

**TOPIC: Femininity and Masculinity in Stephen Chifunyise's written plays: The Case of *Intimate Affairs* and *Muramu***

**Abstract**

The article argues that masculinity and femininity should not be understood narrowly as mutually exclusive bipolar opposites. Every individual, female or male should be assessed on a continuum of femininity and masculinity qualities. Thus, it is the 'amount' or preponderance of either masculinity or femininity traits that vary from one individual to another in both males and females. We will also argue that not all females are necessarily feminine and that not all males are necessarily masculine. With close reference to the two written plays, we will further argue that femininity or masculinity should not be simplistically understood to be determined only by the process of socialisation. It will be argued that it is not only socialisation that determines one's masculinity or femininity as to suggest so is to not only be deterministic, but also essentialist, static and dichotomous. It will be concluded that masculinity or femininity in males and females is the outcome of one's willingness to conform or not conform to societal expectations and to some extent, the biology.

**KEY WORDS:** Femininity, Masculinity, Sex, Gender, Gender identity, gender roles, Socialisation

**Introduction**

Horne (2010) has argued that institutions such as the family, home, church, school and media among others play a major role in socialising children into adult gender roles they will carry out both inside and outside the family later in life. Caldera et.al (1989) concur with this view of the importance of socialisation and suggest that children as young as 18 months display sex- stereotyped toy choices. They argue that parents socialise their children through sex- typed play and by selecting toys 'appropriate' to boys and girls. It is these play activities and choice of toys that have properties that elicit particular types of behaviour in both boys and girls. Thus, boys are 'taught' to be masculine and girls feminine, according to the norms of the society. However, this paper argues that although Horn (2010) and Caldera et. al's (1989) views may be true to an extent, the theory of socialisation on its own does not fully explain masculinity and femininity in human beings. Socialisation is not the only determinant factor