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Gender Difference and Poverty in the City of Doualaⁱ

By Nanche Billa Robert¹

Abstract

This article examines how gender disparity in terms of education, occupation and a person's income influences poverty. The main question we asked was: how has Cameroon's depressing economy for the past twenty-five years affected the present gender gap?

We use the relative method to measure poverty. We discovered the psychological and social essentials for ordinary living patterns in Douala which we used to construct our questionnaire. It was self-administered using the systematic sampling method.

The following results were obtained: 25.74 percent and 7.5 percent of men and women respectively earn above the poverty-line: 177,000frs CFAⁱⁱ. Men earn an average salary of 100,000frs as against 60,000frs for women. About 48 percent of women are married and 10.61 percent of them are housewives thereby slightly demarcating the public/private sphere.

Although men dominate women in owning durable goods, there is statistically no feminisation of poverty in Douala because women participate as much as men in the desired predominant values of Douala: domestic comfort, health seeking behaviour, good feeding habit and leisure activities. This is because more women stay under someone and live in a family house than men.

Key words: Gender difference in poverty, relative poverty in Douala

Introduction

After a period of sustained growth, which Cameroon experienced up to the middle of the 1980s accomplishing an annual average growth of 7 percent over a ten-year period, the situation deteriorated from 1986 onward and the country has suffered a severe economic and social crisis, (Baye 2004). Since 1985, there has been a sharp reversal in economic performance. The Gross Domestic Product per capital declined by 6.3 percent per year from 1985 to 1993 and this translated into a 6 percent rate of decline in private consumption per capita. How has Cameroon's regressing economy for the past twenty five years in which its citizens have been making an effort to adapt to a constantly reducing domestic consumption due to the deterioration of the job market affected gender gap and participation in the prevalent values in Douala?

Amin (2001) affirms that households headed by men have a relatively higher prevalence of poverty (40.6 percent) than households headed by women (38.7 percent). Poverty is 1.5 percent higher among men's households. Total expenditures per day adult equivalent of households headed by women are 2.1 percent higher in relative value than those headed by men. Poverty in terms of basic needs is lower in households headed by women than those headed by men. Men head 3 out of 4 households and nearly 8 out of 10 poor people live in households

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headed by men. Just like Amin (2001) Baye (2004) explains that males are poorer than females in Cameroon and states that there is no feminisation of poverty in Cameroon.

According to Nana-Fabu (2009) the feminisation of poverty in Cameroon simply refers to the increasing proportion of the poor in Cameroon who are women. According to her, women of late in Cameroon have been over-represented among the poor. They lack the skills and socio-economic opportunities to empower them fight against poverty. Their work is isolated and devalued. As a result, they are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and misery: low income, low savings, low investment and low productivity despite their hard work. Is there really a feminisation of poverty in Cameroon when Amin (2001) and Baye (2004) say poverty is higher in households headed by men than those headed by women?

The current study first of all establishes gender inequality in terms of education, income, occupation and then finds out whether such disproportion affects women's participation in the leading desired values in Douala.

The following hypotheses were formulated: There is a positive relationship between gender and income, education and occupation. Gender disparity positively influences one's participation in the main values in Douala.

The Questionnaire

Poverty is relative to a society and epoch. Sociologically speaking, one is poor when one cannot attain the desired values of one's society (Holborn et al 1991).

Thirty randomly selected respondents were asked the psychological and social essentials for ordinary living patterns in Douala before formulating the questionnaire. One after every twenty of them was picked. The results indicated that for one to live a better life in Douala, one must have a good salary, transportation means, be in good health, own a decent house which is airy, spacious, clean, well-built, secured, well-electrified, air-conditioned and with potable water, buy fashionable things (durable goods), have enough to eat, satisfy one's primary needs, attend good schools and colleges. Under leisure activities respondents mentioned reading, travelling, watching TV programmes, visiting friends and drinking with them, visiting recreational centres and doing sport.

The desired values were grouped into four appropriate categories: Domestic comfort, feeding habits, health seeking behavior and leisure activities. Domestic comfort was broken down into three components: Homeownership (measured using homeownership, rent, living under someone and in a family house as well as homelessness which is perceived in Cameroon as a lack of an abode be it in a poor or rich neighbourhood. However, there are hardly neighbourhoods exclusively for the poor or rich in Douala. It is easy to identify poor people in rich neighbourhoods and vice versa.), possession of durable goods (measured using possession of refrigerator, gas cooker, personal cars, computer, etc.) and home quality measured using sufficient electrification (having light inside and outside of the compound), having potable water, privacy (keeping ones secrets from one's neighbours), air condition and others in situation where respondents could mentioned what they were using at home apart from the above desired qualities.

The second, feeding habits, was broken down into two components. The variation of food (how often respondents change the type of food they eat) and the taking of a balanced diet (how often they took all the classes of food). The two were measured using the following indicators:

daily, weekly, fortnightly and monthly. Finally, another component was the number of times one fed oneself per day measured using: once, twice, thrice, and four times.

In health seeking behavior, it was examined whether respondents would go to the hospital, consult a traditional clinic, stay at home or use all the above when they were sick. Finally, leisure activities were measured using: reading, visiting friends, sport, traveling, visiting recreational centers, watching television, drinking, etc.

The range of salary was established using the minimum and maximum salaries in Cameroon: 23,514frs and 465,850frs CFA respectively following the trade convention that pays the best in Cameroon; however, there are workers in Cameroon who earn far above the maximum range and below the minimum range.

Questions 1 to 10 in the questionnaire were demographic questions: sex, age, marital status, province of origin, ethnic group, neighbourhood, level of education, religion, occupation and income. They served as independent variables. Apart from age, level of education and income, which are measured using ordinal scale, the rest are measured using nominal scale.

Questions 11 to 19 measure the values of the Douala residents that is, what one needed to live a psychologically and socially benefiting life. We got these variables from the research we carried out before designing our questionnaire.

Question 11, which is measured nominally, measures how those in Douala spend their leisure time. We put others because some Douala residents may decide to do other activities apart from those proposed.

Questions 12-15 are nominal variables except question 12; they measure the feeding habit of the Douala inhabitants. In terms of number of times, variety of food, the taking of balanced diet, eating enough vegetables and fruits. At the end of each question, it was asked why, because some people because of cultural reasons or lack of time may decide not to eat or take variety of food and fruit and not necessary because of poverty. Question 16 finds out where one goes to when one is sick. This is to find out whether poverty influences where respondents treat themselves.

Question 17-19 measure domestic comfort in Douala in terms of home ownership, rent and their cost as well as the possession of certain goods and the quality of their homes. Under possession of durable goods it was asked why people do not possess them because some may decide not to buy them because of other reasons and not poverty.

Sampling Procedures

For the sample population to be representative of the general population, a systematic sampling method was used in which everyone had an equal chance in the selection. In every neighbourhood, much effort was made to start with an nth subject and then select every 20th unit after the first. In this case every unit in the general population had the same chance of being selected. Questionnaires were administered in all the major neighbourhoods in Douala: The size of the questionnaires administered in each neighbourhood was determined by its size.

The questionnaires were administered by directly contacting and handing them to the respondents (self-administered) and the non-literate ones were helped to fill them. Since the questionnaire contained sensitive questions such as salary, possession of certain durable goods, home quality, they were contacted in the streets, drinking spots, offices and other places out of their homes in order to create a conducive atmosphere for them to give very sincere answers without being suspicious.

Out of the 202 questionnaires administered, 58 were administered by three research assistants: one postgraduate student in Sociology and two graduate students in Psychology, who were taught the research methods used.

Method of Analysis

The data was processed using the Sphinx software which is a recognised program for analysing data in the social sciences. Particular attention was paid to descriptive and inferential analyses. Each aspect of the operational framework is presented in five stages: display of figures in table, description of the table, interpretation and analysis, inferential analysis by considering aspects like: the chi-test and percentage technique, and finally their sociological implications. In the write-up we compared the specific category to the general population. This method of the calculation of percentage permits one to compare a modality of the independent variable to the percentage obtained in the total population or sample. If the percentage of the independent variable is more than the percentage of the total column we put a +. This shows the difference it makes in the whole. The red in our tables indicate areas of significance. We also calculated the degree of association (I-P). We used tables mostly where there is a correlation.

Poverty-Line in Douala

This research shows that, low incomeⁱⁱⁱ earners, that is, those who earn between 25,000-125,000frs CFA are mostly those who are dependent: they live under someone and in a family house because they do not have enough resources to build and rent a house. However, those of them who own homes, 83.33 percent of their homes are below 4.1 million. Equally, they do not rent expensive houses, about 43.48 percent pay rent below 20,000frs. Only 35.77 percent, 7.32 percent, 12.20 percent of them own a refrigerator, a personal car and a computer respectively. Only 44.70 percent, 39.55 percent of them will take a variety of food and a balanced diet daily respectively. 60 percent of them complained of lack of means. As for leisure activities, 40.10 percent of them read during their leisure time.

Contrarily, those who earn above 177,000frs are not dependent, do not live in a family house, 35 percent and 65 percent of them rent and own homes respectively. 50 percent of them who are homeowners, own homes above 10 million C.F.A. 84 percent of those who rent, pay rent above 42,000frs. Above 90 percent of them possess at least a refrigerator, a gas cooker, a radio, a television and a compact disc. 55 percent and 53 percent of them possess at least a private car and a computer respectively. 67.5 percent and 57.5 percent take a variety of meal and a balanced diet daily. The rest take it weekly because of lack of time for most. 80 percent of them go to the hospital when they are sick.

Considering the two categories, it is glaring that the latter are better-off than the former. Therefore the poverty threshold in Douala can be fixed at 177,000frs C.F.A. However, 25.5 percent and 7.5 percent of men and women respectively earn above the poverty-line. Why are there more women than men below the poverty-line? Can it be due to gender disparity in occupation, income and education? Does it influence their participation in the predominant values of Douala?

Gender Disparity

Here we examined the disparity that exists between income, occupation, level of education and gender in order to know whether they influence poverty.

Table 1: Sex and Occupation

Sex \ Occupations	Manager	Private sector	Informal sector	Civil servants	Liberal profession	Farmer	Trader	Student	Housewife	Unemployed	Missing	Total
Male	+2 1.4%	+46 33.8%	25 18.4%	+13 09.5%	10 07.4%	1 0.7%	11 08.1%	1 0.7%	0	+25 18.4%	2 1.4%	136 67.3%
Female	0 0	12 18.8%	+14 21.2%	5 21.21%	+8 14.2%	1 1.5%	6 9.09%	+2 03%	+7 10.6%	11 16.6%	0	66 32.7%
Σ	2 0.9%	58 28.7%	39 19.3%	18 08.9%	18 08.9%	2 0.9%	17 08.4%	3 01.5%	7 03.5%	36 17.8%	2 0.9%	202 100%

Source: Our Research.

From the above table, 17.8 percent of Douala residents are unemployed. The unemployment specifically the professional insertion of the young generation is an unavoidable problem. Before only the uneducated were unemployed but it is the contrary today. More and more educated people are unemployed than the uneducated ones (Joel2000). About 15,000 students graduate from Cameroon's state universities and other private institutes every year and only about 2,000 of them succeed to have a job in the private and public sectors.

Rising joblessness among the active population in the urban areas constitutes the main indicator of the difficulty Cameroonians are facing to insert themselves in the labour market. In 1990, unemployment rate was 7.3 percent and it rose to 24 percent in 2000. Our work indicates that it is 17.82 percent because about 19.31 percent works in the informal sector. Rouband (1994) shows that urban unemployment in Cameroon is one of the highest in Africa and even much higher than those registered in Latin America. The informal sector is rising in Cameroon within the active population; in 1983 there were above 65 percent salarised jobs, it dropped to 63 percent in 1987 and less than 50 percent in 1993 (Joel et al 2000) and this work shows that it is 19.3 percent.

From the above table, it is visible that more men suffer from unemployment than women simply because 10.61 percent of women are housewives who depend on men for their livelihood. It is equally clear that men dominate women in lucrative posts and sectors: managerial positions, private sector, and public service which are well-paid jobs and sectors. Women dominate men in lowly paid and isolated jobs in the informal sector, liberal profession, trading: small businesses like selling food-stuffs in front of their doors and in local markets. The dependence of occupation on sex is very significant ($\text{Chi}^2 = 23.64$, Degree of Freedom = 10, $1-p = 99.14$ percent).

This problem is global and not particular in Douala. In Europe for example, there are still jobs perceived as "women's jobs" in sectors where average wages are lower than in sectors

dominated by men. For example, 40 percent of European women work in the spheres of education, health and public administration and only 29 percent of European scientists and engineers are women. Women across Europe are actually more vulnerable than men to experience poverty in terms of poor housing, healthcare, struggle to find child-care services, etc. In order to survive women had to make significant compromises and accept job offers that many men did not (Amankwah2009).

Lorber (1994) explains that wage discrimination occurs in two major ways: wage scales of jobs, occupation, sectors and segments where dominant group men are in the majority are consistently higher than, and in any job women and subordinate group men tend to be paid less as workers.

However, Joel et al (2000) shows that the economic activities of the women in Cameroon are not marginal because they work an average of 35 hours per week as against 41 hours for men. The inactivity of women is only possible when the other members of the household bring enough resources for the up-keep of the family. In a situation of insufficient resources, women contribute to the household comfort by working in the informal sector: doing petty business. From the above, women's rights and duties tend to be much closer to home than men's.

Talcott Parson and Robert Bales (1955) say, men specialize in instrumental tasks (particularly roles associated with deriving a livelihood) and women in expressive tasks (nurturing roles that are an extension of their reproductive and nursing function.) Mascia-Lees (1984) blamed this on the advent of colonialism and capitalism in Africa which subjugated and impoverished women considering that capitalism depends on the backwardness of the household which maintains women as a reserve labour force, available to join the labour force, usually at the periphery of the economy. According to Nana-Fabu (2009), colonialism and neo-colonialism in Cameroon helped to reinforce male domination in all spheres of life as the family has increasingly been eliminated as a productive unit.

Milojevic Ivana (2012) affirms that traditional patriarchal gender order has been altered in places where alternative visions for the future were recommended: gender partnership, egalitarianism and equity thereby minimising patriarchal social structure. In places of the world where traditional, patriarchal power structures remain strong and alternative visions weak, social change continue to reinforce the former. How much then do women earn considering their low rewarding jobs?

Table 2: Sex and Income

Income \ Sex	24,000 74,000	75,000 125,000	126,000 176,000	177,000 127,000	228,000 278,000	279,000 329,000	>330,000	Missing	Total
Male	53 38.9%	25 18.4%	11+ 08.1%	14+ 10.3%	9+ 06.6%	1+ 0.7%	11+ 08.1%	12 08.8%	136 67.33%
Female	31+ 46.9%	14+ 21.2%	2 03%	3 04.5%	0	0	2 03%	14 21.2%	66 32.67%
Σ	84 41.5%	39 19.3%	13 06.4%	17 08.4%	09 04.5%	1 0.49%	13 06.4%	26 12.8%	202 100%

The above table shows that women earn mostly very low salary as compared to men. They dominate only around 25,000-125,000frs and men dominate around 126,000 to 330,000frs

and above. By and large men earn more money than women because they monopolise high rewarding jobs. The high percentage of missing data for women is due to the fact that 10.61 percent of them are housewives and do unpaid jobs. The dependence of income on sex is very significant ($\chi^2 = 16.30$, Degree of Freedom = 7, $1-p = 97.75$ percent).

The average salary for men is 100,000frs and 60,000frs for women which is far below the poverty-line of 177,000frs. This has fallen because as shown by Jean et al (2000), it was 104,000frs for men and 63,000frs for women.

Comparatively, Amankwah (2009) indicates that currently women in the European Union earn around 17 percent less than men. In order to earn as much as a man would earn in a year, a woman in Europe needs to work 418 days. Can women low salary in Douala be due to their level of education?

Table 3: Sex and Level of Education

Education \ Sex	F.S.L.C ^{IV}	O/L	A/L	Graduates	Postgraduates	Missing	Total
Male	21 15.44%	32 23.5%	+44 32.3%	+23 16.9%	+15 11.02%	1 0.7%	136 67.33%
Female	+13 19.7%	+29 43.9%	13 19.7%	7 10.6%	2 03%	2 03%	66 32.67%
Total	34 16.8%	61 30.2%	57 28.2%	30 14.8%	17 08.4%	3 01.5%	202 100%

Source : Our Research

This table shows that more women have the first school leaving certificate^V and ordinary level holders: 19.70 percent, 43.94 percent respectively than men (15.44 percent, 23.53 percent) respectively. More men are advanced level holders, graduates and postgraduates than women. The dependence of education on sex is significant ($\chi = 15.39$, Degree of Freedom = 6, $1-p = 98.25$ percent).

Budgetary allocation in the education sector in Cameroon declined sharply over the 1996-2001 period resulting in a shortage of physical facilities. As a consequence, there has been a worsening student/teacher ratio, inadequate guidance for students, lower quality of teaching and a growing number of graduates who cannot find jobs. There is also an imbalance in the allocation of the university budget, which is tilted towards administrative expenses to the detriment of teaching and research. The quality of education has been affected and has led to: high repetition and dropout rates; geographic and gender disparities in access to school, disparities in the installation of school infrastructure, a deterioration in the quality of teaching and learning, a high degree of centralisation and inefficiency in the management of the education system (Cameroon Government 2003).

The educational institution serves as an agency for screening and selecting individuals for different types of jobs. By conferring degrees, diplomas, credentials that are prerequisites for many technical, management, and professional positions, it determines which young people will have access to scarce positions and offices of power, privilege, and status. The school functions as “mobility escalators,” allowing able, gifted individuals to ascend the social ladder

(Krymkowski 1991). Therefore with their low academic qualifications as compared to men, women in the city of Douala are hardly selected for positions of power, privilege and status.

According to Lorber (1994) the glass ceiling concept assumes that women have the motivation, ambition and capacity for position of power and prestige but invisible barriers keep them from reaching the top. They can see their goal, but they bump their heads on a ceiling that is both hidden and impenetrable. It is an organizational bias that prevents qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management positions. This research shows that women in Douala do not have such ambition and motivation of higher positions because they are not highly educated and as a consequence are either involved in petty businesses or household management. Low payment encourages them to get married and concentrate themselves on domestic activities and child rearing and men benefit from their unpaid labour at home. They mainly depend on their husbands and family members for their livelihood.

Sanday (1974) links gender stratification to economic roles: Women's cultural values rise when they contribute about as much to subsistence as men do and dwindles when they contribute less. When the domestic and public spheres are not well separated, gender status is more equal (the domestic/public dichotomy). As the society experiences further modernization, the public/private differentiation widens.

Examining the feminisation of poverty in Cameroon, Nana-Fabu S. (2006), explains that during the pre-colonial period women exercised a lot of social and political power and a greater sense of autonomy: women dominated the household economy due to little specialization of production and women's control of agriculture and the fruits of their labour. However, during the colonial period the money economy was introduced and agriculture was seen as a money-making venture and not subsistence alone. Therefore Europeans and male-labour force displaced women. As a result men took women's position as primary producers as well as their considerable power and autonomy because they were excluded as cash crop producers and were not taught to diversify their crops. Equally, they were given inferior education which also reflected their socio-economic status, women were not trained to use new agricultural techniques and equipment. Those who were educated were trained to occupy secondary and non-decision making roles and were excluded from integrating themselves into the social, economic and political structures.

From the above, we can conclude that men in Douala earn more money because they do more prestigious jobs, and are highly educated than women. Can this therefore cause the feminization of poverty in Douala?

Gender and Poverty

The objective of this part is to find out whether there is feminization of poverty in Douala considering women's low income, education and dead-end jobs. We examined gender and poverty using the main values of Douala: domestic comfort, feeding habits, leisure activities, health and mobility. Therefore does women low economic and social status influence the feminization of poverty in Douala?

Sex and Domestic Comfort

Here we find out whether there is a relationship between owning a home, the quality of one's lodging and gender. This research shows that more males are homeowners, rent and are

homeless than females. It also shows that more women stay under someone and live in a family house than men. This is an indication that men are more combative, acquisitive and independent because as seen above, they are wealthier, more educated and occupy more prestigious jobs than women. Tannen (1990) states that in a world of status, independence is key, because a primary means of establishing it is to tell others what to do, and accepting orders is a maker of low status. “Though all humans need both intimacy and independence, women tend to focus on the first and men on the second. It is as if their lifeblood ran in different directions.”

If homelessness is defined as a lack of an abode, then only about 5 percent of Douala residents are homeless but if homelessness is defined as being in a neighbourhood that is minimally adequate in terms of shelter, privacy, personal safety, security of occupancy, comfort etc therefore 46.76 percent of Douala residents are homeless. The former is considered in this work because that is how homelessness is perceived in Cameroon.

However, there is no statistical relation between sex and residence type (Chi 2 = 2.14, Degree of Freedom = 5, 1-p = 17.05 percent).

Considering sex and worth of house, men slightly own more expensive houses than women. The dependence of worth of house on sex is slightly significant (Chi 2 = 9.88, Degree of Freedom = 6, 1-p = 87.02 percent). It is worth noting that married women live in their husband’s houses which by virtue of their union belong to them too.

As concern sex and rent, there is no significant relation (Chi 2 = 3.01, Degree of Freedom = 6, 1 – p = (9.24 percent). It is worth noting that the rent of 3.03 percent of women is paid by their friends probably their “sweet daddies” whereas nobody pays the rent of a male. This still shows the dependence of women on others. 0.74 percent of men jointly pay their rent whereas women hardly co-habit in a room with a friend in order to cut down the bills. There is no statistical relation between sex and who pays one’s rent (Chi 2 = 4.93, Degree of Freedom = 4, 1 – p = 70.58 percent).

There is absolutely no significant relation between sex and home quality. (Chi 2 = 0.91, Degree of Freedom = 7, 1 – p = 0.39 percent).

Table 4: Sex and Possession of Durable Goods

Goods \ Sex	Refrigerator	Cooker	Radio	Television	Private car	Computer	Telephone	Missing	Total
Male	+71 52.2%	77 56.6%	+115 84.6%	+113 83.1%	+26 19.1%	+30 22.2%	+91 66.9%	1 0.7%	524 68.77%
Female	31 46.9%	+44 66.6%	+48 72.7%	+55 83.3%	8 12.12%	8 12.12%	42 63.63%	2 3.03%	238 31.23%
Σ	102 50.5%	121 59.9%	163 80.7%	168 83.1%	34 16.8%	38 18.8%	133 65.8%	3 1.5%	762 100%

Source: Our Research.

Although men slightly dominate women in the possession of goods like private car, computer and others, there is no significant dependence of possession of durable goods on sex. (Chi 2 = 6.47, Degree of Freedom = 7, 1-p = 51.39 percent).

Although men slightly dominate women in possessing more expensive homes and durable goods, statistically, there is no correlation between gender and domestic comfort because more females dependent on others than males.

Gender and Feeding Habit

Here we establish whether gender differences influences feeding habits such as its frequency, quality, and variation.

Table 5: Sex and Frequency of Meals

Sex \ Times	One	Two	Three	Four	Σ
Male	17+ 12.5%	66+ 48.5%	50+ 36.5%	3 2.2%	136 67.33%
Female	6 9.09%	32 48.5%	21 31.8%	7 + 10.6%	66 32.67%
Total	23 11.4%	98 48.5%	71 35.1%	10 04.9%	202 100%

Source: Our research

This table shows that despite women's low income, they eat more times than men who eat mostly once and thrice per day. 37.50 percent of men complained of poverty. If women eat four times, it is because 10.61 percent of them are housewives: they prepare the food (expressive tasks) whereas men are always in their offices or out of home searching for the family's daily bread (instrumental tasks). The number of times one eats per day slightly depends on one's sex. (Chi 2 = 7.10, Degree of Freedom = 3, 1-p = 93.11 percent).

There is no significant relation between sex and the eating of a balanced diet (Chi = 2 = 5.50, Degree of Freedom = 5, 1-p = 64.17 percent), despite the fact that males slightly dominate. Females take a balanced diet mostly weekly.

There is absolutely no statistical relation between sex and the variation of meals (Chi 2 = 0.67, Degree of Freedom = 4, 1-p = 4.51 percent). Its 1-p percent and Chi 2 is too low. There is also totally no significant relation between sex and the eating of enough vegetables and fruits (Chi 2 = 2.22, Degree of Freedom = 5, 1-p = 18.27 percent).

Therefore, although women eat more times than men and later slightly dominate former in eating quality food, we can conclude that gender does not influence eating habits.

Mobility, Health, Leisure Activities and Sex

We established whether gender influences spatial mobility, medical care and leisure activities.

Our research shows that men live slightly longer in their neighborhoods than women. This is because this research shows that wealthier people live longer in their neighbourhoods than poorer ones. Unlike low salary earners, 61 percent of those who earn >177,000frs live longer in their neighbourhoods. Despite this, the dependence of mobility on gender is not significant (Chi 2 = 6.12, Degree of Freedom = 5, 1-p = 70.5 percent).

Men visit mostly traditional doctor and also fluctuate between the hospital, traditional doctor and stay at home more than women, who mostly go to the hospital and at times when the illness is not serious or because of lack of means stay at home. Statistically there is no dependence of the place one goes to when sick on sex. (Chi 2 = 4.10, Degree of Freedom = 4, 1-p = 60.80 percent).

Concerning leisure activities, 19.12 percent, 5.15 percent and 13.64 percent, 3.03 percent of men and women respectively like traveling and visiting recreational centers. More men like doing leisure activities which are more expensive than women's. When one considers the other aspects: reading, visiting friends, doing sport and so on one discovers that there is no relation between sex and leisure activities. (Chi 2 = 4.18, Degree of Freedom = 7, 1-p = 24.09 percent).

The above demonstrates that, there is a significant relation between sex and occupation, income and level of education. As for the values of Douala, there is a significant relationship between gender and the number of meals and worth of home and there is no dependence of leisure activities, variation of meals, eating balanced diet, eating vegetable and fruit, where one goes for medical care, residential type, cost of rent, house quality, possession of durable goods and mobility on sex. Therefore it can be confidently said that although males are more educated, occupy prestigious and high paying jobs, they participate in the society as much as females. Consequently there is no feminization of poverty as such in Douala. According to Amin (2001) and Baye (2004) household headed by men have a relatively higher poverty than household headed by women. This is false because this study shows that although there is no feminization of poverty; men slightly have a more comfortable live than women despite the lack of a statistically significant relation. We reformulate our hypothesis as: there is a negative relationship between gender and poverty in Douala. That is, there is no relationship between gender and domestic comfort, feeding habit, health seeking behaviour and spatial mobility.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that, although women are poorly educated, earn low incomes and work in dead-end occupations, they participate as much as men in the predominant values in Douala. Therefore, there is no feminisation of poverty in Douala because of women's dependence on others. However, women have a very low status and 10.61 percent of them are housewives who do unpaid domestic chores.

Using this, we reformulate our hypotheses as: there is a negative relationship between gender and domestic comfort, feeding habit, health seeking behaviour and spatial mobility.

Generally, it is worth noting that those who participate comfortably in the main values of the city of Douala are the postgraduates, those above 40 years, married and single parent persons, those who have nuclear family, Protestants and those from the Littoral Region. Those who are excluded include those with low-level education, divorcees, workers in the informal sector and those who have extended family.

Gender equality is a fundamental condition for the full enjoyment of human rights by women and men. International instruments now exist to promote and defend women's rights, but gender inequalities are persistent in a wide range of areas. If gender equality is to be achieved, the government of Cameroon should carry out an aggressive policy on the education of the girl child. Women should be trained to go beyond gender roles which deny them access to the public world of power, achievement and independence. They should not think that their existence depends on others because traditional gender roles limit the psychological and social possibilities for women. This will help make women more competitive in the job market and thereby reduce their high dependence on family members.

The government should train the girl child to be more competitive, more rational and rule oriented than just inculcating the values of nurturing and emotion. Textbooks should not portray men and women as Andersen (1992) put it "in gender-stereotypic roles" thereby teaching them different abilities and different identities.

Social institutions should incorporate female-oriented values such as flexibility, orientation towards others and co-operation into dominant social institutions, in order to produce more gender-balanced boys and girls.

Endnotes

ⁱDouala which is the capital of the Littoral Region is the economic capital of Cameroon. Cameroon is a country in sub-Saharan Africa

ⁱⁱAbout \$354 US dollars considering that \$1 is equivalent to 500frsCFA. CFA means Commauté Financière Africaine (African Financial Community). It is the currency we used through this work

ⁱⁱⁱWe use person's income and not household income.

^{iv}The first school leaving certificate is a certificate obtained after completion of primary education. The ordinary and advanced levels are obtained after completion of the first and second cycles of the secondary school respectively.

^v A certificate obtained in Cameroon after completing the primary education before going to secondary school.

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