

Reconceptualizing Motherhood in Modern African Society: An Afrocentric Philosophical Reconstruction of Care, Ubuntu Ethics, and Gender Justice

Michael D. Olajide^{1*}, Olatunun A. Oderinde²

1. Research Fellow in the Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies in the College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa (UNISA), South Africa
2. Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State

* Corresponding author: mikedaintl@gmail.com

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Abstract: This research places the institution of *motherhood* in modern African society as the main unit of analysis to decipher its shifting cultural values. The purpose of this research is to reconstruct the meaning of motherhood distorted by colonialism and capitalistic modernity through the lens of contemporary philosophy. Using a qualitative method approaching conceptual-analytical analysis, this literature study evaluates the main texts of ethical philosophy and African feminist thought. The findings and novelty of this research prove that the concept of motherhood in Africa is not just an oppressive biological-domestic function, but a relational, ethical, and socially productive institution that provides moral authority for women. This deconstruction gave birth to a new synthesis that sat down as a fair communal responsibility. The scientific contribution of this research is to provide a theoretical blueprint for bridging the tension between radical Western autonomy and traditional communitarianism. Thus, this study offers a robust contextual framework for the formulation of gender justice policies, social sustainability, and the fulfillment of reproductive rights rooted in the local wisdom of modern African societies.

Keywords: African Philosophy, Motherhood, Ubuntu Ethics, African Feminism, Motherism, Gender Justice, Social Sustainability

1. Introduction

Maternal institutions in the dynamics of contemporary African society are currently at a crossroads due to the impact of massive global structural disruption (Akinbobola, 2023; Tamale, 2023). Sociologically, the daily reality of mothers in Africa is currently surrounded by chains of structural poverty, macroeconomic instability, unplanned urbanization, and waves of migration that strain traditional kinship (Dube, 2022; Metz, 2018). Empirical data shows that more than 80% of the female workforce in the Sub-Saharan region is trapped in the vulnerable informal sector without adequate maternity protection guarantees (Ojong, 2018; World Bank, 2024). This condition is exacerbated by the dark portrait of reproductive injustice, where this region accounts for nearly 70% of total global maternal deaths with a dramatic ratio of 545 deaths per 100,000 live births (Ajayi et al., 2023; World Health Organization, 2023). This double pressure is increasingly heightened when



professional mothers are required to bear the burden of domestic and career at the same time in the midst of a lack of childcare facilities (Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019; World Bank, 2023). As a result, motherhood is often pejoratively reduced in the capitalistic system as a form of unpaid reproductive work that limits social mobility (Mama, 2018; Opara, 2020). These real conditions reflect the collective moral failure to protect the main pillars of civilization's sustainability (Chisale & Moyo, 2024; Gyekye, 2016).

A review of the literature shows that the theme of the position of women and family institutions in Africa has attracted wide attention from a wide range of cross-disciplinary experts (Metz, 2017; Nnaemeka, 2021). Previous sociologists and anthropologists generally studied motherhood as an instrument of cultural domestication or a locus of patriarchal domination that demanded unlimited sacrifice (Akinbobola, 2023; Dube, 2022). On the other hand, Afrocentric thinkers such as Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí launched a counter-critique by asserting that precolonial societies did not recognize rigid gender hierarchies and viewed motherhood as a legitimate source of moral authority (Afolayan, 2022; Oyěwùmí, 2016). In line with this, Catherine Acholonu introduced the idea of *Motherism* that glorifies motherhood as a civilizational principle that focuses on environmental care and peace (Acholonu, 1995; Nwafor, 2024). Meanwhile, contemporary feminist critics warn of the dangers of this cultural romanticism because it risks marginalizing childless women and perpetuating a unilateral domestic workload (Akinbobola, 2023; Dube, 2025). However, the majority of current studies tend to be trapped in extreme dualism: radically rejecting motherhood or praising it sentimentally without providing a logical ethical-structural foothold (Nnaemeka, 2021; Tamale, 2023).

The fundamental research *gap* lies in the lack of studies that position motherhood as an independent normative philosophical category (Chimakonam, 2022; Metz, 2018). Most studies isolate the conversation of motherhood in the sociological empirical-descriptive realm, public policy, or simply a political advocacy movement (Matolino & Kwindigwi, 2021; Nwafor, 2024). There is a sharp separation of schools of thought, where the communitarian approach glorifies maternal symbolism but ignores the exploitation of women's work (Okome, 2021; Salami, 2025). In contrast, liberal feminism tends to adopt an individualistic Western paradigm that uproots women from their relational roots (Oyěwùmí, 1997; Nzegwu, 2006). In addition, the discourse on *Ubuntu* ethics that emphasizes human interdependence is very rarely applied to dissect the burden of parenting specifically (Metz, 2022; Chisale & Moyo, 2024). Therefore, this research aims to fill this academic gap by applying a conceptual-analytical methodology that integrates African philosophy, *Ubuntu ethics*, and contextual feminist critiques (Metz, 2017; Opara, 2020).

This article proposes a key philosophical argument that motherhood in modern African society should be understood as a productive, relational, and transformative social-ethical institution (Chimakonam, 2022; Opara, 2020). Through conceptual deconstruction, this study flatly rejects the glorification of maternal suffering or the limitation of women's roles in exploitative domestic spaces (Acholonu, 1995; Opara, 2005). Rather, this research confirms that indigenous African philosophical values of human dignity, reciprocity, and collective responsibility can enrich gender justice (Gyekye, 2016; Ramos, 1999). By adopting the synthesis between *the framework of Chioma Carol Opara's feminism* and *the ethics of Ubuntu*, it is positioned that the work of childcare must be socially distributed to fathers, communities, and the state (Metz, 2022; Chisale & Moyo, 2024). Independent motherhood is motherhood that is freely chosen, fully supported economically, and integrated in a

fair legal structure (Egbunike, 2024; Tamale, 2023). This radical reconceptualization is crucial for realizing the moral sustainability of society, the liberation of women's agency, and the development of a dignified African civilization in the future (Acholonu, 2017; Oyěwùmí, 2016).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Relational Ontology, Personhood, and the Concept of Traditional African Motherhood

The construction of human identity and existence in the African philosophical tradition is fundamentally built on a solid foundation of relational ontology (Chimakonam, 2022; Ramos, 1999). In contrast to the atomistic Cartesian pattern of the West, the concept of *personhood* (humanity) in Africa is affirmed through a network of kinship, cultural reciprocity, and full integration into the community (Gyekye, 2016; Wiredu, 1992). It is in this cosmological space that the maternal institution occupies a central position because it acts as an existential mediator that bridges biological and spiritual life (Mbiti, 1969; Wiredu, 1992). Parenting work, transmission of moral values, and preservation of lineage are seen as the main axis that moves the wheels of social life of civilization (Matolino & Kwindigwi, 2021; Metz, 2018). Therefore, motherhood in traditional philosophy has never been dwarfed into a mere private-domestic affair or a purely mechanical reproductive function (Oyěwùmí, 2016; Adeyemi, 2024). Through this meaning, the existence of a mother is culturally closely attached to the survival of the birth and mind of her community (Mbiti, 1991; Chimakonam, 2022).

The pre-colonial social system in various parts of Africa showed a real manifestation of the high spiritual and political authority possessed by the mother figure (Amadiume, 1987; Oyěwùmí, 1997). In Yoruba culture, the term *ìyá* (mother) represents the power of metaphysics and ethical leadership that is respected through the symbolism of *Ìyá Nlá* (Abimbola, 1976; Idowu, 1962). Likewise, in the social structure of Igbo society, the existence of *the omu institution* proves that maternal identity is able to penetrate the boundaries of the household to carry out the economic function of public political control (Amadiume, 1987; Uchendu, 1965). Motherhood is positioned as the main anchor of the formation of the character of the next generation through informal education methods that continue to be sustainable (Acholonu, 2017; Opara, 2020). Failure to support maternal functions, such as infertility or neglect, is automatically responded to as a communal crisis that must be resolved together by a wide network of relatives (Mbiti, 1969; Wiredu, 1992). This historical track record confirms that the original roots of African thought place mothers as dignified subjects who dominate the ethical spaces of society (Oyěwùmí, 2016; Adeyemi, 2024).

2.2. Colonial Disruption, Neoliberalism, and the Marginalization of Women's Domestic Work

Western colonialist intervention has brought about massive destruction of the communitarian-oriented social order that originally protected the position of African women (Nnaemeka, 2004; Oyěwùmí, 1997). The colonial government, along with the spread of European religious missions, imported the Victorian-era domestication ideology that was gender-biased and rigid (Nnaemeka, 2004; Oyěwùmí, 1997). Women are forced to submit to a new patriarchal control that defines their role as a supporter in a privatized nuclear family model (Oyěwùmí, 1997; Nzegwu, 2006). As a result,

the public and political authority that was previously tightly held by mothers in the pre-colonial era was systematically eroded (Amadiume, 1987; Oyěwùmí, 2016). The wage economic structure introduced by colonialism shifted the orientation of labor values, where masculine production activities were valued by material means, while feminine reproductive work was ignored (Mama, 2018; Ojong, 2018). The destruction of this cultural foundation is the beginning of the throwing of African mothers into a circle of modern structural subordination (Afolayan, 2022; Salami, 2025).

In the post-colonial era, the adoption of a capitalistic neoliberal economic system exacerbated the socio-economic marginalization faced by mothers (Mama, 2018; World Bank, 2024). Free market policies cut social subsidies and privatize the public sector, forcing mothers to bear the burden of raising children alone in isolated urban areas (Metz, 2018; Dube, 2022). The hard work of taking care of children is now labeled as an unproductive activity because it does not produce monetary commodities directly in market indicators (Mama, 2018; Opara, 2020). Mothers are faced with an exploitative dilemma, where they are obliged to engage in a vulnerable informal labor market in order to survive while bearing the domestic burden (Ojong, 2018; World Bank, 2024). The loss of the communitarian support system transforms nurturing that was initially a source of shared happiness into an arena of exhausting individual struggle (Metz, 2018; Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019). This phenomenon of dehumanization gives birth to an existential crisis that degrades the dignity of mothers and widens the gap in gender-based poverty (Mama, 2018; Tamale, 2023).

2.3. Theoretical Synthesis: Integrating Motherism, Femalism, and Ubuntu Ethics

In order to counter the hegemony of the Western feminist paradigm that is often individualistic biased, African feminist intellectuals have given birth to contextual conceptual alternatives (Acholonu, 1995; Nnaemeka, 2021). The theory of *Motherism* pioneered by Catherine Acholonu places motherhood as the epicenter of the humanitarian liberation movement based on the maintenance of life (Acholonu, 1995; Nwafor, 2024). On the other hand, the philosophy of *femalism* of Chioma Carol Opara complements this perspective by placing theoretical emphasis on the importance of women's body agency, creativity, and full autonomy (Opara, 2005; Egbunike, 2024). *Femalism* prevents the absolutization of the role of mothers, so that women are not trapped in a narrow positioning as a mere means of reproduction (Opara, 2020; Okafor, 2022). The meeting of these two ideas creates a balanced discourse that values motherhood as a noble choice without having to sacrifice women's human rights and civil liberties (Nnaemeka, 2021; Tamale, 2023).

This theoretical integration finds its most solid operational anchor within the ethical philosophical framework of *Ubuntu* (Ramose, 1999; Metz, 2018). The main principle of *Ubuntu* underlines that the maintenance of the lives of future generations is a collective moral responsibility that must be carried out together (Metz, 2022; Chisale & Moyo, 2024). This ethics radically rejects the one-sided burden of childcare solely on the shoulders of women (Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019; Chisale & Moyo, 2024). Through the conceptual synthesis between *Motherism*, *femalism*, and *Ubuntu*, *care work* has been successfully deconstructed from mere personal sacrifice to social relational justice (Metz, 2018; Opara, 2020). Parenting is now positioned as a crucial form of social investment for the moral sustainability and future of civilization (Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019; Metz, 2022). It is this theoretical combination that offers a resolution to the tensions of tradition-modernity to liberate maternal agency in Africa (Acholonu, 2017; Opara, 2020).

3. Methods

3.1 Material Objects

The material object of this research is focused on the institution of motherhood in the dynamics of modern African society, which is critically studied (Acholonu, 2017; Oyěwùmí, 2016). This object is not approached physically-empirically, but as a discursive concept that is in the midst of the tension of tradition, colonialism, and modernity (Opara, 2020; Tamale, 2023). The focus of the study is emphasized on theoretical representations of parenting, women's agency, reproductive injustice, and domestic workload (Akinbobola, 2023; Mom, 2018). The choice of material objects aims to dismantle Western patriarchal and individualistic biases that obscure the ethical meaning of motherhood in Africa (Oyěwùmí, 1997; Nzegwu, 2006).

3.2 Research Design

The research design applied in this study is qualitative with a conceptual, analytical, and normative approach to philosophical analysis (Chimakonam, 2022; Metz, 2017). This research is designed as a *library-based inquiry* that moves away from sociological empirical generalizations (Metz, 2018; Ramos, 1999). An analytical approach is used to unravel the ontological assumptions behind the texts of philosophers' thought (Acholonu, 1995; Oyěwùmí, 2016). Meanwhile, normative reconstruction methods are used to build new theoretical synthesis that is relevant to contemporary challenges (Opara, 2020; Tamale, 2023).

3.3 Data Source

The data sources in this philosophical research are entirely derived from high-quality primary and secondary text literature (Acholonu, 1995; Oyěwùmí, 1997). Primary data are sourced from the seminal work of Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, Catherine Acholonu, and Chioma Carol Opara who explore African feminism (Acholonu, 1995; Opara, 2005; Oyěwùmí, 1997). Secondary data include articles in reputable international journals and textbooks from 2016 to 2025 on *Ubuntu* ethics (Metz, 2022; Chisale & Moyo, 2024). The literature selection was based on criteria of high academic credibility as well as direct relevance to gender justice discourse (Nnaemeka, 2021; Tamale, 2023).

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique is carried out through a strictly structured literature documentation method based on thematic classification (Metz, 2018; Opara, 2020). The initial step begins with selecting a text cluster that outlines the concept of personhood, caring ethics, and maternal dynamics (Chimakonam, 2022; Gyekye, 2016). Furthermore, textual data in the form of key arguments, theoretical quotes, and global survey data from international institutions (World Bank, 2024; World Health Organization, 2023). All of this verbal-conceptual data is digitally documented to ensure valid reference traceability (Acholonu, 2017; Oyěwùmí, 2016).

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique adopts a combined thematic *synthesis method* with philosophical comparative reasoning (Metz, 2022; Opara, 2020). The analysis stage begins with data reduction,

followed by coding essential concepts such as agency, reciprocity, and marginalization (Chisale & Moyo, 2024; Salami, 2025). Researchers critically compare cross-references between traditions of thought in order to reveal the conceptual tensions that occur (Acholonu, 2017; Oyěwùmí, 2016). Finally, a normative conclusion was drawn in the form of a new formulation of a new maternity framework that is adaptive and gender-equitable (Egbunike, 2024; Tamale, 2023).

4. Result

4.1. Empirical Description of Socio-Economic Crisis and Maternal Health Services in Modern Africa

Recent empirical data reveal that the macroeconomic crisis that has hit Sub-Saharan African countries places mothers as the most socially vulnerable group (Mama, 2018; World Bank, 2024). A survey report from the World Bank confirms that more than 80% of working women in low-income areas depend on the informal sector for their livelihood (Ojong, 2018; World Bank, 2024). The absence of legal employment contracts and minimum wages has implications for the nullity of maternity leave rights and maternal health benefits for female workers (Dube, 2022; World Bank, 2024). This neoliberal situation is exacerbated by the state budget austerity policy that cuts social security expenditure for families (Mama, 2018; Akinbobola, 2023). As a result, mothers are forced to shoulder a double workload to meet domestic nutritional needs in the midst of inflation (Ojong, 2018; World Bank, 2023). This phenomenon of feminization of poverty has significantly changed the role of motherhood into a very heavy locus of economic vulnerability (Ajayi et al., 2023; Dube, 2022).

In the public health dimension, the facts show that access to decent reproductive medical services is still highly discriminatory (Ajayi et al., 2023; World Health Organization, 2023). Based on official data from the World Health Organization, Sub-Saharan Africa bears the worst record by accounting for around 70% of the global maternal mortality rate (World Health Organization, 2023). The mortality ratio of 545 deaths per 100,000 live births confirms the lack of availability of trained medical personnel in the interior (World Health Organization, 2023). Pregnant women in rural areas often face massive geographical and financial barriers to simply getting basic prenatal check-ups (Ajayi et al., 2023; World Health Organization, 2023). This inequality in infrastructure allocation is exacerbated by the adoption of modern health systems that tend to ignore local etomedicin's knowledge (Oyěwùmí, 2016; Salami, 2025). As a result, the safety of mothers' lives is at stake in unprotected biological reproductive processes (Opara, 2020; World Health Organization, 2023).

Reproductive injustice is further deepened by the high rate of teenage pregnancy that occurs due to early marriage and customary coercion (World Health Organization, 2022). WHO reports that the adolescent birth rate in some African countries exceeds 100 births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years (World Health Organization, 2022). These premature pregnancies automatically break girls' educational chains and lock them in an intergenerational cycle of poverty (Ajayi et al., 2023; World Bank, 2024). Young women lose autonomy over their own bodies due to the strong penetration of patriarchal control and limited access to contraception (Tamale, 2023; World Health Organization, 2022). These characteristics of forced motherhood give birth to serious psychological disorders such as postpartum depression that rarely receive medical attention (Opara, 2020; Moos & Shaikh, 2024). This objective reality proves that the protection of women's reproductive rights in Africa is still in an emergency (Opara, 2020; Tamale, 2023).

4.2. The Erosion of Communal Support and the Burden of Patriarchal Moral Expectations

The process of aggressive urbanization and labor migration to urban centers has undermined the traditional family structure of African society (Metz, 2018; Dube, 2022). If in the past the practice of childcare was carried out collectively by an *extended family network*, now urban capital takes care of children in social isolation (Metz, 2018; Dube, 2022). The absence of uncles, aunts, or grandmothers who usually help ease the daily burden of mothers triggers a spike in maternal stress levels in urban areas (Metz, 2018; Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019). Individualistic urban spaces force single mothers to rely on expensive and unpocket-friendly commercial parenting services (Ojong, 2018; Dube, 2022). The collapse of this traditional social safety system shifts all parenting responsibilities into a solitary private matter (Metz, 2018; Chisale & Moyo, 2024). This phenomenon of sociological isolation weakens women's domestic resilience in the face of life shocks (Mama, 2018; Opara, 2020).

In the midst of the collapse of the cultural buffer wall, modern patriarchal society continues to impose unrealistic moral expectations on mothers (Opara, 2020; Akinbobola, 2023). Mothers are culturally constructed as sacred figures who are obliged to have unlimited fortitude and must not complain (Acholonu, 2017; Opara, 2020). When the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency, moral disintegration, or divorce in the family occurs, the blame is automatically placed on the mother's inability (Opara, 2020; Salami, 2025). This biased idealization narrative is deliberately maintained by patriarchal structures to perpetuate the exploitation of women's domestic work (Acholonu, 2017; Opara, 2020). Mothers are prohibited from expressing mental exhaustion, boredom, or psychological helplessness because they are considered to violate the nature of women's chastity (Opara, 2020; Egbunike, 2024). This unequal psychosocial pressure places women under the highly oppressive moral scrutiny of the public (Opara, 2020; Tamale, 2023).

This domestic exploitation is exacerbated by the gender imbalance in the division of labor adopted by local customary laws (Acholonu, 2017; Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019). Men are exempt from the obligations of daily physical care of children because their role is attached to the function of earning a living (Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019; Chisale & Moyo, 2024). When women begin to enter the public sphere for a career, they are still required to complete all household chores without assistance (World Bank, 2023; Egbunike, 2024). The Equality Now report confirms that family law discrimination in various African countries still legalizes the superiority of the husband (Equality Now, 2024). Women often lose custody of their children and family land ownership rights when they are widows (Equality Now, 2024). The rhetoric of mother-worship echoed by traditional leaders has proven to be inversely proportional to the protection of real law in the courts (Acholonu, 2017; Opara, 2020).

4.3. Transmission of Ethical Character and Sustainability of Maternal-Based Moral Values

Despite being squeezed by various structural obstacles, empirical facts show that mothers remain the primary agents of preservation of moral values (Gyekye, 2016; Oyěwùmí, 2016). Within the intimate domestic space, the mother transmits the foundations of ethical character needed for

the social integration of the child (Gyekye, 2016; Opara, 2020). Through habituation of daily behavior, children are introduced to the concepts of kindness, honor, and social respect (Gyekye, 2016; Metz, 2018). In the Yoruba ethnic community, for example, the practice of teaching *the character iwà pèlẹ́* (subtle character) is consistently instilled by the mother (Abimbola, 1976; Oyěwùmí, 2016). Children are trained to use polite body language such as prostrating (*prostrate*) when greeting parents and speaking softly (Oyěwùmí, 2016; Adeyemi, 2024). This process of early language socialization is a vital cultural capital for children to navigate social relations in public spaces (Oyěwùmí, 2016; Opara, 2020).

The method of internalizing values used by mothers in Africa relies heavily on the richness of collective oral traditions (Opara, 2020; Egbunike, 2024). Folklore, ancient proverbs, riddles, and lullabies are applied as interactive moral education instruments (Oyěwùmí, 2016; Opara, 2020). Mothers in the Igbo community actively use the proverb *onye aghala nwanne ya* to instill the doctrine of kinship solidarity (Uchendu, 1965; Opara, 2020). Through fairy tales about the greed of the tortoise figure, children are taught to stay away from corrupt behavior and to value mutual justice (Oyěwùmí, 2016; Opara, 2020). Meanwhile, in Hausa culture, daily routines in the house are used by mothers to train the character of simplicity and honesty (Opara, 2020; Egbunike, 2024). *Living archive* of this moral knowledge has proven to be effective in maintaining social cohesion in the midst of the shocks of modernity (Opara, 2020; Moos & Shaikh, 2024).

The moral resilience shown by this mother contributes directly to the indicators of long-term social sustainability of African civilization (Metz, 2018; Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019). When formal educational institutions and state bureaucracy are degraded due to corruption, the mother's domestic space becomes the last bastion of integrity cultivation (Gyekye, 2016; Opara, 2020). Mothers use informal economic nets and women's communal social gatherings to finance the continuation of their children's school (Mama, 2018; Ojong, 2018). The survival creativity carried out by mothers is a tangible manifestation of ethical agency that reproduces the order of social life (Opara, 2020; Egbunike, 2024). Without emotional care and character building initiated by mothers, the social cohesion of society is certain to collapse (Metz, 2018; Mom, 2018). The maternity sector thus proved to be an absolute prerequisite for the birth of the stability of contemporary civilization (Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019; Metz, 2022).

5. Discussion

Data analysis clearly shows the existence of an acute structural paradox surrounding the existence of maternal institutions in modern Africa (Akinbobola, 2023; Tamale, 2023). On the one hand, the findings show a recognition of the function of motherhood as a vital instrument for the moral formation of the younger generation through oral tradition (Oyěwùmí, 2016; Opara, 2020). But on the other hand, this noble position is hit by the reality of macro poverty, wage marginalization, and alarming maternal mortality rates (World Bank, 2024; World Health Organization, 2023). The massive erosion of social support networks due to urbanization forces mothers to bear the domestic burden alone (Metz, 2018; Dube, 2022). As a result, there is a very gaping gap between cosmetic cultural respect and structural material protection (Acholonu, 2017; Opara, 2020). Mothers in Africa are still found to be trapped in a double cycle of exploitation legalized by patriarchal biased family laws (Equality Now, 2024; Ogbeide-Ihama, 2025).

Theoretically, the sociological crisis that befell mothers indicates a failure to adopt capitalistic modernity in Africa (Oyěwùmí, 1997; Nnaemeka, 2004). When states shift to neoliberal economic patterns, they uproot the communitarian social safety net without replacing it with modern welfare infrastructure (Metz, 2018; Mom, 2018). Motherhood is commodified and repurposed simply as a provider of cheap unpaid labor that is not appreciated in the calculation of GDP (Mama, 2018; Opara, 2020). Philosophical reflection on this reality shows that alienation from *care labour* is a form of fundamental violation of human dignity (Gyekye, 2016; Metz, 2022). Modern society has sacrificed the foundation of women's biological safety in pursuit of pseudo-economic growth targets (Tamale, 2023; World Health Organization, 2023). This reflects the ethical decay of social maturity of contemporary civilizations (Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019; Chisale & Moyo, 2024).

An in-depth interpretation through the lens of African philosophy confirms that motherhood must be deconstructed from mere biological destiny to a relational ethical category (Chimakonam, 2022; Oyěwùmí, 2016). Using *the ethical principles of Ubuntu*, motherhood should no longer be isolated as a space for the personal struggle of individual women (Metz, 2018; Chisale & Moyo, 2024). The interdependent nature of *Ubuntu* confirms that the moral quality of a child is the result of the responsibility of the collective ecosystem (Metz, 2022; Chisale & Moyo, 2024). Therefore, the heroic sacrifice of mothers that has been romanticized by indigenous peoples is actually a form of covert oppression (Acholonu, 1995; Opara, 2005). The moral authority possessed by the mother, such as the concept of *fiyá* or *omu*, must be translated into formal sovereign political rights (Amadiume, 1987; Oyěwùmí, 2016). Motherhood must be placed as a pillar of an independent creative agency that is materially respected (Opara, 2020; Egbunike, 2024).

When compared to the claims of Western liberal feminism that views motherhood as an absolute obstacle to women's economic freedom, the findings of this research offer an alternative synthesis (Oyěwùmí, 1997; Nzegwu, 2006). Through the theoretical integration between *Catherine Acholonu's* Motherism and Carol Opara's Chioma *femalism*, it was found that motherhood is precisely a site of agency power (Acholonu, 1995; Opara, 2005). Critics of post-2020 African feminism reject the discarding of the value of parenting and choose to fight for the redistribution of domestic labor justice (Nnaemeka, 2021; Tamale, 2023). In contrast to conservative communitarian analysis that ignores women's autonomy, this research demands a total reform of customary marriage law (Okome, 2021; Salami, 2025). The academic position of this study thus succeeded in breaking through the polarizing impasse by proposing a parenting framework that is free from the snares of patriarchal coercion (Opara, 2020; Tamale, 2023).

As a follow-up to this reconceptualization, revolutionary steps are needed at the level of legislative policies and cultural actions (Chirongoma & Shumba, 2019; Tamale, 2023). Governments in African countries are obliged to pass laws that guarantee domestic care wages for poor mothers and free reproductive health insurance (World Bank, 2024; World Health Organization, 2023). Modern corporate institutions are forced to provide breastfeeding spaces and fair maternity leave policies for both parents (World Bank, 2023; Egbunike, 2024). Social movements such as male *engagement programs* in Senegal must be massively replicated in order to destroy the stigma of women's domestic fortitude (Banchereau, 2025). Academically, further research should be directed at empirical studies on the impact of economic digitalization on the mental workload of single mothers (Dube, 2022; Moos & Shaikh, 2024). This radical transformation is very urgent in order to ensure the sustainability of the future of civilization (Acholonu, 2017; Metz, 2022).

6. Conclusion

This research concludes that maternal institutions in modern Africa are undergoing ontological and sociological disruption due to the clash of capitalism and patriarchy. Important findings prove that although mothers continue to be the main bastions of the transmission of ethical character and social cohesion of society, their hard work is overlooked. There is a sharp separation between the rhetoric of cultural worship and the absence of material protection for women's reproductive health. The original African philosophical framework succeeded in dismantling that this exile of domestic work was a form of moral deviation of civilization. Motherhood must be restored to its status as a respectable relational function.

Theoretically-scientifically, this research made a significant contribution by giving birth to a hybrid thinking model that transcended the West-East binary opposition barrier. A synthesis that marries the principles of *agency feminism* and the collective responsibility of *Ubuntu* ethics succeeds in formulating a contextual concept of reproductive justice. This study breaks the dominance of radical feminist discourses that often uproot women from their family ecosystems. This new theoretical model places childcare as an ethical obligation that must be distributed fairly to all elements of society. This theoretical blueprint is important for the enrichment of non-Western gender studies.

Given that this study has a limited scope that focuses on the conceptual theoretical review of the literature, future research suggestions are proposed. The researcher is then advised to conduct a field investigation based on ethnographic methods to photograph the dynamics of mothers working in the digital economy sector. A macro-scale comparative study is needed to test the effectiveness of maternity laws in areas of armed conflict. An in-depth study of the psychological changes of fathers involved in active parenting is also invaluable. The development of this empirical research is crucial to ensure the realization of transformative gender justice across the African continent.

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