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# Theological and Cultural Perspectives on Gender Identity in Igboland: Examining Biblical and Folk Evidence Against Transgenderism

**Afunugo, Kenechi Nnaemeka**
Department of Religion and Human Relations
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka
nk.afunugo@unizik.edu.ng

## Abstract

This study explores the theological and cultural perspectives on gender identity in Igbo cosmology, emphasizing biblical and folk evidence against transgenderism. The study incorporates both personal communications with regal Igbo elders cum the consultation of extant literature apposite to its objective as the mode of data collection. The Theory of Transgender contradictions as projected by Anderson (2018) were leveraged in appraising this study. The necessary generalizations and conclusions were drawn purely on the qualitative analysis and synthesis of the gathered data made through phenomenological, hermeneutical and culture centered approaches. Observations indicate that in as much as transgender individuals operate in the closet in Igbo land, there are some Igbo natives both in diasporas and homeland that underwent medical or surgical transitions to live in accordance with their identified gender; whereas others simply settle for gender identity that does not align with their sex at birth including non-binary cum gender queer identities: They mostly express such via effeminate and butch dispositions. This study underscores that within the Christian structure, the bible which is a major Christian theological foundation affirms the immutable divine conception of gender as distinctly male and female in Genesis 1:27 and Deuteronomy 22:5. Hence any deviation from one's biological sex is inconsistent with biblical teachings; and thus, an aberration, a revolution against God and fraud against humanity. Similarly, the Igbo cosmology

and folklore accentuate the importance of maintaining societal harmony and spiritual balance through adherence to and celebration of the established gender sanctity at birth as male and female. The Igbo people thus perceives transgender and other associated learned behaviours as abomination. This study ultimately advocates that mankind should anchor on the truth as addressed in the bible regarding human sexuality. Humankind should equally eschew from transgenderism since it provokes curse upon people that conform to such as conceive in the Igbo culture. The Igbo cultural custodians and church leaders should always be firm in their teachings and injunctions on the sanctity of gender origin divinely ordained at birth.
**Keywords:** Gender Identity, Theological, Cultural, Biblical, Folk, Transgenderism, Perspectives.

## Introduction

Transgenderism had raised a lot of contentions in the human society right from the time immemorial with some advocating for its full acceptance and implementation in the human societies on the basis that one's gender identity can differ from the sex that they were assigned at birth: Thus, implying that such a person is trapped in someone else's body. Conversely, others insist that transgender is a psychological problem and is against God's immutable concept of gender.

Various individuals around the globe have embraced and evolved to transgender identities. Capatides (2021) lists world celebrities that are transgender individuals including Caitlyn Jenner, Laverne Cox, Elliot page, Zaya Wade, Kataluna Enriquez (who was crowned-miss Nevada USA and thus became the first openly transgender Miss USA contestant), among others. Most of these transgender individuals have been nominated as award winners in their various respective areas of specialization, enterprise and endeavours. Yurcaba (2024) intimates that the overwhelming majority of transgender people all over the globe report more life

satisfaction after having transitioned. Hodshire (2023) records that transgender people make up approximately 0.6-3% of the world population. University of California Sam Francisco (2024) however, detail that the worldwide estimates for transgender women are 1 in every 30,000 people, while that of transgender men are estimated at 1 in every 100,000 people. They assert nonetheless, that these numbers are likely an underestimate because they only account for transgender people diagnosed with gender identity disorder and people receiving services at gender clinics, which are obviously not inclusive of all transgender people.

The debate surrounding transgenderism continues unabated, with arguments in favour of and against its societal acceptance persisting, showing no signs of resolution in the foreseeable future. Baboolall et al (2021) and National centre for transgender equality (2023) assert that although the corporate society has stepped up its public support of transgender people and their rights, it still has a long road ahead to foster a truly inclusive environment for transgender employees. They protest that most African societies perceive transgender as basically inappropriate and intolerable. The reporters insist that transgender people are not mentally unstable or abnormal; rather that they are normal, stable human beings that deserves love and equal respect. They ultimately elaborate that healthcare providers assign a baby's sex at birth based on external genitalia, resulting in an "assigned female at birth" (AFAB) or "assigned male at birth" (AMAB) designation. The reporters streamline that "cisgenders" refers to individuals whose gender identity matches their assigned sex. However, some people later realize that their gender identity does not align with their assigned sex: Hence the word "transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at birth.

Strachan (2023) and James (2024) declare that transgenderism is a cultural tsunami facing human kind. They assert that transgenderism is a tidal wave that advances through lies. The authors illuminate that the demand for transgender rights might seem focused on protecting a minority from discrimination. However, the ideology of "gender identity" is toxic: Stressing that "transgenderism" or the "ideology of gender identity" is aiming to eliminate the immutable and legal destinations between male and female. Wareham (2024) exposes that Stanford scientists published findings that an Artificial Intelligence (AI) neural network model can differentiate male and female brains. However, the right wing media perceives the discovery as proof of binary, immutable sex; whereas transgender advocates view it as evidence of being "born in the wrong body". The author thus, warns that the ongoing quest to pinpoint the origins of transness is harmful and counterproductive.

Transgenderism had permeated into almost all the human enclaves in the globe. The Igbo located in the Southeast, Nigeria, is not an exception. There are evidences of transgender peoples among the Igbo youngsters substantiated in almost all the southeast Universities in Nigeria as O. Okoye, F. Chukwudindu, O. Elike and C. Iwuno (personal communication, May 28th, 2024) observe. In Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka for instance, particularly in the faculty of Arts, there exists groups of youngsters that engages in binary and non-binary transgender identities as K. Sam-Obi, G. Nwokedi, I. Chigbata, A. Nwamara, J. Oyeka, N. Ojukwu, B. Nwokocha and S. Ikegbo (personal communication, 25th August, 2023) intimate. There are equally manifestations of both binary and non-binary transgender identities among adults in various communities within the Igbo enclave.

The Igbo culture perceives transgenderism as an abomination or taboo that requires remediation and ritual cleansing. The bible pertinent to the Christian framework upholds the immutable,

absolute and divine construct of gender as male and female. Thus any digression from this is an error, deceitful and demands reparation and liberation. Apposite to the foregoing, this study advocates and stimulates the adoption of the Igbo cultural cum biblical stance on human gender as basically males or females divinely assigned only at birth as the global standard for gender identification. The theory of Transgender Contradictions as postulated by Anderson (2018) is utilized in evaluating this study. Both the primary and secondary means of data collections were employed by this research work. All the gathered data were qualitatively delineated via phenomenological, culture centered and hermeneutic approaches. The focus area of this study is Awka South and Idemili North Local Government Areas.

**Meaning of Transgenderism**

Butterfield (2022) expounds that transgenderism is a concept that originated in 1974 as an adjective that qualified persons whose sense of personal identity does not align with their anatomical sex. The term combines "trans" (Latin for crossing) and "gender" (from French and Latin roots meaning kind or class). The terminology shifted from "transgendered" to "transgender" after 2015, emphasizing that it is an intrinsic aspect of identity. The author delineates that currently, gender dysphoria describes the psychological condition where a person feels like their personal identity does not match their anatomical sex. Butterfield indicates that there is a significant cultural trend towards supporting the view within the transgender movement that if a person's gender identity (their sense of being male or female) conflicts with their biological sex, their gender identity should be considered the determining factor.

Tauches (2020) elucidates that "transgender is a term self-applied by persons whose gender identity varies from that traditionally associated with their apparent biological sex at birth" (p.1). Tauches highlights that initially, transgender referred specifically

to males identifying as females, and females identifying as males. Over time, the term expanded to include anyone whose gender identity including behaviours and traits are traditionally linked to the opposite sex.

The American Psychological Association (2024) defines transgender as "an umbrella terms for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not conform to that typically associated with sex to which they were assigned at birth" (p. 1). The assertions of the American Psychological Association posit that transgender identities can be broadly categorized into two major branches, binary and non-binary thus:

**1. Binary transgender identities:**

a. Transgender women (MTF): Those assigned male at birth but identify and live as women.
b. Transgender men (FTM): Those assigned female at birth but identify and live as men.

**2. Non-binary transgender identities:**

a. Genderqueer: These individuals reject conventional gender categories and may equally identify outside the male and female binary.
b. Gender fluid: Those that experience a dynamic or changing gender identity over time.
c. Agender: These are people that do not identify with any gender.
d. Bigender: These individuals identify with two genders, either simultaneously or alternating.
e. Demiboy or Demigirl: These categories of persons partially but not wholly, identify as boys or girls.
f. Two spirits: This is a term used by some indigenous cultures in North America to describe a person who embodies both masculine and feminine qualities.

All these categories reflect the spectrum of gender identities that go beyond traditional male and female roles. It should be noted

that the afore-reflected definitions pertinent to transgenderism were influenced by the fact that gender is currently being underscored as a social construct that is not strictly aligned to biology, and also not limited to just male or female. Hence people can identify as nonbinary, gender fluid, genderqueer, or transgender, among other identities.

**The Origin of Gender Theory pertinent to Transgenderism**

Blakemore (2022) in his peculiar records, avers that there are earliest instances of gender variance involving Gala and Galli priests in ancient Sumer, Akkadia, Greece, and Rome that crossed gender boundaries in worship. He intimates that indigenous communities recognized two-spirits individuals, while South Asia acknowledged Hajira, nonbinary ritual figures. The author illuminates that the Roman emperor, Elagabalus (C.E. 218-222) challenged gender norms, adopting feminine dress and expressing desire for genital removal surgery. He was later shunned, stigmatized, murdered and thrown into the Tiber River at the age of 18. Blakemore elucidates that Albert Cashier, a figure from the 19th century union army soldier in the United States, was one of at least 250 people who, though assigned a female sex at birth, fought in wars as men. Cashier, according to Blakemore, served bravely in over 40 battles as a gallant soldier. Although Cashier was secretive, her war record was later challenged. She was eventually confined to a mental institution and forced to wear woman's clothing. Blakemore declares that the term "transgender" was not coined until the 1960's. However, people have always challenged the gender binary right from the time immemorial.

James (2024) in his account, elaborates that the concept of separating "sex" and "gender" began with Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895), a German doctor and advocate for homosexual rights, who proposed the idea of "a female soul in a man's body" to argue that homosexuality was innate and should not be penalized. This notion evolved with sexologists like Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), who described homosexuals as experiencing "sexual

inversion", suggesting that male "inverts" had a "feminine soul in a male body". Thus, according to James, this marked the early development of distinguishing biological sex from gendered experience.

Turban (2020), Blakemore (2022) and James (2024), further portray that Havelock Ellis polarized "sexual inversion". Harry Benjamin and John money in the mid-20th century advanced medical treatments for transsexuals. Robert Stoller later distinguished biological sex from social gender in 1968. They intimate that hormonal and surgical interventions for transgenderism began in the 1930's. The 1960s to 70s saw mainstream media attention and controversy pertinent to it. Within that period, sex and gender roles were seen as socially constructed. Radical feminists and scholars like Judith Butter questioned binary distinctions.

James (2024) exposes that the transgender radical movement he tagged "Transgender Tipping Point" (p. 2); occurred in 2014, driven by media and activist campaigns. He highlights that the global influence of transgender was stimulated by the Yogyakarta Principles (2006). These principles advocates gender identity based on, self-perception, thus influencing international human rights laws. Irrespective of all these postmodern influence in favour of transgenderism, James elucidates that a scientific review in 2016 found no evidence to support the notion that gender identity is innate and separate from biological sex: Transgender reformers however, arbitrarily refutes that. Currently, many countries have legalized changing legal sex, sometimes without medical requirements, consequently leading to concerns over access to sex-segregated spaces. Organizations promote comprehensive sexual education, teaching children about gender fluidity and self-determined gender identity.

**Empirical Studies**

There are transgender individuals within Igbo communities, though they are often not widely visible due to cultural and social stigmas. G. Nganwuchu, G. Molokwu and U. Arinze (personal communication, May 7th, 2024) express that traditional Igbo society has complex gender roles, and while contemporary Igbo communities are slowly becoming more accepting, transgender people still face significant challenges. They exposit that there are ongoing efforts to raise awareness and acceptance for transgenderism: Whereas some advocacy groups are working towards supporting LGBTQ + individuals in Igbo communities.

F. Okanimee, J. Ikpoyi, C. Onyelibe, C. Okonkwo and A. Nweke (personal communication, May 10th, 2024) indicate that in most secondary schools within Awka South Local Government Area in Anambra State, there abound youngsters that conform to transgenderism. C. Unachukwu, G. Ikejiobi, N. Okpala and I. Ekezie (personal communication, May 21st, 2024) equally affirm that a significant number of youngsters in secondary schools within Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State engage in transgenderism. They elucidate that these secondary school students completely express characters and attributes of the sex other than the ones assigned to them at birth. They even indulge in sexual activities in consonance to their perceived gender identities apposite to transgenderism. There are also some students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka that identify with both binary and nonbinary transgenderism as E. Okeke, M. Okpala and C. Obi (personal communication, June 2nd, 2024) maintain. There are also young adults resident within Agbani-Ifite, Awka, in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State, that also conform to transgenderism.

Transgender within the Igbo communities abounds. However, they operate secretly because the Igbo cosmology perceives it and other related sexual or gender inordinate dispositions as a taboo. One

may not even be mistaken when one asserts that transgenderism is like an open-secret in Igbo land. Chutel (2018) records of the case of Akwaeke Emezi an Igbo, who reduced her breasts and removed her uterus via surgical operation in order to conform to her idealized or perceived gender identity pertinent to transgenderism. Akwaeke (cited by Chutel) believes that her transition is facilitated spiritually since she perceives herself to be an *Ogbanje* (a mystical marine world cult). Akwaeke Emezi, thus identifies as non-binary transgender and equally explores her gender through the concept of *Ogbanje*, a spirit child in Igbo spirituality that exists between life and death cycles. Emezi's understanding of her gender transcends traditional male and female categories, aligning more with this African spiritual framework than western gender norms. Chimamanda Adichie (cited by Phiri, 2021) in total disagreement to Akwaeke's beliefs, stated that "transwomen are transwomen" (p.1), instead of affirming her status as simply a woman. Akwaeke Emezi later accused Adichie as a transphobic owing to her perceived derogatory remark.

Nwankwo (2019) equally narrates the transgender transition story of another Igbo lady simply identified as Area scatter. He highlights that area scatter believes that "he" embodied a form of gender nonconformity influenced by Igbo spiritual traditions. Specifically, "he" was seen as a figure endowed with feminity and artistic talent by the divinities, disrupting conventional gender roles in post-war Nigeria. This aligns "him" with the broader Igbo cultural context where figures like the *Ada mmuonwu* represent gender fluidity through spiritual possession, suggesting a nuanced historical understanding of gender that transcends the binary. Area scatter lived the remaining days of "his" life as a woman despite being a man at birth.

Nwokoye et al (2021) lists transgenderism among the taboos in Igboland. The authors emphasize that various individuals that engage in transgenderism in the closet always come out to confess

because the curses associated with it affects them adversely in their various life endeavours. They insist that every sexual absurdity in Igbo land generates curses. I. Ibegbu and N. Akaeze (personal communication, June 5th, 2021) narrates cases of several persons at Nibo and Ogidi town respectively, that were unprofitably affected owing to their involvement in transgenderism. They were later absolved through ritual cleansing sacrifices. Chima et al (2019) elucidate that sexual absurdity like transgenderism are courtesy of the influences of globalization, humanism and post modernism. The authors affirm that it is not of Igbo conception. In alignment, F. Nwaogu, R. Emeh and C. Ekeh (personal communication, June 8th, 2024) along with C. Igwe, V. Ibeh and M. Agha (personal communication, June 10th, 2024) that are transgender individuals resident in Ifite, Awka and Okpuno respectively, portray that they were drawn into it through their social networks. Thus, trangenderism is equally a learned behavior.

Collins (2017) in view of the spiritual dynamics of sex and gender identity argues that pre-colonial Igbo society recognized and respected gender nonconformity, which is evident through spiritual practices and performance arts like the *Ada mmuonwu* masquerade. This suggests that, much like the Dagaaba, gender identity in Igbo culture was fluid and not strictly tied to biological sex. This fluid understanding contrasts sharply with the rigid European gender binaries imposed during and after colonialism, which marginalized gender diversity that had been historically integrated into Igbo culture. This study realizes that there is this consistent misunderstanding of the Igbo cultural position regarding gender roles. The Igbo people perceive gender and sex as the same. They understood that one's gender is determined by one's sex evidenced by one's genitalia at birth. However, the Igbo people still underscores that one can be endowed with qualities and attributes different from one's sex at birth. Such endowments should not make such a person to start indulging in sexual activities with people of the same sex in conformity to transgenderism. The Igbo

do not equally encourage transgenderism via the removal of assigned genitalia at birth just to conform to one's perceived gender identity. Thus, the Igbo people perceive gender as purely energetic. In that context, one who is physically male can vibrate female energy and vice versa. In all these vibrations and counter-vibrations, it is a taboo in Igbo land for a naturally born male or female to outrightly reject their sex or gender and conform to transgenderism or any other sexual absurdity by the removal of their genitalia; leading to marrying a member of the same sex.

**The Theory of Transgender Contradictions**

Anderson (2018) argues that contemporary views on transgender identity introduce new form of metaphysics that challenges traditional notions. This alternative metaphysics, according to him, asserts that a person's declared gender identity is their actual gender, regardless of physical evidence. Thus transgender activists frame their arguments as scientific and medical, and not as philosophical, in order to gain broader acceptance. Anderson emphasizes that the shift from terms like "birth sex" to "sex assigned at birth" reflects this perspective, emphasizing gender identity over biological sex as the basis for personal identity.

Anderson (2018) elucidates that transgender peoples criticize the use of the term "biological sex", arguing that it is a simplistic and outdated concept that perpetuates harmful ideas about both trans women and men. They instead argue that individuals are assigned a sex at birth by doctors or parents rather than the fact that they were born with a biological sex. The Author laments that educators in the entire school system at all levels now utilize the "Gender unicorn" graphic instead of the "Genderbread person" to teach in order to avoid defaulting to male or female body shapes, and to also differentiate more accurately between gender, sex assigned at birth, and sexuality. Anderson (2018) reprimands that in view of promoting transgender thesis, transgender activists facilitate the use of Gender Unicorn as a better educational tool for

understanding the distinction between gender identities, sex assigned at birth, and sexuality, therefore avoiding the use of the term "biological sex". Gender identity is consequently described as expansive and yet innate, typically established by ages 2 to 3, with claims of a strong biological basis, though lacking cited and credible sources in some expert declarations. Against these backdrops, Anderson posits the transgender contradictions as highlighted below:

1. **Reality versus belief:** Transgender advocates compare gender identity to religious beliefs, suggesting that beliefs do not determine reality. Thus, claiming that a gender identity does not alter the underlying biological reality. This is quite superfluous.
2. **Science in opposition to self-determination:** He highlights the tension that transgender activists simultaneously claim that science shows gender identity to be innate and unchanging, while also asserting that people can self-determine their gender, even if it changes over time. This is quite inconsistent, erratic and unreliable.
3. **Immutability versus changeability:** Anderson questions how gender identity can be both biologically determined and subject to change, and whether shifts in identity imply incorrect perceptions at some points.
4. **Social acceptance in contrast to imposition:** Anderson's thesis questions why society should accept self-declared gender identities if they are self-created, viewing this as an imposition of subjective beliefs on others.
5. **Philosophical incoherence:** He asserts that the evolving and sometimes contradictory nature of transgender ideology leads to philosophical confusion and division, even among the transgender supporters and activists.
6. **Feelings as reality:** Anderson argues that transgender beliefs wrongly equate feelings with reality, thus leading to demands for societal validation of subjective identities.

7. **Resistance to evidence:** Anderson accuses transgender activists of ignoring opposing evidence, suppressing dissent, and maintaining beliefs that conflict with observable facts.
8. **Influence despite contradictions:** Finally, he argues that despite these contradictions, transgender activists have influenced key societal sectors, spreading ideas he views as harmful.

Actually, transgender ideas are harmful, despicable, unscientific, unphilosophical, incoherent, unnatural, and highly deceptive. Principally, they perceive using divine immutability of sex against their deceptive postulations as being inhuman, perpetrating aspersion, toxicity and denigration on their personality and feeling. Truth is that if transgender postulations are lucid, realistic, factual, genuine and sincere, they would not need to go extra miles in enforcing acceptance. Passing of bills for the public acceptance and ratification of a peculiar salacious and inordinate concept cannot transform such lewd and inappropriate bills to become good or gainful. It is obvious that the contemporary world is evolving to a lawless and unethical, perverse scenario where everyone condones and tolerates evil knowing that such will make others to look the other way regarding their own peculiar atrocious dispositions. It is like trade by barter, once you accept and endorse one's weakness, evil deeds and lies, the other will reciprocate. Thus, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. People seldom projects truthfulness and moral decency in the contemporary world.

## Theological Perspectives on Gender in contrast to Transgenderism

Since the sources of Christian theology are Experience, Bible, Reason and Church traditions; this study hinges on the rational interpretation of the bible in view of the Church traditional stance on gender against transgenderism. Butterfield (2022) declares that

feelings of gender dysphoria are actually a consequence of the fall of man. It affects human minds, hearts, and bodies as reflected in Genesis chapter 3. He stresses that hormonal or genetic abnormalities causing gender confusion are medical issues. They are not identity problems. Thus, such issues need counseling and medical treatment in consonance with Psalm 139:1-16. The author establishes that transgenderism is linked to sin of envy, since it covets the sexual anatomy of another as typified in proverbs 14:30 and Roman 1:28-29. He insists that true contentment is found in God and not in altering one's gender. Christians and the entire human kind are thus called to be content in their God-given bodies in view of 1Timothy 6:6 and Genesis 1:27-28. Butterfield summarizes that repentance from envy and reliance on the gospel provides hope and contentment despite the fall of human bodies as enjoined in Romans 8:18-25 and Psalm 34:8.

The Assemblies of God (2017) admonishes that Genesis 1:26-31 streamlines that mankind being created in the image of God refers to the role of humanity over creation as representatives of the authority of God. It depicts human fruitfulness and filling the earth through procreation, and not to bask in the euphoria and vain orientation of transgenderism. Gender incongruence is sinful and rebellious even though one may portray it simply as a deep struggle. The bible might not have used the word "transgender", since it is a recent word. However, it posits that choices contradicting one's birth sex can be morally problematic according to Christian theology. This can lead to rebellion and sin when not controlled, tamed and finally arrested.

The Assemblies of God (2017) equally maintain that Paul's teachings emphasize the respect of gender distinctions in worship, aiming to distinguish Christian practices from those in pagan temples. They stipulate that Paul argues that men and women should honour their natural gender in worship, without restricting their roles. Paul, according to the Assemblies of God, underscores

that men and women complement each other and that dissolving gender distinctions disrespects both sexes and the body. The clarion call is for mankind to honour God by respecting male and female identities in worship and community, as reflected in 1 Corinthians 11: 2-12 and 6:20. They finally assert that Deuteronomy 22: 1 to end with special emphasis on verse 5 proclaims that cross-dressing is a detestable thing (Hebrew toebah) or an abomination to God. The text thus, does not support behaviour which disrespects a biologically based gender like cross-dressing, interpreted in the verse in reference to homosexuality (cross-dressing understood as a kind of sexual role-play) or a reference to transvestite behaviour found in the pagan worship of other Ancient near Eastern cultures, as in the cult of Ishtar or Canaanite futility cults. All these sexual inordinate behaviours dissolve distinctions between the sexes and thus offer support for pagan versions of prostitution or goddess worship: God abhors and detests them all together with transgenderism.

Nash (2024) exposits that the Catholic Church hinges on Genesis 1:26-27, emphasizing that humans are created in the image and likeness of God as male and female. This scriptural foundation affirms that gender identity is inherently tied to biological sex from birth. The church also teaches that each person is either biologically male or female at birth, including those with intersex conditions. This accordingly, reflects an understanding of gender grounded in biological reality rather than subjective identification.
De Young (2016) and Anderson (2017), streamline that the biblical stance of creation is on male and female. Each of these two sexes is a glorious gift from God. They express that human sexuality is meant to be offered back to God either in complementary unity with the opposite sex in the context of marriage for procreation and mutual delight or in celibacy for individual devotion to Christ. They highlight that not only do male and female together reflect the image of God, but the blessed conjugal union of man and woman in marriage context to bring forth new life is equally used

in the bible as the deepest and most intimate analogy of God's relationship with His people. Relatively, throughout the bible, God and mankind are portrayed as husband and wife or as a groom and bride. The authors delineate that the creation account found in Genesis lays out this gender- based, matrimonial picture and sets the stage for the final, eternal union of God and His people (that is of Christ and His bride) described in Revelation. Ultimately, the authors disagree with revisionist gay and transgender theologies as contradictory to foundational Christian doctrine and Judeo-Christian sexual ethic. They equally oppose the celebration of transgenderism as one of God's gift.

**Igbo cultural perspectives on Gender Dynamics Pertinent to transgenderism**

Obasi et al (2015) portray the *Umuada Igbo"* as one of the most organized, peaceful and endowed women groups in Nigeria. Irrespective of the fact that they constitute of female Igbo natives from each peculiar Igbo town, their roles as agents of reconciliation and vanguards of development in pre-colonial and post-colonial modern Igbo land can never be overemphasized. Sequel to this, Emeka-Nwobia (2021), affirms that the dynamics of complementarity and power relations between Igbo men and women are visible in both the transgenerational Igbo institutions of *Umuada"* (every female child of Igbo ancestry: The association of daughters of the land from the same natal community) and *"Umunna"* (a group of men from the same family or sharing the same ancestry) groups. The roles of both *Umuada* and *Umunna* are legislative and judicial. Both associations are formidable socio-cultural cum political organization in Igbo communities that engages in peace building, community development along with performing purification and funeral rites for deceased members of their lineage.

In view of the afore-stated backdrops, Obi-Nwosu (2020) insists that gender roles among Igbo people from prehistoric times were

not arbitrarily assigned but evolved. Thus, indicating that females endowed with male attributes can take up male roles in the community yet will remain as wives to their various husbands. Taking up such male roles which include participating actively in the policy, politics and adjudication processes at the highest level in Igbo parlance does not include that they will start engaging in transgenderism or any sort of sexual absurdity or inordinate concupiscence. Likewise, males which are endowed with female characteristics can engage in some female activities like dancing. However, this does not equally include engagement in reassigning themselves other sex as in transgenderism or engaging in any other sexual anomalies and distortions.

Igwe (2009) against the Igbo core traditional stance insists that same-sex marriage practice between females in Igbo land is not traditionally for procreation and maintenance of linage, but in conformation to transgenderism and homosexuality. However, Aliyu (2018), Urama (2019a) and Urama (2019b) expostulate that same-sex marriage union in Igbo land is simply observed apposite to continuity of lineage or posterity. They elucidate that woman-to-woman marriage in Igbo land has absolutely nothing to do with homosexuality, transgenderism or any sexual incongruities: Moreover Chukuwemeka (cited by Aliyu) identifies woman-to-woman marriage in Igbo land as "an improvisation to sustain patriarchy and an instrument for the preservation and extension of patriarchy and its traditions" (p. 2). The author's argument hinges on the fact that in Igbo society, the male child was of utmost importance and it is always in the obsession to have male children that will continue the lineage that same sex marriage between females ensued. This equally takes place especially where a woman suddenly becomes a widow childless or even without giving birth to any male child except female ones. She now marries a female wife that other male consorts will be impregnating to make male children in order to maintain her late husband's lineage.

Amadiume (2000), Eze (2021), and C. Okaro, E. Onuike, V. Nwafor and E. Okafor (personal communication, June 9th, 2024) declare that sex and gender are not differentiated in the Igbo culture. They accentuate that one's sex and gender is determined at birth by the genitalia parts. They equally reiterate that even if one is endowed with qualities, attributes or even physical features of an opposite sex, such person's genitalia parts determines the person's gender or sex. They spotlight that individuals are free to express the attributes of the sex they are endowed with, however it is an abomination or taboo for such person to go to the extent of engaging in sexual activities pertinent to self idealized gender extraneous to birth-sex or gender. Basically, they state that transgenderism, homosexuality and any other related sexual illegalities are taboos and forbidden in Igbo land.

**Biblical steps to counseling transgender individuals in contemporary Igbo society**

Transgender individuals are susceptible to variety of challenges including gender dysphoria, discrimination and stigma, surgical risks, hormone therapy side effects, and the fact that it constitutes a sin of rebellion against God among others: These may even sincerely cause them to desire change and resort to their natural sex or gender. Such opportunities should be approached with the following biblical counseling options pertinent to the Igbo cosmology:

1. Speaking the truth in love as illustrated in Ephesians 4:15. The church's teachings on chastity and gender identity should gently be presented in honourable mode.
2. Advocate for sexual purity in line with Thessalonians 4:3-4. Guide them toward a life of sexual purity and chastity aligning with biblical principles.
3. They should be made to understand that Christ equally died for all human kind and is ever ready to receive repentant sinners as reflected in John 3:16. Humbly and tactfully lead

them to confess and renounce their engagements in transgenderism.

4. Encourage holistic identity in lieu with 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Focus on their identity in Christ rather than solely on gender identity, encouraging spiritual growth and transformation.
5. Encourage them to always respect and understand the Igbo cultural background, navigating traditional views and contemporary challenges with sensitivity pertinent to Acts 17:26-27.
6. Encourage reconciliation with God and themselves, promoting healing and personal acceptance in the light of 2 Corinthians 5:18.
7. Pray for them and seek divine wisdom in providing guidance, acknowledging the need for God's intervention in their journey as enjoined in James 1:5.
8. Conduct deliverance where necessary to break strongholds of spiritual involvement of *"Ogbange spirits"* in the transgender conformation pertinent to Psalm 34:4, 107:6, 91:15, and James 5:16.
9. Advice them to go for surgical restoration to their natural gender if they actually conformed to transgender via medical surgery in order to avert the curses associated with transgenderism as perceived in the Igbo cosmology. Equally encourage them to take medication for restoration to their sex at birth.

## Conclusion

Transgender is not an option for mankind in the contemporary world. Transgender activists must understand the deceptive, rebellious and destructive nature of the concept. One must learn self control. Human kind should desist from yielding to every form of desire that the mind conceives. The mind is a pathway that entertains all thought process, however, it behooves on every individual to settle for the one's to nurture.

Transgender should be perceived and identified for what it is; "a total distortion targeted at ending sex or gender and plunging mankind into sexless oriented mind set against God's creative precept". The biblical stance on gender or sex remains immutable and pristine. The Igbo culture on the other hand enthrones sexual rectitude as against transgenderism and other sexual absurdities. Every act of transgenderism remains a taboo in Igbo culture. Transgenderism is equally a sin of disobedience against the Divine order.

**Recommendations**

This study in view of all its articulations proffers the following recommendations:

1. Parents and guardians should always give their children and wards first hand information and teachings on gender, sex cum sex education in general apposite to the biblical and Igbo cultural precepts.
2. The government within Igbo enclaves should ensure that moral instructions are undertaken in educational institutions, emphasizing on biblical and Igbo cultural stance on gender identity and roles.
3. The government within Igbo enclaves should equally ensure that school teachers and lecturers do not indoctrinate toddlers and youngsters in transgenderism. If such is ever discovered, the culprits must be sacked and properly prosecuted.
4. Elders and community leaders in Igbo land should employ concerted efforts towards reinforcing the significance of traditional Igbo gender roles and values through cultural events, storytelling, and education. They should equally always advocate for the preservation of cultural norms and values.
5. Church leaders in Igbo communities should always teach and expose the biblical truth regarding gender or sex. They should equally provide counseling based on Christian

teachings that emphasize the biblical understanding of gender as male and female. Moreso, they should always offer pastoral care and support to individuals struggling with gender identity issues; promoting a return to traditional gender roles.

6. The local media should incessantly be utilized to portray Igbo traditional gender roles positively and to equally highlight stories of individual's living in accordance with cultural norms.
7. Legal policies that uphold Igbo traditional gender norms and discourage the adoption of transgender identities should be promulgated. Laws that reflect the Igbo community's stance on gender and prevention against the promotion of transgender identities should be instituted.

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