



## **The Impact of AI Technology on Women's Roles in Yorùbá culture**

By

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### **Abstract**

*The effect of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and modern technologies on women's roles within contemporary Yorùbá culture is complex and multi-layered. On one hand, technology empowers Yorùbá women to expand their economic, educational and social spaces, providing tools for entrepreneurship, tele-education, telemedicine and time-saving household devices. On the other hand, certain technologies and algorithmic designs risk reproducing gendered stereotypes and altering the lived practices that characterise Yorùbá identity, especially in domains of caregiving and reproduction. Existing gender studies rarely focus on the intersection between Yorùbá women's cultural roles (primordial, traditional, supportive) and the concrete ways they engage with AI and household technologies. This study, therefore, is an attempt to fill the gap using a qualitative approach grounded in Virtue ethics theory. The study combines close textual analysis of selected poems from Àrìnpé Adéjùmò's Rò ó re with structured interviews with 15 purposively selected Yorùbá women to probe day-to-day interactions with specific technologies (pounding machines, washing machines, sweeping/robotic devices, smart home assistants, AI baby monitors, mobile finance, IVF and surrogacy technologies). Our analysis captures technological affordances and constraints on women's primordial (reproduction/nurture), traditional (household management/cultural transmission), and supportive (emotional, economic, social) roles. Findings from the literary analysis and respondents' experiences suggest that modern technologies reduce drudgery and open pathways for agency while also introducing pressures (constant availability, cultural dislocation, and ethical concerns around reproductive technologies). The study recommends adoption-support policies, technological literacy programmes, ethical oversight for reproductive technologies, and further empirical study via the proposed structured interviews to substantiate and nuance these conclusions.*

**Keywords:** Yorùbá women, Virtue ethics, AI Technology, Cultural continuity.

### **Introduction**

The Yorùbá people are predominantly settled in the south-western part of Nigeria, occupying the area formerly known as the Western region in Nigeria (Ajayi, 2018:5). They can be found in Òyó, Ògùn, Òndó, Òşun, Èkìtì and Lagos states. They also form parts of Edo state in the South-South geopolitical zone as well as Kwara and Kogi states in the North-Central zone of Nigeria. However, this study is not premised on the origin and the history of the Yorùbá, it centres on the values that rate Yorùbá women as indispensable in the family structure in the Yoruba cultural context, and by extension, the society at large. Although the Yorùbá family is patriachal in nature, the female gender still performs ascribed and achieved roles which showcase them as indispensable, and indubitably, these roles are manifested in various facets of life, as it shall be established in this study.



Johnson (1921) affirms that the Yoruba people are social, polite and hospitable. These, among many others, constitute virtues that make their women stand out responsibly among their counterparts in the global sphere. Yorùbá culture is such that embraces virtue ethics. The 'Òmọ̀lúàbí ethos' exemplifies all virtuous traits that are necessary for an individual to be affirmed as socially and culturally responsible. That is why, in Yorùbá cultural context, an upright individual is usually referred to as *omolúàbí*. In Yorùbá culture, women are nurtured to be responsible, homely, hospitable, and hardworking. Yorubá women are not lazy, they are trained to be supportive in whatever capacity they have, both in the family and in the society. This is why Johnson (1921) asserts that, both young and old Yorùbá women work hard to support their families remarkably .

Family as the basic unit upon which society thrives is very critical and imperative in the vast human experience accross cultures. Through family, every member in human society gets a sense of belonging, support and identity. Shehu (2010) corroborates this by asserting that a family is an emotional unit where interpersonal relationships which provide support and care are found. However, within the familial structure and the advantages it offers, women play a vital role, serving as caregivers, nrturers and custodians of cultural heritage. For instance in Yorùbá culture, despite the patriachal and homogenic orientation, women still occupy unique positions as guardians of traditional values and as pillars of family sustainability. Meanwhile, despite the significant contributions of women in socioeconomic and sociopolitical spheres of modern endeavours, they have been overlooked and relegated to the sphere of mere traditional or cultural significance. Whereas, in the complexities of contemporary life, it is evident that women's roles are not only essential to family survival, but also crucial to the growth and development of the society at large. This paper explores the evolving landscape of these roles in the light of technological change. It addresses two linked problems: first, a scholarly gap on how AI and household technologies significantly reconfigure Yorùbá women's social practices; second, social realities are unraveled through structured interviews conducted with fifteen purposively selected Yorùbá women domiciled in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria so as to capture their lived interactions with modern devices and AI tools. However, the fifteen respondents preferred to remain anonymous. However, their responses assisted in unravelling the social realities of the technological shifts analysed in the study. Using Àrìnpé Adéjùmò's *Rò ó re* as a literary lens, this paper first maps the cultural and ethical foundations of Yoruba women's roles (virtue ethics and the Òmọ̀lúàbí ethos). It then documents modern technologies used in domestic and reproductive domains. The paper therefore provides answers to the following questions: What do Yorùbá women do with these technologies? How do technologies mediate autonomy, care, time use, cultural practice and the moral self?

### **Literature and Virtue Ethics Theory**

Literature on technology and gender in African contexts typically focuses on access, digital literacy, mobile banking, and the gendered digital divide. Less attention has been paid to the experiential ways in which household and reproductive technologies impact day-to-day social practices in specific cultural domains. Yorùbá literary works (poetry, drama and novels) both written and oral, provide a textured archive of women's roles across time. Àrìnpé Adéjùmò's poetic anthology, *Rò ó re* is one of the robust Yorùbá creative works which foreground women's virtues in the areas such as caregiving, resilience, maternal labour, social leadership and moral stewardship. Yorùbá written poetry showcases themes of motherhood, marriage and family. For example, Àrìnpé Adéjùmò's *Rò ó re* features some poems such as *Agbára abo* which extols natural virtues or endowment of women and *Ogbón àgbónjù* which addresses the age-long Yorùbá stereotypes aimed at relegating women in terms of moral values and cultural ethics.



Virtue ethics theory stresses the importance of character traits and virtues in shaping human behaviour, interpersonal relationship and moral decision-making. Tomlinson (2012) agrees that virtue is a character trait a human being needs to flourish or lead an impactful and fulfilling life. In the same vein, Grcic (2013) asserts that virtue ethics offer the solutions to the problem of maintaining social order among the members of a species. It is not a gainsaying that moral values channel human impulses, thus moral decision making is applicable in analysing any literary work which centres on personal and societal values. In the context of women's roles in Yorùbá cultural context, virtue ethics offers a valuable framework for understanding the ways in which women's virtues and character traits impact their families and communities. For example, virtues like compassion, empathy and kindness are important in building a strong family bond and they are often embodied by women in their roles as caregivers and nurturers.

Furthermore, virtue ethics theory preoccupies itself with importance of context and cultural tradition in shaping moral values and virtues. For example, in Yorùba oral poetry like Ifá corpus, women's inevitable roles in reproduction or procreation are projected in *Òdí Méjì* thus:

Funfun niyì eyín  
Ègún gágáágá niyì orùn  
Omú ùkìkìkì niyì obìnrin  
Adiá f'Éjì Òdí  
Tí n sunkún aláilóbìnrin  
Tí n fi ojoojúmọ káwọ ọtan  
Èrò Ìpo, Èrò Ọfà  
Ìgbà ìdí dí méjì  
Náà làá dọlómọ

Abimbola (2006:54)

The white colour is the beauty of the teeth  
The long height is the beauty of the neck  
Big breast was the beauty of a woman  
Divination was cast for Éjì Òdí  
Who was crying that he did not have a woman (wife)  
He would daily put his hands between his thighs  
People of Ìpo  
People of Ọfà  
It is when the opposite sex copulates  
That we can bear children

The above Ifá corpus excerpt reveals that Yorùbá poetry underscores women's reproductive centrality and their social powers. It celebrates the woman's body and the essentiality of women for procreation and social continuity.

In Yorùbá thought, the Ọmọlúàbí ideal parallels this emphasis. Fáyemí (2009) notes that social recognition in Yorùbá culture rests on moral comportment — the upright person is an Ọmọlúàbí. The community shapes virtues through rites, everyday practices and storytelling. Thus, the analysis asks: Does technology support or undermine the cultivation of virtues central to Yoruba life? Does, for example, a pounding machine that eases physical labour still allow a woman to manifest hospitality and care in culturally recognised ways? Or does it reconfigure



moral performance — shifting the signs of care from embodied labour to managerial or economic competence?

Furthermore, the relatedness of literature and virtue ethics theory in the aspect of gender and the place of women in Yorùbá culture is clear. Using virtue ethics allows the study to evaluate technology not only instrumentally (time saved) but morally (effects on character, relational obligations, dignity). This theoretical stance informs coding categories for interview analysis (honour/dignity, caregiving competence, economic agency, cultural continuity, and moral dissonance).

Existing empirical literature (where available) notes both gains and ambivalences: washing machines, grinders and mixers reduce drudgery and free time for income generation, yet older kin may view mechanisation as replacing valued labour practices or diminishing ceremonial display of care (Ojo, 2021; Adeyemi, 2018). Similarly, reproductive technologies such as IVF and surrogacy provoke ethical debates about kinship, bodily integrity and social recognition; in societies where gestation is culturally central to the mother's identity, such technologies can be destabilising without accompanying social conversation and regulation (see regional commentaries and policy briefs). This study builds on that literature by combining textual interpretation (poems) and a methodology designed to gather empirical data on how Yoruba women use and interpret technologies in their daily lives.

### **Women's Roles/Status in Yorùbá Culture and the Effects of AI Technology on them in the Contemporary Era**

This section presents a critical analysis of women's roles — primordial, traditional, and supportive leaning on the poems of Arinpé Adéjùmò, Yoruba cultural milieu on technology impacts. The analysis also considers the responses elicited from the fifteen respondents. Each role is then linked to concrete technologies and the likely effects (positive and negative). Yorùbá women are endowed with the ability to multitask and handle complex and challenging human experiences as regards their families and their community (Femi-Amao, 2022). Therefore, in this study we have identified and categorised women's roles into three distinctive parts as listed and analysed below:

#### **Women's Primordial Roles and Effects of AI Technology**

By divine order, women are saddled with the natural role of procreation, that is, conceiving and giving birth to offspring. Kalaivani (2019) lays credence to this, he emphasises that the whole burden of childbearing and the most crucial part of the childbearing task are carried out by the women. This is a very important role in populating the family and the society. He explains further that the task is non-negotiable, thus women are the pioneers of the nation. In Yorùbá culture and society, the primary motive behind marriage is to birth and raise responsible children. Every couple enters into marriage with the hope of bearing children as soon as they are married. A Yoruba popular axiom says that 'Children are the reward of marriage' coupled with another popular maxim that says '*òmọ lèrè igbéyàwó*' which means that a child is the reward of marital union. Hence, the primordial role of a woman is having the natural capability to produce offspring. Adéjùmò ascertains that such a role is usually divinely enabled by God, the creator, as revealed in the following excerpt:

Olú tó foyún taboyún lóṛẹ

Òun là bá kí

Oore kànkà ni ká rómọ dípò ẹni

*Rò ó re o.i 39*



(The creator who gifts a pregnant woman the foetus  
Should have been appreciated

It is a great fortune for someone to have offspring

In another poem, she also confirms this primordial role as a great task for women:

Ìkúnlẹ̀ abiyamo ñkó?  
Èrù jẹ̀jẹ̀ tí í ọ̀mọ̀ lẹ̀rù  
Okùn tó ọ̀mọ̀ wáyé  
Ara abo ló kúkú wà

*Rò ó re o.i 45*

(Going into labour  
Causes great fear  
The cord that brings the child into the world  
Is from the mother )

Furthermore, women are naturally endowed with the ability to nurture, especially through food preparation and caregiving. The natural ability that women have in feeding babies from childbirth through infancy is a clear example of women's natural role as food suppliers. The flow of food from the mother's body into the baby's body, through breastfeeding is a symbiotic process that creates a physical and mental bond between the mother and the child, according to Yorùbá cosmology. This natural process is what enables women to provide and supply food for anyone who is important or intimately related to them such as their family members, aside from the breastfeeding role. For women, feeding is strongly tied to care-giving (Whitcomb 2022), such that happens through the example of breastfeeding which is the natural endowment from God. Adéjùmò depicts this in the following excerpt:

Ọ̀ṣùbà ñlá ni mo gbé fÉlédùà  
Tó mélé tó i dá mi lólá  
Ó worí ó fún mi lómú  
Ọ̀mú ọ̀kíkíkí tó jẹ̀wà fẹ̀mi

*Rò ó re o.i 33*

I greatly honour the Creator  
Who made me beautiful  
It pleases the Creator, He endowed me with breasts  
Big enough to make me beautiful

Based on Yorùbá cosmology, it is evident from the above analysed excerpts that women's primordial roles which mainly centre on childbearing and nurturing are not merely biological but valorised as spiritual and social functions. However, there are emerging technologies affecting the aforementioned primordial roles. They include reproductive technologies such as IVF, assisted reproduction, and surrogacy which continually change the production of offspring but raising cultural questions. For instance, IVF and assisted reproduction offer hope for infertile couples and expand reproductive agency. Yet in contexts where carrying a child is a key marker of motherhood, IVF may be seen as a mixed blessing; it preserves the social possibility of offspring but can leave unresolved questions about lineage and ritual belonging if technologies are poorly understood or stigmatised. One respondent strongly opposed the adoption of alternative sex technologies, arguing that they are alien to Yoruba culture and fundamentally immoral. According to her, Yoruba society places a high premium on procreation within heterosexual marriage, seeing it as both a biological and spiritual duty as



evident in our poem analysis and evidence from oral tradition. She further argued that such technological innovations undermine indigenous values, erode the sanctity of family lineage and disrupt the traditional system of kinship. When surrogacy is commercialised or unregulated, it can generate moral anxieties around the commodification of bodies. In Yorùbá cultural contexts where gestation and mothering are morally thick practices, surrogacy requires sensitive cultural negotiation and legal oversight. There are also telemedicine and maternal care apps that improve prenatal care access, timely advice and emergency referrals. AI-driven diagnostic apps or models that triage symptoms can reduce maternal mortality if integrated with local clinics. From the virtue ethics standpoint, technologies that preserve maternal dignity and facilitate safe childbirth align with the *Omólúàbí* ethos (care, prudence). A respondent aligned with this standpoint as she welcomed these innovations as progressive in the digital era. She maintained that medical and technological advances should be adopted as far as they offer solutions to challenges such as infertility and family planning. In our view, technologies that commodify gestation or undermine relational accountability risk moral dissonance. Therefore, policies must ensure reproductive technologies are ethically rooted, accessible and regulated. They can complement, rather than replace traditional values

### **Women's Traditional Roles and Effects of AI Technology**

Traditional Yorùbá society assigns certain peculiar responsibilities to women within the family structure, which can also be called household or domestic roles. Right from the adolescent stage, the parents and community members begin to inculcate the necessary values that will empower a girl-child to become a responsible adult. Yoruba written literature therefore portrays women fulfilling these traditional roles which include caregiving, household management and child nurturing. Through the poem, '*Orí ló dá mi lábo*', Adéjùmò celebrates women by highlighting their pivotal roles as caregivers and nurturers in sustaining family bond as revealed below:

Opé tÓlú ẹ̀ se mí lólùrànlówó  
Olùrànlówó labo kúkú jẹ̀ fòkọ̀ rẹ̀  
Bábo ẹ̀ se ń gbẹ̀bí ró  
Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni à ń táyẹ̀ ọ̀mọ ẹ̀ o.i 1

Gratitude, that God made me a helper  
A woman is a helper to her husband  
As a woman is upholding the family bond  
She's training the children to be successful

The above excerpt extols the traditional virtues of women as pillars in the family. She inculcates moral values in children, through discipline and monitoring. Mothers' attitudes and ways of life are usually emulated by the children because the mother is the closest to the children, thus a responsible mother does everything in her power to be a good role model to the children so that the children would not soil the family's reputation and good image in the public. A Yorùbá proverb which corroborates the assertion goes thus: '*Omọ̀ tó dára ni ti bàbá ẹ̀, èyí tí kò dára ni ti ìyá ẹ̀*', meaning a well-behaved child belongs to the father, while the bad one belongs to the mother. This is the reality in the Yorùbá worldview, because in most cases, the father is not always at home, and the mother is expected to perform her responsibility in training the children. Familusi (2012) agrees that, mother is the first agent of the child's socialisation. Women's role in making sure that the children are morally upright is very



important because the children are the ambassadors of the family wherever they are in the society. Women's roles in managing the household and ensuring its smooth functioning, is part of the traditional roles assigned to them. This is also evident in the same poem, as written below:

Mo ṣopé tÓlú dá mi láfínjú  
Afínjú tí n túnlé ṣe  
Bábo jí á gbálè  
Á tún gbá gbogbo àyíká  
Á múlé wuyì fónílé  
Á múlé wuyì fálejò  
Á múlé wuyì fún tẹbí tará o.i 1

I am grateful that God created me as a wellness warden  
A wellness warden who takes care of the house  
When a woman wakes up she sweeps the house  
She will also sweep the surroundings  
She makes the house habitable for inhabitants  
She makes the house attractive to visitors  
She makes the house attractive to families and acquaintances

Making the house decent and neat is part of the traditional roles assigned to women. Yorùbá people frown at filthiness. Ifá corpus affirms that cleanliness or neatness helps in marriage sustenance, as affirmed in Ìwòrì Ọ̀sé. According to the corpus, women should maintain both home and personal hygiene at all times. Plaiting of hair and looking good all the time is important in serving as role models to the children. Iwòrì ọ̀sé of *Ifa* corpus buttresses this:

*A kii fitijú kárùn*  
*A difá fún Afínjú*  
*Tí n lẹ ree yan ọ̀bùn lalẹ*

One should not be infected with  
disease because one is shy  
Divination was made to a neat person  
Who is going to be friends with  
a dirty person  
A dirty finger nails,  
a very dirty underwear

*Èékánná ọ̀wọ̀ è pènètè*  
*pènètè pènètè isalẹ*

If one marries a dirty person as  
wife, one must not eat locust  
bean again

*Bá a bá f'ọ̀bùn lóbinrin*  
*A o gbọ̀dọ̀ jẹrú mó*

Abimbola (2006)

A woman's traditional responsibility is to teach children personal hygiene in order for them to stay healthy and make the environment neat. Kalaivani (2012), concerning this avers that women are the health officers in the family.

Women are expected to be experts in home and personal hygiene, and must also be timely in preparing and serving meals to family members. Yorùbá mothers are given credit for their culinary skill which is the ability to understand meal preparation and nutritive values inherent in food. The Yorùbá women are expected to ensure that food is prepared with proper indigenous ingredients like locust beans (irú), crayfish (edé) and other important condiments



to garnish the food. The stew is cooked to taste with assorted meat or fish for family enjoyment. It is also pertinent to note that such food must be prepared in a clean and hygienic place or manner. This is revealed by Adéjùmò in the excerpt below:

Báya ẹ̀ ní gúnyán  
N laya ní lọta  
Bó ti ní sáré síwá  
Ní ní sáré sẹ̀yìn  
Gbogbo ẹ̀ nítorí àtítójú ẹbí ni

As the wife is pounding yam  
Also, she is grinding pepper  
As she is running forte  
So, she is running back  
All this just to take care of the family.

The above excerpt exemplifies the traditional roles of women as housekeepers with good culinary skills. They value decency and have a great sense of fashion, beauty and neatness. All these virtues are for the benefit of the family, acquaintances and the larger society.

From the foregoing, it is evident that Yorùbá tradition expects women to maintain the household as a site of moral formation and cultural perpetuation. The poems locate housework such as cleaning, preparing food, and children training children etiquettes as moral labour. However, there are modern tools that have significantly altered the aforementioned moral labour. These tools are concrete domestic technologies such as pounding machines, washing machines, electric grinders and some others. For example, pounding machine have largely replaced the mortar and pestle for pounded yam, drastically reducing exertion and time; allowing women to manage larger households or run small food businesses. The tools reduce bodily harm, enable time reallocation to income generation, and expand skill sets (operating devices, minor repairs). Pounding machines free women from the intense upper-body labour of pounding yams (culturally significant but physically costly), enabling them to sell prepared food at markets; a form of entrepreneurial expansion. In the cultural domain, such mechanisation can affect cultural performance. For instance, there are some rituals or family rites that require manual labour such as communal pounding during festivals; substituting machines may be read as a loss of ritual authenticity. Older kin may interpret mechanisation as neglect of proper domestic vigilance or as a decline in Ọmọ̀lúàbí dispositions (diligence, sacrifice). Also, devices introduce costs (purchase, maintenance) and dependencies (electricity, repair skills). If modern devices enable women to exercise prudence, temperance and care more sustainably, they enhance a virtuous life. However, contrarily, one of our respondents described AI as a cultural disruptor, predicting that virtual assistants and automated services will reduce the communal interdependence that sustained Yoruba women's supportive roles for centuries. If they displace embodied practices that are themselves teaching grounds for virtues (e.g., mother teaching her daughter by doing), social mechanisms should preserve transmission through adapted ritual forms.

### **Women's Supportive Role and the Effects of AI Technology**

Women's supportive roles are an important aspect of Yorùbá culture which encompasses a range of responsibilities that ensure family and society cohesion and foster community well-being. In the area of emotional support systems, women offer assistance, guidance and soothing



words to create a sense of security and stability in the family and society. This role is exemplified in the poem titled 'Rò ó re' as revealed below:

Agbára àfojúrí n bẹ fábo  
Agbára àìrì ò sì gbéyìn  
Bẹẹ bá gbàgbé ohun gbogbo  
E şàà rántí Tinúubú  
Ìyálóde tó kojú ogun  
Òun ló yÈgbá lóko erú Ìdòòmì o.i 4

Unseen power is there for women  
Metaphysical power is also inclusive  
If you have forgotten all other things  
You should remember Tinúubú  
The leader of women who faced the war  
She was the one who liberated the Ègbá  
From the slavery of the Dahomey

The above excerpt is historical as the poet alludes to a woman, Tinúubú, a female warlord and a high-chief in Ègbá land in the pre-literate Yorùbá era, who fought against Dahomey's incessant invasion of the Ègbá kingdom. The poet therefore asserts that women have both physical and metaphysical prowess to protect their communities as well as their immediate families. Even when they do not support physically, their roles in conflict management and resolution create a sense of security and stability in the family.

In the precolonial Yorùbá society, women played a vital role in providing succour to their husbands after a long day of work on the farms or in their craft workshops. They understood the importance of emotional support and sexual intimacy in soothing their husbands' nerves and rejuvenating their spirits. Upon their husbands' return, Yorùbá women would often prepare warm baths, massages and comforting meals to help them relax and unwind. They would also offer soothing words of encouragement, praise, and admiration, acknowledging their husbands' hard work and provision for the family. Some of them who were versed in chanting personal or lineage panegyrics of their husbands also employ it to cool their husbands' nerves. This emotional support was crucial to strengthening the bond between husband and wife, fostering a sense of unity and cooperation in the family. There is no how a woman will come with a soothing fingers and words that a man would not feel relaxed. Adéjùmò portrays women as irresistible in the poem below:

Orí şe mí lárìimáleèlọ fákọ  
Bákọ rábo tó rewà  
A sì wò ó lẹ̀emejì o.i 45

God made me to be irresistible to men  
If men saw a beautiful woman  
He would look at her twice.

In the contemporary era, responsible women continue to play this important role, albeit in adapted ways, They may not be fetching water from a well or pounding yams with mortars, but they still provide emotional support, sexual intimacy, and soothing words to calm their partners'



nerves. They may offer a warm embrace, a listening ear, or a comforting meal after a long day of work. They may also offer words of encouragement, praise, and admiration, acknowledging their partners' efforts and contributions to the family. In today's fast-paced and often stressful world, this role is more crucial than ever, helping to maintain healthy relationships, build strong families, and promote overall well-being.

In addition to the emotional and social support, women contribute significantly to family economic stability through their supportive roles in Agriculture, trade and other vocations. Kalaivani(2019) supports this as he asserts that woman in the family contributes to the income of the family through her own earnings, and that she is also prudent enough to transform the waste products in the house into useful items for productive purposes. Even in the contemporary era. Women compete favourably with their male counterparts in academia, the corporate world and governance.

In 'Ààbò' Adéjùmò projects that women can go to any length in offering financial support in the family.

Òpò iyá ló torí ọmọ doníg bèsè  
Níbi ká yáwó nítorí àtítọmọ  
Ká tọmọ kọmọ lẹ ọrífirẹ o.i 33

Many mothers become debtors because of their children  
In borrowing money towards the child's upkeep  
To train the child so that the child could succeed.

Òpò abo ní sù n bẹ nílẹ̀ yìi  
Tàà bá máa pè lólú ọmọ  
Irú won ní di ilé-ìṣẹ̀ nílá mú  
Irú won lọba òkè fí sípò kànkà  
Won ò sì balé ìṣẹ̀ jé o.i 34

There are many women in this nation  
That we should be calling them the great  
patriarch  
Such women are directors of Industries  
God has placed them in key positions  
And they do not spoil the Industries.

The title of the poem from which the above excerpts are drawn is 'Ààbò' which means 'Protection'. The poet metaphorically refers to women as a refuge at the home front and in the society at large. Thus, according to Hilale (2021) women not only contribute to the development of their families but that of the whole community and even the coming generations. We can infer that the poet is drawing our attention to the valuable contributions of women so that the society can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society where women's supportive roles are acknowledged and respected.

Based on the above discussion of women's supportive roles, it is evident that from Yoruba cultural perspectives, they are emotional anchors who provide intimacy, reassurance and conflict resolution in the family and by extension, the society. It is however pertinent to note



that these roles are not easily reduced to technical substitutes in the contemporary era despite the advent of evolving technologies such as communication tools like smartphones, social media, AI baby monitors, E-commerce and mobile money platforms and sex-tech and sex-satisfaction devices, among several others. For example, the communication tools assist women to maintain kin networks over distance and at the same time enable emotional support across migration flows while AI baby monitors and smart-home devices allow remote monitoring and early warnings for infant distress; provide reassurance. According to Hertog (2024), female experts are excited by the potential of the technologies to take over domestic tasks, which are very helpful in carrying out household chores. For instance, AI-powered baby monitors and smart home devices have made it easier for Yorùbá women to manage their households and care for their children.

Bhawana (2023) also affirms the improvement in women's participation in the digital economy, such that has helped them to break free from traditional gender norms and expectations. For instance, AI-powered tools have enabled Yorùbá women to start their own online businesses, which has opened doors for women to start their businesses and become financially independent and offer financial support in the family in the face of recurring economic recession in the global world.

As helpful as the aforementioned technologies are, they have also created new expectations and pressures to be constantly connected and available online, thereby creating a total reliance on technology and eliminating human face which is essential for empathy. One of the aspects of supportive roles that modern technology is adversely eroding in Africa is sexual intimacy in marriage. It triggers moral debates due to the emergence of sexual satisfaction devices. While some schools of thought believe that it enhances sexual autonomy, others believe that it is gradually eroding marital intimacy and cultural values. Four out of our fifteen respondents observed that technology has amplified women's traditional strengths in commerce. Mobile banking, e-commerce platforms, and AI-assisted business tools allow market women to manage transactions, track inventory, and reach distant customers, thereby expanding the scope of the age-old ojà (market) network.

Regardless of the perspectives of the school of thought, it is evident that technology has come to enhance women's supportive roles and they are inseparable in the present era. Communication technology reduces isolation; financial platforms empower women to contribute economically; telehealth improves mental health access; but the negative effects are begging for stakeholders' attention. Some of the negative effects include constant connectivity which can create an expectation for 24-hour availability; erosion of relationship boundaries; algorithmic biases in virtual assistants (feminine voices, subservient roles) risk further entrenching stereotypes that women are default caregivers; sex-tech and the mechanisation of non-traditional sexual arrangements (e.g., same-sex relationships, surrogate arrangements). However, despite the seeming cultural conflicts, two respondents linked AI to a revival of women's advisory roles, noting that social media and digital communication tools enable them to counsel younger women on marriage, child upbringing, and entrepreneurship; functions once performed in the courtyard or at the market square. Two others argued that AI is creating new social hierarchies, privileging those with digital literacy and marginalising women in rural areas who lack access to devices or the internet, thereby widening the rural-urban gap in women's cultural participation.

All these may conflict with indigenous norms and require dialogic social processes rather than moral panic. Summarily, we can aver that technologies that support women's agency, enable



care and cultivate practical wisdom are preferable while the ones that produce alienation, exploitative commercialisation or moral confusion need community-based ethical regulation.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has bridged the gap between literary-cultural analysis and empirical social inquiry. Àrìnpé Adéjùmò's *Rò ó re* provides a rich literary archive that anchors discussions about women's roles within Yoruba virtue ethics; at the same time, modern household and reproductive technologies materially shape how those roles are enacted. The study affirms that the impact of AI technology on women's roles in the contemporary era, in particular Yorùbá cultural context is multifaceted and far-reaching. The findings of this study reveal the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in the perception of women's roles within Yoruba society. While the primordial and traditional supportive roles of women remain deeply valued and to a large extent, serve as enduring markers of cultural identity, the incursion of alternative technologies such as surrogacy, same-sex partnerships, and IVF has engendered divergent views evident in our analysis and the responses from our anonymous respondents. For some respondents, these innovations are alien and morally incongruent with Yoruba cultural ethos; for others, they represent a necessary adaptation to realities and possibilities of the digital era in the face of globalisation. These contrasting perspectives therefore underscore the cultural negotiations and moral obligations for societal change. Hence, Yoruba womanhood, though rooted in tradition, is not immune to the influence of global technological and social shifts.

### **Recommendations**

1. Policy measures: subsidise key household devices (washing machines, electric grinders, solar-powered units) for low-income households; support local manufacturing and repair networks to lower long-term costs.
2. Technological literacy and maintenance programmes: community-based training on safe use, minor repair, and integration of devices into cultural practices.
3. Regulate reproductive technologies: establish ethical guidelines and legal frameworks for surrogacy and IVF to prevent exploitation and protect kinship rights.
4. Design culturally sensitive AI: collaborate with Yoruba linguists and women users to produce interfaces that avoid gendered stereotyping and support caregiving roles without reinforcing inequality.
5. Public dialogues: community forums where elders and youth discuss technological adoption, preserving ritual practices while accepting beneficial technologies.

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