

The suffering womanhood in Luke 13:10–17 in the context of the post-COVID-19 pandemic in Africa

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Dates:

Received: 12 Sept. 2023

Accepted: 19 Dec. 2023

Published: 29 Mar. 2024

How to cite this article:

Etukumana, G.A. &
Ogedegbe, B.G., 2024, 'The
suffering womanhood in Luke
13:10–17 in the context of
the post-COVID-19 pandemic
in Africa', *HTS Teologiese
Studies/Theological Studies*
80(1), a9431. [https://doi.
org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9431](https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9431)

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The suffering of womanhood and maltreatment are apparent when reading ancient writings. In Luke 13:10–17, it is possible to see how a number of women who suffered illnesses were treated in the hands of religious elites of the ancient world. However, the woman in Luke's encounter with the Lukan Jesus during her illness redefined how religious leaders should deal with the suffering of womanhood. The woman was healed and treated with dignity by the Lukan Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. Using socio-historical interpretation, the Lukan Jesus in the Gospel of Luke demonstrated that religion should be used to alleviate the suffering of women, not to exacerbate it. The lesson derived from the Lukan Jesus' action and words on the suffering woman in Luke 13:12 is significant for the African religious setting in an endeavour to alleviate women's suffering in Africa in the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic era.

Contribution: This article adds to the ongoing discussion in biblical studies about gender equality, specifically in Africa where diseases such as COVID-19 have highlighted the need for change. It argues that African women should resist negative male dominance in society, similar to the woman in Luke, and work towards empowering women in Africa to achieve freedom and equality.

Keywords: Lukan Jesus; healing; religion; pandemic; Africa; Luke's Gospel; suffering womanhood; COVID-19.

Introduction

Many studies (Asikainen 2018; Fleenor 2011; Thompson 2001) proved that the ancient world regarded women based on the rules and regulations that guided them. Women were treated based on the constructs of society. Society was the major determinant factor for decisions on womanhood within the societal structure. One of the reasons was that the functionality of society was mostly determined by one dominant gender – masculinity (Asikainen 2018:23). Such a patriarchal society was built on the principle of dysfunction and maltreatment of womanhood. The treatment of women is well documented in ancient literature (Thompson 2001:3). Viola Raheb (2003:88) notices that the origin of such misconception about women begins at the birth of the baby girl. The place of women was underrated and played down by their male contemporaries. Many uses of figures of speech in terms of verbal, allusion and innuendo point to how women were handled in society (Asikainen 2018:23–24).

The same allusion is spread across the New Testament. Scholars of the New Testament attest that the way women were treated by New Testament participants was in contrast to its contemporary environment (Asikainen 2018:107). Women were respected by the New Testament community, and they were fully allowed to participate in the communal activities of Jesus' community. The reactions of Jesus on many occasions show that the Lukan Jesus considered women not as property but as humans who deserved full respect and dignity. Jesus' statement in Luke 13:12 is congruent with the new community that is about to be launched into a movement that will subversively care for both men and women equally.

To arrive at the analysis of this theme, this study will apply a socio-historical interpretation method (MacDonald 1988:22–23; Van Staden 1991:178), following the examples of Marshall (2009) and Etukumana (2016). The reason is to enable it to explore how women were treated in the ancient world and compare it with the treatment of women by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. While applying the socio-historical interpretation in this study, many actions of the elite in the text will

Note: Historical Thought and Source Interpretation.

be scrutinised based on the principle of honour and shame that was prevalent in the ancient world. This will provide the basis for scrutinising how womanhood was treated.

Just as Jesus dealt with the woman who suffered for many years in Luke, the church in modern Africa is expected to follow the example that Jesus set for them. Dealing with the less privileged, especially women who have been ravaged by a pandemic, becomes sacrosanct for the church community in Africa. Having seen the way and manner in which women were treated in biblical times, especially considering the woman in Luke 13:10–17, the analysis of the text indicates the element of structural violence on the part of the synagogue ruler(s) against the woman and the Lukan Jesus was able to remove that structure and set the woman free. As a result, this study will adopt Monita Mungo's (2021) thesis on the modern structural violence against women during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) era and thereafter. It will deduce several implications for womanhood in Africa. The understanding of womanhood in this article sees women as different from men in many ways as acknowledged by Cynthia Russett (1991:1–48); however, the differences do not in any way make a woman less than a man. The article will specifically analyse the available data in at least two or three countries in Africa to represent the whole continent on how women were treated during the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa.

How would the church of Christ in Africa imitate and minister to those who have been affected in so many ways by different kinds of diseases and sufferings? How would the women who are often neglected in the scheme of things in the continent of Africa be accorded the rightful place especially when faced with disaster or pandemic?

Socio-historical reading of suffering womanhood in the ancient world

In the socio-historical hermeneutics, two things are put into consideration: the text and the social dynamic of the people involved in the text in comparison to the earlier similar textual culture elsewhere (Theissen 1977:3). The combination of the sociological and historical study of a given text is with a huge interest and benefits to the reader of the text (MacDonald 1988:22–23; Theissen 1992:33–34; Van Staden 1991:178). In this article, the text involved is the Old Testament and its Jewish culture, and that will be compared with the literature in Luke's Gospel. The major issue here is comparing the treatment of womanhood in the Old Testament with that of Luke 13:10–17. In the first place, the ancient authors saw women as weak and evil. Femaleness in the ancient Jewish world is tantamount to a sick and imperfect being (Philo *Leg* 2:96; *Spe* 1:200–201 [BibleWorks n.d.]).

Josephus (*War* 5:7) points out that:

Moreover those that had gonorrhoea, and the leprosy, were excluded out of the city entirely. Women also, when their courses were upon them, were shut out of the temple. Nor, when they

were free from that impurity, were they allowed to go beyond the limit beforementioned.

Considering the position of Josephus, it means that women were categorised as unholy and were not worthy to approach the holy precinct. In the Greco-Roman society, women were placed under the leadership of men. Patently, women often suffered exclusion because of institutionalised societal inequality (Montgomery 1989:117–118). Women were in general terms schemed out or excluded in many decisions of the male-dominated society of the ancient world.

The feminist interpreters of the Bible emphasise that the Old Testament narrative celebrates maleness in all its ramifications. Theophilus Ugbedeogo Ejeh (2019:49–59) critically evaluates the gender's position in the Bible and concludes that women were subjugated by their male folks. The reasons for this subjugation are simple: men were created first, and it was a woman who led humanity to sin (Ejeh 2019:51). The general notion is that the male gender is a dominant trait in every facet of the Old Testament (Bal 1989:17). Underscoring the reason for this dominant trait of maleness in the Old Testament (OT), Hisako Kinukawa (1994:29–30) alleges that the maleness of the Old Testament stemmed from the culture of honour and shame in the ancient world. Men preferred to honour themselves as the superior gender compared to their female counterparts in the same environment. She further adds that this belief (p. 29) has located a critical issue that contributes to the undermining of the power of womanhood in the ancient world – honour and shame culture of the ancient Near East (Kinukawa 1994:29). The honour and shame culture within the patriarchy allows men to seek honour while shame goes to the women folk. Women are to bear the shame, and men enjoy the honour (Kinukawa 1994:29).

About a similar notion, Victor H. Matthews (1998:102) alludes that the essence of honour and shame in the household was meant to provide a good ambience for the female gender to bring honour to the family of the woman. In case, the female involved is found wanting, such a woman would receive adequate and corresponding shame from society, which may eventually lead to death depending on the degree of offence (Matthews 1998:103–106). If the woman survived the 'trial ordeal', there was a tendency that she might not regain her former or original status. Matthews (1998:110) further sees 'libelling' as one of the principles that the ancient world relied on in order to review the status of an individual downward. The same principle was found in the traditional African society. Name calling was a social indictment of an individual character for defamation and condemnation. More often, the essence of this libelling whether in the Old Testament or Africa was to degrade the status of the woman involved. Sossou (2002:201–209) indicates in her study that in West Africa, many women were subjected to inhuman treatment, especially at the death of their husbands.

The economic benefit, social justice and equality that warranted the law in Deuteronomy 12–26. Women were the

means of equitable distribution of resources. The apparent treatment of women as property was witnessed in many households in the ancient world. A good girl will do everything possible to bring honour to her parents.

However, looking at the treatment of womanhood in the ancient world in comparison with the Hebrew Bible, the scholars of the Old Testament such as Matthews (1998) and Ejeh (2019) believe that the Old Testament pays more attention to the welfare of womanhood than other ancient Near East nations. Many of these scholars believe that the Mosaic Law was more favourable to womanhood and their plight. However, the conclusion of the debate about the place of honour and shame of womanhood in the ancient world is that the ancient authors such as Philo and Thucydides believe that women's honour is reserved for their homes when compared to the way and manner in which the Old Testament treats womanhood (Matthews 1998:105–107).

Despite this assertion, the evidence shows that there were women who got their honour from 'a public court of reputation' according to Zeba Crook (2009:596). These women were able to withstand and resist the maleness of their society and bring honour to themselves (Crook 2009:593). This could be seen in the way the sick woman in Luke 13:10–17 was treated with, by the privileged male counterparts in the text. The reason is that the woman in the text is aware of the fact that in the Bible, both males and females are equal in status and dignity (Ejeh 2019:59). As a result, Susanna Asikainen (2018:106–108) believes that women in the gospel were treated with dignity compared to the Jewish writings such as Philo, Josephus and Maccabees. She still has doubts that despite the picture of womanhood in the Gospel, the writers did not refrain from the traditional way of treating women in their contemporary society (Asikainen 2018:110–111).

The context of Luke 13:12 and the suffering womanhood

The reading of Luke 13 using socio-historical interpretation in the context of womanhood in the ancient world informs exemplarily how the sick person and womanhood were treated. This text is a narrative that deals with one of the women who had been suffering for many years from a medically incurable disease. In the ancient world, it was believed that sickness was a result of sin (Etukumana 2020:35). The sickness was caused by spirit possession and that made her bend for many years (Weissenrieder 2003:316) without being able to raise her head. It means that she could only communicate with 'the ground' and not 'the up', a metaphor for disfellowship with God of heaven because of illness (Grün 2006:39–40). The narration depicts the woman as someone who had lost her humanness and had become separated from the community of people because of the spirit of infirmity. It was a flaunting indication of oppression. In the words of Anselm Grün (2006:40), 'Luke sees in this woman bent double the image of the oppressed person who is broken and whose dignity has been infringed'. Based on

Luke's narrative as a medical expert, the woman had lost hope of restoration. She was just counting her days of departure from the earth until she met Jesus. She was bastardised by the guardian of human tradition (Rodriguez 2012:79–80).

In this text, Luke mentions key things that are associated with Jewish ritual processes. These two key things are the Sabbath and the synagogue. The Sabbath was meant for humanity as a day for rest from work and labour. Rodriguez (2012:79) believes that the Pharisees dispute the general notion of the Sabbath and were transforming the Sabbath into a cruel tyranny and humankind into a slave of that tyranny in contrast to the will of God. It was on this notion that Pablo T. Gadenz (2018:225) sees the significance of the Sabbath as to remain humanity of God's creation and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Based on this, he believes that Jesus' healing on the Sabbath signals the new creation to humanity. The exodus of the people of Israel means to the Lukan community that Jesus has ability to liberate humanity not only from the bondage of Egypt but also from the bondage of Satan. Darrell Bock (1996:117) authenticates that Jesus sees the Sabbath as the moment of doing good services to humanity whereas the Lukan Jesus complies with the provision of doing good deeds on the Sabbath. But, what is critical is that the said event took place in the synagogue. The setting in the synagogue on the Sabbath (4.15–16, 31–33; 6.6 and 13.10) is one of four instances in Luke's Gospel (Wainwright 2014:176).

The synagogue was a place of worship. A synagogue is a place with social and cultic implications. The social and cultic implications imply the idea that the people came together to interact with one another using religious principles. Through this interaction, people's needs and aspirations are supposed to be met. Ordinarily, the social interaction within the synagogue should have helped the poor and the marginalised. Nevertheless, unfortunately, the reverse was the case here with this woman. Perhaps, she has been a perpetual worshipper in this synagogue yet she suffered severely and was bound by disease for many years. The elders of the synagogue seemed not to have noticed her predicament, which was an indication of a lack of care from the synagogue leadership (Lk 13:14). Looking through the sociocultural lenses of the synagogue, one can conclude that the elites of the synagogue were suffocating the poor and marginalised of its members especially when viewing from the perspective of the Lukan Jesus (13:15). The suffering of the poor and the marginalised was not an important aspect of the ministerial career of the synagogue leadership.

The cultic implication of synagogue is seen in individual worshippers expressing their emotion with prayer and thanksgiving to God for his mercy and grace to them. It means that it is the place where one is free to express and offer his or her worship to God. It is a place where worries and cares are presented by their creator with the hope that such worries and cares will be taken care of by God, the owner of the synagogue. By implication, one can adduce that

συναγωγή and *ἐκκλησία* (church) are synonymous. This synonymity here implies that what *συναγωγή* (synagogue) meant for the people in the Lukan time is what the church means for humanity today – a place of prayer and answered prayer. If it were in the present-day context, the woman would have met with Jesus in *ἐκκλησία*. It was based on this that this woman tended her desire and prayed to God and God in Jesus answered her prayer. While the social dimension of this woman's life could not be met by the synagogue and its worshippers (Rodriguez 2012:81), her need was met by God whom she prayed to and worshipped.

The neglected womanhood found compassionate Jesus

Weissenrieder (2003:316) interprets and views this text against the backdrop of Hippocratic medicine. This interpretation signals that any sickness that lasted more than 12 years was regarded as incurable and that the person suffering this sickness was believed to be dead. To the Lukan immediate audience, by the interpretation of Weissenrieder, the woman was already a living-dead person. Therefore, her situation was beyond human capacity and needed not only to be cured but also to be raised from the dead. It was only God who created her that could exercise such healing and resuscitation power to heal and bring her back to life.

Craig S. Keener (1993:227) sees nothing that motivates Jesus in the text apart from his inherited behaviour towards people – the compassionate heart. This is displayed in his response to the woman who is afflicted in the text by a demon. Jesus' action was a reflection of Luke 6:36 (RSV) 'Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful'. Jesus displays this attitude to depict that mercy and compassion supersede the law. Where there is a conflict between compassion for humanity and the law, it is expected that compassion for humanity should take preference. Jesus' reading the heart and seeing the situation of this woman decided to have compassion on her. Jesus' compassion and mercy towards this woman are demonstrated in the way and manner that remedies have to be brought to this woman (Bovon 1985:285). The only thing that this woman needed was healing. The healing that will make her to be acceptable in her society. There was only one person who could do that for her: the Lukan Jesus. Luke records that the Lukan Jesus extending his hand and touching her indicates that God in his mercy has extended his salvation to this afflicted woman. Thus, Jesus exerted upon himself the role of mediator between God and this woman. The use of *καὶ παραχρήμα ἀνωρθώθη* in verse 13 serves as a *passive divinum* in the healing episode of this woman. God has indeed passed through his human representative unannounced to bring healing and restoration to this poor and afflicted woman (Wolter 2017:185). This woman received healing and restoration. Restoration in the sense that the notion of healing in the New Testament is beyond pathological; it involves social, religious and cultural sensations (Etukumana 2023:37). Healing is both physical and spiritual.

Healing here does not only signify good health but it also invites the idea that this woman who was once bound had been freed from all estrangement and is now reconciled to God and humanity (Etukumana 2020:34–35). She has been freed from the oppression and marginalisation. The sickness was not the only infirmity that she suffered but her suffering translated to hate by the social class and the elites of the synagogue and society. It was not Jesus who colluded with Satan as postulated by the elites of the synagogue, but the elites colluded with Satan to oppress the daughter of Abraham (Nolland 1993:724; Wolter 2017:189). This woman who Howard Marshall (1978:557–559) believes to suffer from a disability that resulted in the distortion of the spine, found the mercy and compassion of God through Jesus.

Luke Timothy Johnson (2006:238) suggests that the woman's disease was caused by demons, contrasting with Howard Marshall (1978:557–559) who attributed it to a physical disability resulting from spinal deformation. The healing of the bent woman in the synagogue (13:10–17) comes as a surprise amid all these sayings. The miracle sparked controversies because the learned leaders of the synagogue believed that Jesus' miracle was contrary to the Law of Moses by healing on the Sabbath day.

Viewing the story within the Lukan *Sondergut* and setting implicates the reason that warranted Jesus's meeting with this woman. This conforms to the use of chain or bond in the text which Fitzmyer (1985:1014) sees as a correlation with the use of the word *δεσμός* (bond, chain) metaphorically. Metaphor in the sense that oppressors are working in collaboration with Satan to marginalise this woman (Wolter 2017:188–189). The synagogue's leader represents the elites who are the fetters that bond the poor masses and not the sickness itself. The real sickness is the elite of the synagogue who aligned with Satan to deal with this woman. Based on J. B. Green (1997:522), the words of Jesus imply that the cause of this sickness was because of subjugation. The same metaphor could be found in Africa where so many oppressive and marginalised systems of governance are attributed to demonic attacks thereby exonerating the elites who caused the problem. Based on Fitzmyer's interpretation, the elders of the synagogues were the real demons who kept this woman in the chain of oppression for many years because they refused to pay attention to her problem (Fitzmyer 1985:1014). Rather, they were able to pay more attention to the keeping of the law instead of the immediate needs of humanity. The last miracle worked by the Lukan Jesus was the exorcism of the dumb demoniac in Luke 11:14, and only a single line was devoted to that deed, an obvious set-up for the controversy over Jesus' apparent collusion with Satan. In contrast, the present healing or exorcism is fully developed in the sense that more details are provided by the author. The pericope provides the audience with a complex situation that requires both societal and divine interventions. Human negligence provides a premise through which God intervenes in the affairs of humanity.

Womanhood in the context of COVID-19 in Africa

According to a report for the Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) published in July 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) affirmed the COVID-19 pandemic on 11 March 2020. The report further adds that the disease's sudden onset was in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei Province in China in December 2019. The COVID-19 was initially considered a worldwide emergency on 30 January 2020. Afterwards, because of its speed and scale of worldwide transmission, it became a pandemic. The same report further stresses that in Nigeria, the first case of the disease was confirmed on 27 February 2020. Kenya confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on 13 March 2020 (Ngere et al. 2020), while South Africa confirmed its first case on 5th March 2020 (SA GRA 2020:iv).

Since the advent of this disease, it has affected many people, especially women, in many ways. The interest of this article is to look into many ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic affected womanhood.

It has been noticed early on in this article that women are often the ones who receive the brunt of a societal problem. As observed by Ryan and Nanda (2022:5–7), structural violence became inevitable and helped COVID-19 to entrench inequalities between men and women. These inequalities are seen in many facets of human endeavours. One of these inequalities is women suffering more abuse and domestic violence during the pandemic (Anurag Chaudhary 2020:1–2). What leads to the cause of these abusive behaviours is often neglected by many students of sociology and religion especially when dealing with issues of emotion. Reading through Luke's Gospel, the woman who suffered from the sickness was suffering on her own. Many people, who came across her, saw her as having a problem. Such behaviour by the elite of her days or the synagogue leader wholly represented the social status of the privileged few who did not consider her as someone who needed attention. In other words, the inequality became sacrosanct as the woman battled purportedly her problem. This woman was inevitably suffering from what Monita H. Mungo (2021) called structural violence. According to Monita H. Mungo (2021:245), structural violence is a direct result of the maintenance of the social and economic structure of society that preserves the dividing line that separates the weak from the powerful, the poor from the rich, and the inferior from the superior, while wreaking havoc and harm on those who cannot afford to pay or lack the ability to earn their way up the social mobility ladder.

Structural violence is not noticeable within the social strata of society. It is subtle in the sense that people often tend to see it as an individual problem.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people who suffered more severely were those who did not have access to the quality of life as expected by humanity. The implication,

especially in Nigeria, shows that women are more vulnerable than their male counterparts during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (WARDC 2020:31–32). The same report further adds that:

Women's unpaid and underpaid care work, a driver of inequality, has always left women with precarious jobs, insecure incomes, and no social safety, thus marginalising women to the informal economy. (WARDC 2020:43)

Temitope Peter Ola and Akinjobi-Babatund (2022:89) acknowledge that Nigeria Police Force reported 717 rape cases in Nigeria between January and June 2020. Similar notions were found in Kenya and South Africa where COVID-19 negatively affected the finances of individual families. Among those who suffered severely were women. According to a UN report on the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, domestic work during and after the pandemic has severely increased in these countries. The reason is that women who were engaged previously in different activities outside their homes were forced to stay at home because of the lockdown. The figure used in this article is based on the surveys carried out in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa and the percentage is based on the total number of people interviewed by the WARDC in Nigeria (5813 in selected 10 states) and Kenya (2587 in all the 47 counties). In South Africa, the samples are divided into two phases: wave 1 and wave 2 simultaneously. The samples of both wave 1 and wave 2 are 2641 and 2460, respectively. Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa used the same methodology known as Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA), which deals with different experiences of women during the COVID-19 crisis and how to provide emergency responses to their various experiences (WARDC 2020:19):

The highest proportion of girls and women that were sexually abused were female respondents from FCT (58.8%), Kaduna (47.2%) and Lagos State (46.5%) respectively. Domestic violence was least experienced by female respondents from Kwara (27.9%) and Kano State (28.4%) respectively. Results across all the selected States, and FCT showed that more than one third (37.8%) of the female respondents were sexually abused while another 45.2% experienced domestic violence during the COVID-19 crisis. (WARDC 2020:12)

Concerning gender-based violence (GBV) against women during the COVID-19 crisis in Kenya, the study shows that:

Acts or threats of violence during the pandemic occurred both within and away from home. Physical (23% and 21% in urban and rural areas, respectively) and sexual harassment (19% and 16% in urban and rural areas, respectively), child marriages (15% and 20% in urban and rural areas, respectively) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) particularly in rural areas were the most prevalent forms of violence. This was mostly experienced in the homes with the perpetrators being predominantly family members and friends. (UNFPA 2020:v)

In South Africa, the percentage is alarming too as it was reported that:

More than 9 in 10 women (93%) and men (92%) indicated that gender-based violence (GBV) is a substantial problem in South

Africa. Among women, this was most prominent for those aged 35 to 54 years, 95% of whom reported this as a major issue in South Africa. About the same percentage of women (91%) and men (90%) reported that GBV happens 'very often' in South Africa, while a small proportion (women 6%, men 7%) reported that it only occurs 'sometimes'. (SA GRA 2020:vii)

Aside from the GBV that was prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were other means of violence witnessed by women. One of these other means of violence was a high increase in domestic labour among women in many households. Analysis of this report from the Nigerian context was surprising. The results across selected states showed that about 60% of the understudied populations were involved in children's care during the COVID-19 pandemic. By implication, there was an absence of equal distribution of labour during the pandemic. The study in Nigeria further showed that the lockdown forced many children to stay at home and many women had to increase the level of their engagement with the children and other domestic labour 'thereby worsening women's economic disempowerment' (WARDC 2020:10). The story of women subjugation is not new in Nigeria. It is what many scholars of Nigerian origin have identified as one of the major problems that are entrenching inequality in Nigeria (Ebekue 2017:84–90; Makama 2013:120–125).

The study in Kenya showed that because of a lack of necessary amenities such as pipe-borne water at home, women were subjected to fetching water for domestic use thereby increasing the volume of their unpaid labour (UNFPA 2020:50). The same study in South Africa also indicated that there was an increase in domestic labour for women during the COVID-19 lockdown (SA GRA 2020:51). Several studies carried out in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa showed a high level of violence and gender inequality in all the countries where the research was conducted (Roy et al. 2022:6). The analysis shows that women were the receptors of the major violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Women's resistance amidst disease in Luke and pandemic Africa

Earlier in this article, we observed that the woman in Luke 13:10–17 was subjected to many unforeseen hardships because of structural violence experienced in the then patriarchal society of her time. The synagogue that should have served as a social and spiritual sanctuary for whosoever came there did not meet the needed social and spiritual aspirations of the people. People saw her sickness as her problem. The situation demonstrates the hypocritical nature of the religious elites of the time (Marshall 1978:559). Even the synagogue members could not recognise her situation. One expects that her condition should have been taken care of by the people in the synagogue; unfortunately, the reverse was the case. Her situation was left to her alone, where the people she purportedly worshipped claimed not to notice her. Her resilience and tenacity in the meeting with Jesus provided an ambience for her healing. The structural violence she

encountered enabled society not to recognise her predicament until the boundary of this structure was broken by her encounter with Jesus. The daughter of Abraham must be freed from the fetter of the devil. The author of Luke's Gospel believes that the purpose of Jesus' coming was to liberate and heal those afflicted by diseases, sickness, poverty and all manner of societal ills (Wolter 2017:187–189).

The African women have much to learn from the woman in Luke 13:10–17 on her persistence even in her worst situation. Her resilience and persistence enabled her to avail herself of worship on every Sabbath day despite her condition. She was in a male-dominated environment yet she triumphed and got her healing. She has become a symbol of resistance to women in Africa. Male folks used many factors in subjugating against womanhood in Africa. African women must begin their freedom by imitating the strategies of the woman in Luke 13:10–17. There is a need to resist through the application of factors such as religious, political, ideological, socio-cultural and economic that would provide them with all the needed empowerment (Makama 2013:130–135). Marginalisation characterises a society with inequality and GBV. The reason is to subjugate one person and make that person seem lower or less human than other persons. Women in Africa have suffered from male dominance and subjugation (Ebekue 2017:4–6). Sikuku and Amuyunzu-Nyamongo (2020:169) have indicated that empowering women provides them with three vital principles that improve their resistance and resilience as they struggle for freedom. Firstly, women empowerment makes women economically self-sufficient; secondly, it builds women's confidence for them to be able to negotiate their rights in any place where they find themselves; and lastly, it provides women with the knowledge of being able to control their bodies and fighting against any violence that comes their way.

Conclusion

This article utilised socio-historical interpretation to interpret the statement and the action of Jesus to the woman in Luke 13:10–17. It was observed that the woman in Luke 13:10–17 represents the entire womanhood who is bartered by the patriarchal narrative. The study affirmed that many women in one way or the other had witnessed the same situation as the woman in Luke.

Just as the woman who suffered from the sickness in Luke resisted the elites and their oppressive behaviour towards her by making sure that she did all that she could to meet with Jesus, the women in Africa have to endeavour in one way or another to resist the elites and gain their freedom. Their freedom depends on their resilience and tenacity. The woman in Luke 13:12–17 indicates a typical example of womanhood's resistance to elitist society. Lukan narrative proves that women are the object of genuine resistance whenever the issue of maltreatment is apparent in any given society. African women should realise that they are dealing with a male-dominated society and therefore they ought to apply all the necessary instruments of freedom to free themselves.

The pronouncement of Jesus to womanhood 'Woman you are freed from your sickness', should send echo and confidence to entire women folks in Africa. This will enable women to see themselves as the daughters of Abraham, who represent global humanity, where humanity is treated equally irrespective of environment, state of health, gender and colour. Jesus' pronouncement is an indication that womanhood is freed from marginalisation, inequality, subjugation and whatever reduces and confines womanhood beyond the status of humanity.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

G.A.E. conceived the idea and wrote the draft, the methodology and analysis of the content, while the B.G.O. contributed to the writing and sourcing for the material and as well as the conceptualisation of the article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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