

## **The Silent Macho Man in the Home: Women in Biblical and African Societies**

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### **Abstract**

From the ancient Near East period, through Biblical times and coming down even to our own African societies, women appear to have been taken as vulnerable victims in the home and at the mercy of their male counterparts. Due to their assumed lowly status, there has been a rise in repeated calls to empower women in almost all aspects of life that pertain to humanity. This paper, however, seeks to distance itself from these repeated calls as it endeavours to argue not for empowerment but rather that the power they have is already more than enough and there are cases that may actually warrant the need to trim down some of those powers. What drives us to argue for such a position is the experienced conviction that women in the homes wield lots of power. The acknowledgment of such power in women finds expression in the Shona idiom, "musha mukadzi" (what makes a home is the woman). Bringing biblical and African societies in focus, the paper uses textual analysis as well as a hermeneutic of suspicion, to explore those incidences in the bible where women appear as if they are less influential than men, yet they are the ones determining all the outcomes. When it comes to exploring African society, the paper employs a sociohistorical analysis to analyze the power of women.

**Keywords:** empowerment, women, Shona, African societies, hermeneutic of suspicion

### **Introduction**

**H**ISTORY AND EXPERIENCE HAVE TAUGHT THAT WHEN APPROACHING WOMEN ISSUES, THERE IS NEED to exercise some caution. Not only do debates about them often end in emotive language, but any criticism levelled at them is often viewed as an attack on all women. This makes any kind of critique about them difficult. Be that as it may, it would actually be a miscarriage of justice if the objective truth about them is left untold just for fear of offending them. The current research therefore needs to be understood in the context of this endeavour to speak objectively of women issues, taking their interaction with power in the home as the subject of interest. Using literary textual analysis, a hermeneutic of suspicion as well as sociohistorical analysis tools to aid the research, the paper begins by discussing some women in the Old Testament who appear to wield little or no powers, yet they are the star players in the decisions reached. The second part explores some cases in African