] as colleagues. They are used to treating women as subordinates. Would I go out of my way to do anything for the organisation? I am sorry – I cannot. I just want to do my basic duty and leave. (Fatty, 37 years old).*

Another participant disclosed:

*The men that I work with often look down on me because I am a woman. This has killed many of my brilliant ideas and suggestions. For example, last week during the departmental meeting, I had a brilliant idea on the subject matter, but I was not allowed to voice my opinion. I raised my hand to talk but the manager never called me. He is a very patriarchal person who believes that women should not talk where men talk. These days I don't care whether the organisation makes progress...I keep my ideas to myself (Veronica, 22 years old).*

Similarly, Janet explained how patriarchy has hugely affected her OCB:

*I don't do any extra for the organisation. I don't go out of my way to assist others, especially male colleagues, with their duties. I only do my basic duties without inconveniencing myself. This is because the men that I work with*



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3 *believe that I am a woman who is not supposed to be working, sharing ideas,*  
4 *and rubbing shoulders with them. This kills my spirit and innovations*  
5 *because I don't get to share with them – but I don't care. They are used to*  
6 *dominating women, and in this society, women also treat men like demigods.*  
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8 *They systematically shut me down whenever I raise suggestions and they talk*  
9 *to me anyhow, most of them saying that I am no more than their wives at*  
10 *home. So why should I bother about the organisational performance or*  
11 *organisational effectiveness? I don't care – I just do whatever I can (Janet,*  
12 *32 years old).*

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19 It is evident from these quotations that patriarchal attitudes leave these aggrieved participants  
20 unmotivated at workplaces and discourage them from voicing suggestions and exercising other  
21 forms of OCB, which has a negative impact on organisational effectiveness. Furthermore, the  
22 manager's attitude portrays a hegemonic masculine organisation in which women are victims  
23 of what Billing (2011, p. 303) described as 'male norms'. This tends to create a regime of  
24 inequality that perpetuates men's dominance and women's subordination in the workplace.  
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### 30 **The Idealism and Reality of Patriarchy in Organisational Practice**

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32 Exploring the interplay between what is ideal and what is real workplace behaviour, the  
33 participants reported that the ideal workplace behaviour in relation to men and women only  
34 exists on paper. Nigerian organisations are patriarchal, and men unconsciously move around  
35 with their 'toga of patriarchy' in society, including in the workplace. The organisational system  
36 reinforces patriarchy and effectively creates inequality and discrimination. One participant  
37 revealed:  
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44 *Personally, I don't think that women can achieve equality with men. In fact,*  
45 *the discrimination, in my opinion, will go on forever. For example, the*  
46 *position of assistant operations manager became vacant last year. I was the*  
47 *best fit for the position in terms of qualification and experience at work, but*  
48 *a man was appointed even though I was more qualified. I lost out because I*  
49 *am a woman. It confirms the reality of being a woman and working in a*  
50 *patriarchal and male-dominated organisation. (Lilian, 29 years old).*  
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58 Lilian's comment describes the struggle between ideal and real organisational practice in  
59 Nigeria. The manager's behaviour in not offering Lilian the position of assistant operations  
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3 manager is not ideal, but it is a reality of a typical patriarchal Nigerian organisation. Lilian  
4 speculated that such discrimination would continue in patriarchal organisations operating in  
5 patriarchal society. Another participant also commented that although the ideal workplace  
6 behaviour exists in people's minds, the reality of it is often a mirage:  
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11 *Ideally, organisational management teams should treat everyone equally and*  
12 *staff should also treat each other with mutual respect regardless of gender.*  
13 *But in the real sense of it, women suffer gender oppression, experience*  
14 *discrimination, and are subjected to unbecoming behaviour from men in*  
15 *organisations. I have worked in both public and private organisations and I*  
16 *can confirm that my manager and male colleagues often treat me with*  
17 *contempt without them realising it because they are used to it. I am sort of*  
18 *used to it. Don't forget that most women suffer the same fate at home. It is*  
19 *called patriarchy. I call it 'Nigerian patriarchy' because it is very strong in*  
20 *Nigerian men (Cristiana, 31 years old).*  
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28 Another participant echoed:  
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31 *The organisation is dominated by men. Sometimes they treat me well and*  
32 *equally, and sometimes they treat me as Nigerian men treat a woman – as a*  
33 *peripheral or slave. For example, in meetings, sometimes I will be asked to*  
34 *give my opinions on issues and sometimes not. Usually, men will dominate*  
35 *the conversations, and I think it is not good enough – it kills my innovative*  
36 *ideas, which is not good for the progress of the organisation (Doris, 38 years*  
37 *old).*  
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44 The above findings reveal the patterns of workplace behaviour in Nigerian organisations,  
45 whereby women are subject to domination (operating through the systematic  
46 instrumentalisation of patriarchy) as opposed to ideal workplace behaviour, which is premised  
47 on equal treatment and mutual respect. This study demonstrates that there is a significant  
48 discrepancy between what is expected of workplace behaviour by women and the reality of  
49 workplace behaviour. Ideal behaviour treats organisational members equally and with mutual  
50 respect regardless of gender. But the real behaviour in Nigerian organisations is deeply rooted  
51 in patriarchy, makes women the subjects of domination and discrimination, and places  
52 patriarchy at the core of the workplace.  
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## Discussion

The women interviewed for this study worked in heavily male-dominated working environments in which patriarchal norms and gender biases are deeply ingrained. Using patriarchy as a theoretical lens, this study revealed how a male-dominated gender structure (Mader, 2016; Risman et al., 2018) negatively impacted women's workplace behaviour. We have been able to demonstrate that the Nigerian organisations' gender structure acts as a social structure with particular powers that enabled male to dominate and consign female workers to the peripherals of the organisations. This has ultimately revealed the nature of the gender relationship prevalent in workplaces in Nigeria and the degree of discrimination experienced by women working there.

We contend that the prevalence of strong patriarchy in Nigerian organisations is tantamount to organisational abuse of the female gender and does not enable healthy workplace behaviour that promotes positive outcomes. From these, our study makes a strong empirical and theoretical contribution to our understanding of the impact of patriarchy on women's workplace behaviour in this national context of pervasive private and public patriarchy. Empirically, our study demonstrates an intense patriarchal structures and norms that are systemic to the Nigerian workplace and that lead to the impairment of the workplace behaviour of women in terms of their work performance and OCB. OCB includes passing along helpful information and going out of one's way to help other employees and the organisation (Dalal, 2005; Resick, 2013). Furthermore, researchers have argued that positive attitudes towards and between employees are crucial in determining organisational effectiveness and overall OCB (Nikolaou et al., 2008; Sung and Choi, 2009; Dunlop and Lee, 2004).

However, the participants are not totally committed to their role as they do not feel obliged to work outside their contractual tasks or help struggling colleagues due to their male colleagues' hegemonic masculine attitudes that consign women to what Billing (2011, p. 303) described as 'male norm'. Attitudes that create a regime of inequality that perpetuates men's dominance and women's subordination in the workplace (Acker, 2006). These findings are in line with the study of Cardona et al. (2004), in which it was found that employees who perceive their relationship with the organisation as a fair social exchange tend to increase their OCB. This study found that women's efforts to achieve career and organisational success in Nigerian organisations are seriously hampered by patriarchy.

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3 Patriarchy hypothesises male domination and discrimination in such a way that women  
4 (femininity) are structurally secondary and subjugated, while men (masculinity) are dominant  
5 (Walby, 1990). Many researchers on gender at work have suggested that gender is unfairly  
6 polarised in organisations in which gender is viewed as a resource available to male privilege  
7 in accessing sources of power (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), or females are placed at a  
8 disadvantage in accessing resources due to various structural and organisational considerations  
9 (Acker, 1990; Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2008; Phillips, 2005).

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16 Our data also highlights the significance of men's propensity to exhibit a strong or weak  
17 patriarchal attitude towards women to the potential workplace behaviour a woman might  
18 exhibit. Whilst men with weak patriarchal attitudes tend to treat women equally (with dignity  
19 and mutual respect) and this begets positive organisational outcomes, those with strong  
20 patriarchal attitudes fully dominate women and engender indifferent work attitudes and  
21 behaviours. Negative behaviours, regardless of whether they are overt or implicit, have  
22 negative consequences on an organisation (Appelbaum et al., 2007). This study found that the  
23 domination of women at work undermines their performance and, ultimately, overall  
24 organisational performance. This type of patriarchy has been described as public patriarchy  
25 (Walby, 1990). It is abetted and maintained by public institutions, such as work organisations,  
26 schools, government, churches, mosques, etc. (Atwell, 2002). Additionally, we also found that  
27 female participants in this study who occupy managerial positions find leading men a  
28 significant challenge. Based on these findings, we argue that that patriarchal regime and the  
29 ethos that subjugate and dominate women are inimical to organisational development.

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41 Theoretically, our article contributes a culturally sensitive approach to the study of gender and  
42 organisational behaviour that encompasses the significance of strong and weak patriarchal  
43 attitudes on women's workplace behaviour, which is hitherto neglected in the literature. Here,  
44 we have demonstrated the importance of a weak patriarchal attitude towards women achieving  
45 a good work performance, OCB, and organisational development. While there are potential  
46 commonalities with African organisations and western developed nations' organisations in  
47 terms of male domination, Kandiyoti (1988) described **Africans'** patriarchy as 'classic  
48 patriarchy' whereby women are greatly disadvantaged by patriarchal institutions and ideology.  
49 We have extended Kandiyoti's conceptual framework by examining the prevalence of  
50 patriarchal attitudes and their associated impact on women's workplace behaviour in Nigerian  
51 organisations, which is highly characterised by structural and individual (especially male)

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3 accommodations of patriarchy. We argue that the accommodation of patriarchy in the Nigerian  
4 organisations destroys women's potential, creativity, and workplace behaviour. It also affects  
5 their overall working life.  
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## 8 9 **Conclusions**

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11 This paper has highlighted the inimical consequences of strong patriarchal norms and attitudes  
12 concerning women's workplace behaviour in the context of Nigerian organisations. The study  
13 has demonstrated that the patriarchal system promotes greater gender inequality and supports  
14 patriarchal gender order at work, which Walby (1990) described as public patriarchy. The study  
15 has demonstrated the participants' situation of being forced to accept the patriarchal structure  
16 and respond with passive resistance at work through the withdrawal of OCB and patchy  
17 organisational performance. The study further reveals that the patriarchal regime prevalent in  
18 Nigerian organisations appears to be culturally motivated because female managers also find  
19 managing male colleagues difficult. A deeper understanding of the huge challenges women  
20 face in this context may go some way towards highlighting and challenging entrenched  
21 patriarchal attitudes and practices that negatively affect women's workplace behaviour.  
22 Conclusively, this article provides a strong empirical contribution to the wider issues of gender  
23 and work in the key area of non-western context and thus suggests women's propensity to  
24 embrace OCB could be high in a work environment in which patriarchal proclivity is low.  
25 Conversely, women's workplace behaviour, work performance, and organisational  
26 development will suffer in environments in which patriarchal proclivity is strong. These  
27 conclusions highlight the potential danger posed by strong patriarchal proclivity to both human  
28 and organisational development.  
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## 44 **Implications, Limitations, and Agenda for Future Research**

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46 The analysis presented in this study has demonstrated that strong patriarchy ultimately drives  
47 the culture in most organisations in Nigeria. Patriarchal attitudes tactically establish a situation  
48 in which women are dominated, discriminated against, and permanently placed in inferior  
49 positions – even when they have risen to a managerial rank. This patriarchal regime therefore  
50 has important consequences for women's workplace behaviour to which organisations must  
51 now pay attention in order to ensure a fairer workplace in which employees can thrive.  
52 Conducting periodic reviews on culture and employee behaviour that ensure all employees,  
53 regardless of gender, are fairly and inclusively treated may be one possible way for  
54 organisations to achieve this. It is essential that organisations provide women with the much  
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3 needed voice that is critical to challenging patriarchal behaviour and fighting oppressive gender  
4 discrimination that undermine their performance and organisational citizenship behaviour. This  
5 requires that organisations maintain and duly observe institutional policies regarding equal  
6 opportunities, equal rights, and workplace fairness to ensure a fairer workplace, including the  
7 option to explore legal means to penalise offenders where necessary.  
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11 The challenges posed by the strong patriarchy in Nigerian organisations are real and complex,  
12 and organisations must address this workplace behaviour in order to create a fairer workplace  
13 and a more supportive work environment in which employees can thrive. It is therefore  
14 essential for organisations to examine periodically their culture to ensure that all employees –  
15 regardless of gender – are involved in the organisation’s affairs. Furthermore, organisations  
16 need to help women become more proactive in combatting patriarchal behaviour instead of  
17 being its passive recipients, which often leads to women withdrawing their work efforts. This  
18 requires organisations to affirm consistently their equal opportunities, equal rights, and equal  
19 treatment policies. It is essential that organisations explore all legal means possible to bring  
20 gender discriminators to book, as this will go a long way in ensuring positive outcomes for  
21 women and providing a fairer workplace.  
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32 Furthermore, HR interventions, such as training and coaching, may be introduced to help  
33 women to become more assertive, innovative, and resourceful, including mobilising and  
34 legitimising various forms of power (e.g. political, social, psychological, and spiritual) in  
35 dealing with masculine behaviour individually and collectively. Similarly, cultural training  
36 may be adopted to address men’s attitudes and to promote the notion of equality, fairness, and  
37 mutual respect, thus enforcing the government’s policy initiatives on equal opportunities.  
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42 While this study is essential in highlighting the under-researched context of gender and  
43 patriarchy, the extent to which the findings of this research can be generalised is constrained  
44 by the research’s limited sample size, scope (banking sector), and research context (Nigeria).  
45 Therefore, future research could expand the scope of this current study in Nigeria and other  
46 African countries to gain further insight into the impact of strong patriarchal norms and  
47 attitudes on women’s workplace behaviour in the global south. Future research could also use  
48 a quantitative approach to test the relationship between patriarchy, gender norms, and women’s  
49 workplace behaviour. Such a study might, if comparative, be more readily generalisable across  
50 multiple contexts. Finally, a multi-country comparative study would shed further light on the  
51 impact of patriarchy on women’s workplace behaviour, considering different cultural contexts.  
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**Table 1 Participants' Descriptors**

No.	Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Grade	Years of work experience	Banks
1	Deborah	Female	37	Client service manager	5	1
2	Patricia	Female	27	Credit facilities officer	6	1
3	Maria	Female	32	Financial analyst	4	2
4	Hillary	Female	38	Business analyst	6	1
5	Joy	Female	40	Account officer	3	1
6	Becky	Female	29	HR specialist	2	2
7	Melinda	Female	35	Financial adviser	2	1
8	Natasha	Female	31	Credit facility officer	5	2
9	Ana	Female	39	Audit manager	10	2
10	Daniella	Female	38	Senior account manager	6	1
11	Alexis	Female	36	Accountant	6	2
12	Fatty	Female	37	Loan officer	3	1
13	Veronica	Female	22	Business banking officer	7	2
14	Janet	Female	32	Credit analyst	4	2
15	Lilian	Female	29	Operations supervisor	2	1
16	Cristiana	Female	31	Investment analyst	8	1
17	Doris	Female	38	Assistant audit manager	8	1
18	Helen	Female	36	Bankruptcy support officer	2	1
19	Teresa	Female	39	Senior accountant	10	1
20	Margret	Female	38	Marketing manager	6	2
21	Judith	Female	34	Client service supervisor	8	2
22	Daisy	Female	39	Audit manager	6	1
23	Abigail	Female	32	Business banking supervisor	5	2
24	Camila	Female	37	Account manager	7	1
25	Barbara	Female	35	Account/marketing officer	4	1
26	Lesley	Female	40	Senior loan manager	6	2
27	Eda	Female	38	Marketing manager	7	1
28	Caroline	Female	31	Asset management manager	8	2
29	Elaine	Female	33	Business banking manager	7	2
30	Faith	Female	40	Lending manager	9	1
31	Suzanne	Female	31	Assistant account manager	10	2
32	Jummy	Female	38	Asset management manager	9	2

'Grade' refers to the position that each participant occupies in their workplace. 'Banks' means the specific bank at which the corresponding participant works – either 'Bank 1' and 'Bank 2'.