

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The issue of gender inequality between sexes has remained a topic of serious debate in African literature. A significant percentage of research findings and writings in African literature identify male-induced oppression as central to the perpetuation of female subjugation, thereby down playing the fact that women are also oppressed by their fellow women. There are other forms of discrimination and violence by women against women that are hardly discussed. Tracing the genesis of gender inequality in African literature, it becomes imperative to note that “by omission or commission, most male writers in the early phase of African literature encouraged the marginalization of women” (Kolawale 2), also female characters are made marginal to the plot of the fiction (Charles Fonchingong 135).

Elechi Amadi, for instance, portrays his male characters as a dignified group and they constantly pass disparaging comments about their women. Madume, in *The Concubine*, dismisses his wife with the statement, “women argue forward and backwards” (70). His female characters are treated with disdain, depicted as inferior and subordinate to men. His heroine is all that a man would wish a woman to be. She must be endowed like Ihuoma, with the kind of physical attractiveness that will make a man eager to possess her. Wole Soyinka’s most prominent characteristics of women is exceptional beauty, a beauty which will be possessed by the man. As his title, *The Lion and the Jewel*, suggests, the male is associated with the qualities of strength and prowess while the female is

bestowed with virtues, ornament or prized possession. Cyprain Ekwensi is not left out, his heroine Jagua Nana in *Jagua Nana* is presented as an epitome of vulgar sexuality and pornography (Orabueze 134). The male dominant approach is also reflected in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. His famous for the macho image of the protagonists leaves little or no room for the projection of feminine value. Most of the male writers present women as victims of a society regulated by cultural norms and traditional values. Chukukere affirms that the ideal female character created by male writers often acts within the framework of her traditional roles as wife and mother, so strong are social values that the respect and love which a woman earns is relative to the degree of her adaptation to such roles (7).

Based on history, African literature and African literary criticism have largely been controlled by men. This is partly because only a small percentage of women acquired university education which is a great advantage for creative writing in European languages, men therefore, blazed the literary trail and pointed in particular directions. In addition, they wrote at a time of nationalist ferment and were caught up in the miasma of reconstructing Africa's image bruised and distorted by colonial intrusion, especially by white writers who saw in Africa a savage people without humanity, saw in its climate an impenetrable and uninhabitable jungle teeming with wild animals, dispensing illness and death to the white man and saw in Africa's culture and traditions a senselessness that made an entire continent irrelevant in the world history. They therefore, demonstrated through their arts the beauty in our arts, the meaning in our rituals, the logic in our traditional system and the soundness in our healing

ways (Nnolim 250). The challenges of the period necessitated the heralding of the masculine traditions.

Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie includes traditional structures as one of the mountains on the back of an African woman. It is fostered through the gender socialization process which connects macho strength and heroism to males and associates the traditional roles of wife and mother to females (7), hence the sloppy and biased presentation of female gender. According to Adimora-Ezeigbo, no group or class has been more designated or muzzled than women in any society. Women have suffered all kinds of oppression- sexual, religious, cultural, political, social and economic. No part of the world is exempted from this 'crime' against womanhood, although some societies and cultures are guiltier than others (73-74). This may be probably because the world is unfortunately patriarchal. Every female including the most uncompromising feminist traces her origins, her genealogy from the male line, hence the surname of every female is patronymic. The debasement of the female image is as old as the Bible and Koran, and has other origins in pre-historic literature and mythology (Nnolim 144). The feminist theorists also address the use of masculinized language like "God the Father" which is looked upon as a way of designating the sacred, as solely men. Biblical language in other words glorifies men through masculine pronouns like 'he' and 'him' and addressing God as a 'He'.

In most traditional societies, people as a result, devalue womanhood and regard women as the 'second sex' according to the French feminist existential writer,

Simone de Beauvoir. She argues that French culture and Western societies in general are patriarchal. The men define what it takes to be human. The female is always secondary or nonexistent. She believes that women are not born inferior but rather are made to be so (Dobie 105). Her *The Second Sex* is a cornerstone of twentieth century feminism – owing to its powerful and controversial impact on feminist thought. It examines “several literary works and shows how literature has functioned so as to propagate and uphold misogynist myths of womanhood” (Goring et al 210). It provides the vocabulary for analyzing the social constructions of femininity and a method for critiquing the constructions.

Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* portrays how society socializes and conditions the female to see herself as an incomplete and inferior human being which makes her lose faith in her sex, while the male is brought up to be strong, proud of himself and to view himself as superior to the female. Adimora-Ezeigbo laments that:

from childhood, the female is confronted with her insignificance and her subservient role in society. She internalizes these images that condemn her to a life of perpetual dependence and diffidence. Some of her “sisters” are confined in the home or if they ever venture out of the door, they are compelled to cover themselves like masquerades – apparitions that frighten innocent children in broad daylight. (74)

Women have the tendency to keep quiet and suffer in silence. Society has always prescribed silence, reticence, complaisance, patience and gentleness as the greatest virtues of the feminine gender, thus creating an object that Virginia Woolf derogatorily described as “The Angel in the House” in her *A Room of One’s Own*. Culturally, agencies of socialization hand over sex-role stereotypes from generation to generation. Socialization therefore, influences sex-role

stereotypes from early childhood when female children role-play nurses, while the males play hunters (Nwosu 40).

Emmanuel Ejiofor Ebo equally confirms that a child's choice of career is influenced by his community's cultural and traditional sex differentiation mentality. The society is responsible for the way women are treated since it customarily assigns matrimonial roles to the women and the more domineering roles of the bread winner and family head is left for the men. In Africa, women cannot be heads of households, to them, her duty is just to bear children, tend the home and assist her husband (239). As Budua, in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*, defines the traditional role of women "marry a man, tend a farm and be happy to see her peppers and her onions grow. A woman should bear children, many children so she can afford to have one or two die" (21).

This role assigned to the women by virtue of their culture is acceptable to the society. Chidinma Daniel-Inim adds that in a patriarchal system:

The man wields the power and the authority that organizes the social structure. He is the authorizing force behind the social, political, economic and religious decisions in the society. Thus, while the man from childhood is indoctrinated with a superiority complex, the woman is merely treated as inferior to the man while the male child is taught to aspire for great professionalism, the female child is indoctrinated with the idea that she could never survive outside the kitchen. At home, she is made to do most of the household chores while the boy plays ball in the field. Decisions that bother on her happiness are considered only after the boy's comfort. (224)

Patriarchy has certainly been operational in the society for as long as organized society has existed. According to Ibigbolade S. Aderibigbe, the dynamics of the

relationship between gender and the roles ascribed to it, has often been employed as the defining factor in determining the status of the male and female components of the society. One's anatomy ultimately determines one's social status (686). Justina Okoye asserts that gender is a culturally shaped group of attributes and behaviours allotted to male and female beings in the society (6). What actually are our female stereotypes in African literature? Girls are often portrayed in a traditional society as quiet, ladylike, pretty, polite, weak, emotional, and passive. These qualities often translate into roles such as teachers, nurses, clerical officers which reinforce the idea that girls are traditionally responsible for the domestic chores. Emphasis is laid more, for the girls on good behaviour, cleanliness, obedience and hard work which aims at creating harmony in future homes (Apena 282). The female is always reminded of her natural roles as a wife and a mother. These roles saddle her with the responsibilities of producing, nurturing children and taking care of the home.

Right from childhood, she is constantly reminded of these duties; so that by the time she reaches adulthood, she comes to accept them as her *raison d'être*.

She may be:

denied property rights because she is unfortunate to be born a woman. She is made to observe the levirate tradition if she has the misfortune of losing her husband. She could be made to marry to provide funds for the sustenance of the male siblings in the family and bears the burden of giving birth and 'backing' the child... while fetching water or firewood. Meanwhile, the man can relax at a palm wine joint to await his food. (Molly Chilwa III)

A woman should perform her traditional roles efficiently – run her home, be a good wife, a super-mother and a supportive member of the extended family. She is expected to love her husband, respect him with all due submission and devotion, whether he loved or ill-treated her. When children come, part of this devotion would be transferred to their nurture and upbringing. If there isn't enough food for everyone in the house, she would ensure that others eat while she gladly goes hungry. Women are judged by their physical feature rather than by their achievement, ability or skill. A man's appearance could be an advantage, but never a hindrance, the attributes that matter most in judging a man are intelligence, skill and financial standing.

In most patriarchal societies, it is men who have always controlled or determined the way women should look. If men prefer fat women in a particular culture, every woman in that culture would aspire to be fat. If thinness is preferred, the mania would swing to thin. In the traditional past, many Nigerian communities preferred their women plump, robust and strong. In some parts of Eastern Nigeria for instance, young women were isolated in "fattening rooms", where they did no work except to eat. At the end of the puberty rite, they become quite plump, soft skinned and ready to be married off., it is assumed that in this condition, they will please their husbands and bear numerous children. There has been a change however, in our society's ideas about beauty, and femininity, within the last decade. Most men prefer their women slender or nicely rounded. Fatness is regarded as a disadvantage partly because it is not very pleasing to the eyes and more because of its health problems. Thinness for

the female has become rather fashionable and most women in our society are avid weight-watchers (Adimora-Ezeigbo 8-10).

In addition, Chimamanda Adichie frowns at the way our society judges powerful women. They are judged more harshly than powerful men. The African traditional society has been conditioned to think of power as male, and that a powerful woman is an aberration. As a result, she is policed. People tend to ask – “Is she humble? Does she smile? Is she grateful enough? Does she have a domestic side” (4).

Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie compares the “sophisticated city girl and the rural woman” stereotype of the African woman. The two are often contrasted to dramatize the conflict of modernity and traditionalism. The sophisticated woman is shown as completely divorced from relatives and friends who are not living in her city or sharing her night life. Very often such characters are portrayed as prostitutes. They “achieve wealth and power through sexual powers” (Chukukere 54), for instance, Jagua in Cyprian Ekwensi’s *Jagua Nana* (6). Some critics equally argue that “Jagua is one of those victims of a male-oriented society... who are oppressed by the system of their times” (Chukukere 54). Counter poised to the city girl is the rural woman, another mirage. She wants the old ways of life. She does not want change and is happy with no innovations like Lawino in Okot p’Bitek’s *Song of Lawino* (Ogundipe-Leslie, 7). Her identity stands the danger of depending solely on her husbands. If his name is Okonkwo, she acquires a spurious and nondescript name - Okonkwo’s wife (*Nwunye Okonkwo*).

A close examination of Igbo folktales reveals also that women are often presented as the wicked step mother, the envious or jealous co-wife, the betrayer of family or village secret to an enemy and eternal gossip whose evil pastime is to sow seeds of discord. (Adimora-Ezeigbo 116). A bride is expected to bear children within the first two years of marriage. Infertility in any African marriage is the woman's fault and the women themselves have been made to believe so, even without any medical proof. Ideally, in a traditional African society, a barren woman is,

expected to marry another wife or wives for her husband. It is preferable that she does that because if she wastes time, two consequences may follow from that. He may either marry another woman with or without her consent or gets a concubine who will bear children for him, he has to take one of these measures to restore his ego and prove his manhood. (Orabueze 144)

Apart from this, many unsavoury names like he-woman, evil woman and witch are attached to a childless woman (Orabueze 107). The traditional structure is very strong because, during the colonial period, British colonial authority established a plural legal system in which the British law operated alongside indigenous customary laws and religious laws in certain areas. African customary laws or religious laws governed issues such as marriage, divorce, custody, burial and inheritance and till date many African states have retained this structure of parallel legal systems (Johanna E Bond 291).

Feminist consciousness thus was awakened in Britain by the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792 "and the women she fought for won the right to vote in 1928" (Nnolim 134).

Wollstonecraft's work blazed the trail in the dialectics of female freedom hinged on human rights (Chioma Opara 12). In 1848, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Stanton led the first Women's Rights convention in Seneca Fall, New York and urged that the American constitution should be amended to read: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal" (Nnolim 143). Alice Paul, Elizabeth Boyer and Judith Hole felt that voting rights for women may not go far enough to achieve total emancipation. They rather laid more emphasis on employment and insisted that payment should be specifically based on individual ability, expertise and skill instead of gender.

Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet and Michelle Barrett blamed capitalism for allotting inferior occupational jobs and lower pay to women. They decried the use of women as cheap labour, limiting their employment to nursing, teaching and other secretarial posts. Feminism however, has spread to many other parts of the world and has according to Utoh-Ezeajugh advanced "since then to a movement for dismantling entrenched patriarchal structures that have deprived women of equal rights and opportunities as men" (140). In Africa, some scholars saw feminism as too Western and alien to the culture, hence, the various theories were formed as derivatives from mainstream feminist concepts. These concepts are more culture specific and can address women's issues from a supposed African perspective. While accepting these concepts of feminism, African feminists discarded its violence and militarism.

The impact of feminist consciousness is felt. Women became aware that they could protest, fight for their rights and win. For instance, in Nigeria, Lagos women protested against the introduction of water rate in 1909. In 1929, the amazons of the Aba women's riot (Adimora-Ezeigbo 76) which has been

described as a unique mass movement in Nigeria was characterized by its “collective leadership” (Mba 75). The women in this movement constituted a formidable force in African history, irrespective of their palpable invisibility and ‘otherness’ under the colonial administration. The value of these women is evoked in the fictive women created in the historical novel *God’s Bits of Wood* by Sembene Ousmane (Chioma Opara 14). In 1949 Abeokuta women also protested against colonial taxation (Opara 14).

Apart from these movement, various women’s organization like (FIDA) Federation Internacional De Abogadas (which is International Federation of Women Lawyers), (GEM) Gender Equality Movement , (NCWS) National Council of Women’s Society, (WIN) the Women in Nigeria, (FOMWAN) the Federation of Muslim Women’s Association of Nigeria and others under the aegis of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (Ezeigbo 71) have aimed to promote equality, development and advancement of all persons especially women in the African society.

This issue of female emancipation and empowerment also attracts the attention of African female writers who have tried according to Nwankwo “to re-write the women back into positivity after the unwholesome portraiture they received at the hands of the early male writers” (172). These female writers needed to create a space whereby their voices could be heard and their desires be made known to the world through their persuasive writings. Flora Nwapa, who blazed the feminist trail in Nigeria especially with the publication of *Efuru* and *Idu*, attempts to correct the seemingly disparaged image of the African woman as presented in the works of African male writers.

Helen Chukwuma portrays 1966 as a year of quiet revolution that ushered in the first female novelist with her first novel *Efuru*. No novel before then was penned after a woman. Nwapa bared the soul of the woman, she showed her as flesh and blood nursing her own dreams and aspirations, being hurt and breaking with tradition when it chokes her. She writes to inform and educate women all over the world about the role of women in Nigeria, their economic independence, their relationship with their husbands and children and the position in the society. She is committed to womanhood. She identifies with her gender, probes into their life conditions and their problems in a male-dominated society (115). In *Efuru*, she creates a sophisticated female protagonist – beautiful, intelligent and rich by all local standards.

No woman in Nwapa's novels is a parasite that depends on men for sustenance. In *Idu*, it is the man who has no inner resources, who borrows money constantly from his wife, who when the wife deserts him, "hanged himself from the thatched roof of his hut" (Nnolim, 196). Male characters are presented as dependent and weak, Adizua for instance could not offer the bride price. Nwapa as well as other African feminist writers protest against the type of disgusting image and marginalized roles assigned to the female characters in male authored texts. They are always at the fringes of their communities' activities and never part of the decision-making process, even when their interests are at stake.

According to Orabueze, little is seen, heard and talked about them. They are either farming, fetching water or fire wood, plaiting their hair, cleaning their

private or public huts, washing cooking utensils, being beaten by their fathers, brothers or husbands, running away from the masquerades, going or coming back from the market, bearing or rearing children, or cooking food for their families or guests (137). The brutalized plight of African women in the hands of the ‘enemy’ man is reflected in Buchi Emecheta’s choice of titles. She appears to say, as Nnolim observes, that the wicked men have kept forlorn woman *In The Ditch* (1972); made her a *Second Class Citizen* (1974); bought with just *The Bride Price* (1976); regarded as merely *The Slave Girl* (1977); denied the *Joys of Motherhood* (1979); and made to bear *The Double Yoke* (1981) of divorce and loneliness (140).

One of the commitments of the female writer should be the correction of these false images of the woman in Africa. To do this, she must know the reality of the African woman, must know the truth about African woman and womanhood (Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie 8). Contemporary female writers have made giant strides in an attempt to re-define and focalize the one-sided presentation of the African woman in African literature. Lapin observed that nearly three dozen women are currently recognized as authors across the African continent and they have been joined by some male writers in giving a serious treatment, a realistic characterization and all rounded perspective of the female gender. Writers tackle the gender equation in various ways as they strive to reverse aspects of female marginalization, (20).

Chimamanda Adichie suggests that the solid unbending belief of feminist premise ... “I matter equally, not if only, not as long as I matter equally. Full stop” (1) should be every woman’s focus. Every woman should remain a full

person. Adichie advises Ijeawele to teach Chizalum that “gender roles” is absolute nonsense. “Do not ever tell her that she should do or not do something “because you are a girl” “Because you are a girl” is never a reason for anything. Ever. (2) A girl should be seen as an individual, not a girl who should be in a certain way. Adichie disputes mother’s territory, into which fathers valiantly venture. Domestic work and care-giving should be gender-neutral. A father should do everything that biology permits, which is everything except breast feeding (2). Gender roles are so deeply conditioned in African that they are very difficult to unlearn.

Based on this; Adichie points out that instead of gender roles, baby girls should be taught self-reliance and how to try and fix physical things when they break. A girl child should be encouraged to read. Books will help her understand and question the world, express herself and acquire her desired ambitions. Teach her to speak her mind, to be kind, brave and honest. She should be made to reject likeability. She is not merely an object to be liked or disliked, rather she is a subject who can also like or dislike. Adichie maintains that in raising a child, we should focus on ability and interest instead of gender. Gender prescribes how we should be, rather than recognizing how we are. We police girls, teach them shame ‘close your legs, cover yourself’. They are made to feel guilty of something for the mere fact that they are born females. They grow up to be women who silence themselves, who turn pretence into an art form.

Mariama Ba, in her *So Long a Letter*, rejects with disgust, the irreparable sense of poignant pathos, ingrained in polygamy, especially on the woman folk. She

decries polygamy as a sacrilege to the precepts of genuine marriage. Narrating the oddities of an abandoned wife, single mother and widow, she highlights polygamy as a male preserve to control women's sexuality. Using the intellectually sensitized Ramatoulaye and her friend Aissatou, both victims of polygamy in a Muslim culture, Ba extols the need to revolutionize through their actions – hence breaking the scurrilous shells of introversion to challenge the status quo (Charles C. Fonchingong 143).

The attempts of the feminist writers to re-constitute the distorted image of the female gender have, however, attracted criticism from a number of scholars. Nnolim condemns the excesses of some African feminists for creating strong-willed female characters who achieve their economic independence through questionable behaviour. He wonders why a feminist self-assertive woman who is a role-model for younger women should not be created (220-221). He equally mocks that the heroines of the African feminists are usually superior in character, industry, wealth and beauty while their male counterparts are debased. Chinweizu states that African Feminists' clamour for identical rights between sexes should also be extended to equal responsibilities. He asks why women should not be treated the same as men in the war situations so they can equally risk death like men (84). Nweke, B.O. observes that African female writers create heroines with rebellious characters and the denigrated caliber of male counterparts who can never partner well with such women to bring about the desired harmony (210).

Ugochukwu Ejinkonye also argues that some characters, settings and incidents in some creative works of African female writers are so “gratuitously padded

with several outlandish details and extreme exaggerations, that their stories simply lose their abilities to be true” (35). They create highly assertive female characters in a society peopled by mostly weak, grossly irresponsible, non-interprising, lazy, emasculated foolish and insane men just to make some feminist point (35).

Despite the criticism, the labours of the African feminist are not in vain; the impacts of their efforts are felt. Most male writers revisit their earlier approaches by representing women in an all rounded perspective. The stereotype that women cannot be potential leaders or possess organizational capacity is therefore, defined through their presentation of female characters. Ngugi wa Thiongo’s women, for instance, are empowered with strength, foresight and perseverance. In his *I will Marry When I Want*, Gathoni is portrayed as an independent woman in her decision to contravene traditional precepts by choosing a husband of her choice, not that imposed by her parents. She also shows a strong sense of awareness to the injustices of her community as evident in her expression and reactions to her mother.

Some of the male writers have however, shown a startling departure from the flat traditional stereotypes. Through their works, they have demonstrated convincingly that if people are to change, grow and become socially and politically aware of current realities, everybody, men and women must be involved in bringing about the new consciousness. Although the heroines are not always the main protagonists in the writings, but they possess great revolutionary potentials and constitute essential forces through which the

society aspires to a new order of awareness. They are shown to transcend their traditionally limiting roles to become politically and economically significant. Chinua Achebe equally moves away from the patriarchal world of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* to a progressive feminine gender course in *Anthills of the Savannah*. He presents Beatrice as a professional who operates on the same wave-length as the most powerful men in the land. This presentation depicts a woman shouldering the responsibility of charting the course of female emancipation (Charles Fonchingong 145).

Research findings have also disclosed that, of all forms of oppression, male-induced marginalization has been widely investigated and documented in African literature. It is worrisome that little or nothing is discussed about other forms of oppression, sabotage and subjugation by women against their fellow women. The study intends to bridge this gap. Female subjugation is also intra gender and it is scantily addressed unlike inter gender marginalization. It may be important to note that most of the obnoxious cultural practices that debase women ranging from widowhood practices to female circumcision are honoured, instituted and executed by women. Most crisis resulting from childlessness or having only female children are mostly instigated by women.

Simone de Beauvoir uses the concept of “subject” and “other” instead of “Master” and “Slave” to distinguish the dialectic of exploitation between the subjects and the others. The subject is man and the other is woman. The others (women) experience their oppression as a communal reality. They see themselves as part of an oppressed group who assert subjectivity and demand

recognition. The women's so-called inadequacies are used as justification for seeing them as the other and for treating them accordingly. Women however find it difficult to identify the origin of their otherness. They cannot like men, call on the bond of a shared history to reestablish their lost status. They seem to lack the solidarity and resources of the Hegelian Other for organizing themselves into a "we" that demands recognition. The conflict between men and women seems ambiguous. Women and men, according to Beauvoir, exist in a "primordial *Mitsein*". There is a unique bond between the subject and its other. In contesting their status as inessential, women must discover their "we" and take account of the *Mitsein* (xix – xxii).

Some psychologists at the University of Michigan refer to women in a position of authority, who treat other female subordinates more critically, as queen bees. "Queen bee" is typically used to refer to an adult female bee that lives in a hive, usually the mother of almost all the bees in the beehive. It is specially fed in order to become sexually mature. A woman who behaves as if she is the most important person in a particular area is also seen as a queen bee. For instance Margaret Thatcher, the UK's first female Prime Minister has been described as a queen bee for not promoting the careers of women in her cabinet. Instead of acting as mentors, some successful female bosses pull up the ladder behind them because they perceive other women as threat. A successful woman, who does not use her good offices to assist other women advance or undermines her female colleagues, is a queen bee. Queen bee behaviours are usually triggered in male dominated environment in which women are devalued. Some of the high status women are consistently less willing to reward their lower status

colleagues. The queen been behavior suggests that women are their own enemies.

To what extent does the ever-present crisis between wives and their mothers-in-law occur amongst wives and their fathers-in-law? Do women not promote polygamy by arranging second, third or fourth marriages for their sons? Do young girls not also accept marriage offer from rich men who are already married? Who inculcates the so-called gender roles more, on children from-the-cradle—men or women? Why should *Umuada* (Daughters of the lineage) allow themselves to be used to enforce the dehumanizing widowhood practices on fellow women especially where there is no similar practice for men? Why should *umuada*, in their greatness, keep silent over the false accusation mostly levelled at their fellow sex as the murderer of their husbands? Why the silence, especially when the accuser goes scot-free? Why should some women allow themselves as accomplices of human trafficking or international sex trade? Should women not be their sisters' keepers? No oppression is less than the other, whether it is meted out to a woman by patriarchy, tradition or women. Therefore, adequate attention, criticism and attack should be re-directed towards intra gender subjugation, and this informs the topic: *Intra Gender Subjugation in Selected African Female Writers' Novels*.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Not much has been documented on other forms of oppression against women by women. Female subjugation is not only inter gender but also intra gender. Most

African female writers do not use their poetic licence and domain of writing to address the reoccurring issues of intra gender marginalization. Pertinent questions about this gap and the role of women in the perceived oppression were raised. Four novels and other secondary materials relevant to the study were used. The novels are *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* by Neshani Andreas, *Arrow of Destiny* by Ann Iwuagwu, and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* and *Roses and Bullets*. The influence of the strong affiliation of the female characters with some patriarchal structures on their attendant traumatic experiences was explored. Based on these issues, the research, therefore, intends to examine and analyze the intra gender relationships amongst the female characters in the novels under study. This will be done alongside socio-cultural structures that debase female gender to capture their roles in the perceived oppression in order to determine if the subjugation is only male-induced.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to debunk the generally accepted impression by African feminists, that patriarchal structures are the major and only source of female subjugation. The study examines the intra gender relationships amongst the women in the selected novels. It interrogates how the African female writers portray the yearnings, pains and experiences of women of various generations, classes and social statuses. The research also analyzes the nature of the prevailing social conditions and gender expectations which women grapple with as well as how their oppressions are perpetuated. It aims to lay the downplayed woman on women violence bare. In line with Focu feminism, the study lends

support that adequate scholarly attention, should be redirected to intra gender subjugation.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

To carry out this research extensively, the researcher examined and analyzed four novels, Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, Ann Iwuagwu's *Arrow of Destiny*, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked and Roses and Bullets*. References were also made from other prose fictions and drama by African writers as well as articles, critical materials and journals related to gender studies. Apart from thematic focus, these novels were written between 2001 and 2014. This represents the realities about the alliances of the female characters in the contemporary period. The writers are all African females who explore from various perspectives the intra gender relationships of the female characters in both pleasant and conflict situations.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research demonstrates the true state of affairs within the women-folk by revealing the dual roles of women as both the oppressed and the agents of oppression. By subtle exposure of the deepening cracks in the walls of women alliances, the study may encourage positive female bonding and comradeship amongst women. It points out some real and hidden issues involved with the intra gender relationships amongst women to raise gender discussions. The work may also provide impetus for a redirection by establishing the fact that intra gender subjugation is prevalent in African prose. It will be an important

source of information to gender scholars. It may generate interesting postulations on gender issues and identities in African consciousness. A more realistic portrayal of the major source of female oppression may be facilitated. The study does not only depict the plight of women in a hostile social condition but also highlights some structures that unarguably hinder their emancipation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP

CONCEPTUAL STUDIES

This involves explanation and reviewing of some social, religious and cultural structures that contribute to women's oppression, which unarguably remain the hallmarks of gender debates. It consists of gender, martriarchy, patriarchy, female circumcision, childlessness, widowhood, battery, intra gender subjugation, abandonment, polygamy and trafficking.

Gender

According Ogundipe-Leslie, gender is the social capacities and attributes assigned to persons on the basis of sexual characteristic (152). Michael Kevane defines gender as "the constellation of rules and identities that prescribe and proscribe behaviour for persons in their social roles as men and women. These rules and identities may be deliberate or unintended, explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious" (1). There is evidence of struggle for prominence and relevance in the traditional societies. Karen Celis et al confirm that:

across the globe, gender determines who goes hungry and who gets adequate nutrition and water, who can vote, run for office, marry, or have rights to children, who commands authority and respect and who is denigrated and dismissed and who is most vulnerable to violence and abuse in their own homes and intimate relationships. (1)

The struggle is basically between the male and female. Gender deals with the question of power:

... questioning how power is shared, the leadership, and the different roles of societal components. More precisely, it

encompasses how women and men are organized and how they interact in society including the family, the church, politics, the economy... (Tietrcheu 116)

Gender may be used to refer to the sex of a person, either male or female. Female and male are understood and treated as essentially different, fundamentally not alike in biology, character and intellect. Hence, as gendered opposites, what the female is, the male is not, yet they complement each other (Ogbonna 384). Males and females are substantively different just as their roles and duties. It may be imperative to examine gender roles, gender stereotype and gender discrimination.

Gender role posits that boys and girls learn the appropriate behaviour and attitudes from the family and overall culture they grow up with. Traditionally, fathers teach boys how to fix and build things while mothers teach girls how to cook, sew and keep the house. Children receive parental approval when they conform to gender expectations and adopt culturally accepted and conventional roles. Gender roles adopted during childhood normally continue into adulthood. At home, people have certain presumptions about decision –making, child rearing practices and financial responsibilities. Gender roles are realities in almost everyone’s life. Gendered social behaviour arises out of division of labour and naturally accepted norms and values. Women, for instance, are usually in full control of the affairs of the kitchen and nurturing of the children. These gender roles may change according to the situation people find themselves. For example in a home where there are no female children, the boys help in the kitchen and the house chores, “although it persists as entrenched

laws when couples lack understanding, or are illiterates and lack economic power” (Ogbonna 386).

While gender roles are defined by behaviours, gender stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity. Gender stereotype consists of beliefs about the psychological traits and characteristics of, as well as the activities appropriate to men or women. The concepts of gender role and gender stereotype tend to be related. Gender stereotypes are very influential; they affect conceptualization of men and women and establish social categories for gender. These categories represent what people think about others. Brannon argues that the attributes of true womanhood by which a woman judges herself and is judged by her husband, her neighbours and society could be divided into four – piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. True women are naturally religious. This is evident in their refinement, delicacy and tender sensibilities. Religious studies however, are seen as compatible with femininity and deemed appropriate for women. Women should also not be interested in sex, although they are accused of being vulnerable to seduction. A true woman should be submissive. She is expected to be weak, timid, and dependent. These women should elevate men who are supposed to be strong, wise, forceful and unquestionably superiors. A good woman is one whose concern is with domestic affairs –making a home and having children. Her domain is in the home, cooking and nursing the sick, especially a sick husband or child (155).

For men, several models of masculinity show gender role stereotypes. Men should avoid all feminine activities and interests, in fact a stigma should be

attached to feminine characteristics. A good man needs success and status; therefore, he should have an achievement orientation. He should be tough, confident and self-reliant. A true man should be able to suppress emotions, be daring and have an aura of aggression and violence. The content of gender stereotypes includes four separate components that their people use to differentiate males from females – physical appearance, traits, behaviours and occupations. These four components are relatively independent, but people associate one set of features from each of these with women and another set with men. People view men and women as differing more in physical features than in psychological characteristics and people rely more on physical information than on trait, behavioural or occupational judgments. Given information about behaviours, people make inference about traits and information about occupations that can affect judgments about behaviours. For instance, a man who is described as taking care of the children, cooking and managing the house can also be judged as likely to be weak, emotional and gentle (Brannon 163).

Ordinarily, discrimination is said to be the treatment of one or more members of a specified group unfairly as compared with others. At times, sex is used interchangeably with gender. Sex refers to biological maleness and femaleness, anatomical differences that distinguish men and women while gender refers to the traits assigned to a sex (Litosseliti 10). Gender discrimination could thus be defined by simply substituting the word ‘gender’ for sex. The Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defines the term

discrimination against women which amounts to gender discrimination against women as:

any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social cultural civil or any other field. (Ibezim 166)

Finally Gender thinkers adopt a feminist stance and see no difference between gender-ism and feminism. The gender paradigm centrally addresses the problems of equality and liberty rights. The same could be said of feminism whose ideology basically consists of power, women, rights and equality (Mwale 116).

Matriarchy

Matriarchy is a form of social organization in which the mother or oldest female is given the privilege to be the head of the family. Matriarchy, according to Fatima Binta Ibrahim is a reaction to the “reoccurring decimal that inhibits the women’s capacity to enjoy their human rights where power and supremacy have been arrogated to men” (475). The struggle by women to be domestically, financially and economically independent is emphasized as being matriarchy. The word matriarchy, for an organization politically led by females, especially mothers, who also have control of property, is often interpreted as the opposite of patriarchy. While patriarchy is the rule of males over the female as characterized by the male dominating system, matriarchy, is the struggle of the female in the unequal class position. Matriarchy, hence, becomes the weapon for female politics in search for a new identity. Patriarchy and matriarchy are

simply indicators of the division of labour in the stereotyped societal manner. Patriarchy is the rule of the father over the mother as characterized by the male dominating system where the female is subordinate (Fatima Bintu Ibrahim 476), while female power is just like the air, though everywhere but it's hardly noticed, its quiet ubiquity acts like a camouflage.

Margot Adler describes matriarchy as the government by mothers or government and power in the hands of women (13). The women occupy the ruling position in the family. The women's power is equal or superior to men's. A society can be called matriarchal when descent, inheritance and succession are in the female line and when the authority over the child is wielded by the mother or her relatives. Kinship is exclusively, acknowledged in the female line in a matriarchal society. A matriarchal society practices visiting marriage. The men live in the clan-house of their mothers and visit their wives, and the visit is restricted to the night. A matriarchal man:

never regards the children of his wife as his children, because they do not share his clan-name. They are only related to the woman whose clan-name they have. A matriarchal man, however, is closely related to the children of his sister, his nieces and nephews. They have the same clan-name as he. His attention, his care for their upbringing, the personal goods he passes on: all this is for the nieces and nephews. Biological fatherhood is not known, or is paid no attention. (Goettner-Abandrot 6)

In the process of taking a political decision, no member of the household is excluded. Every decision is taken by consensus. Women are greatly respected in matriarchal societies. Chinweizu, however asserts that a society cannot be strictly matriarchal or patriarchal, rather, it can have matriarchal and patriarchal

subsystems and these usually complement each other. He explains matriarchy as a form of social organization in which the female head (matriarch) exercises dominant power while the male head is her lieutenant who operates its formal machinery of authority. The patriarch is the head while the matriarch is like the neck that controls that head. The patriarch, who is a one-man-ministerial cabinet which helps the matriarch exercise her monarchical powers, is the figure head, with more of the aura of authority. A matriarch can quietly veto any of her husband's decision which do not suit her, though feminist deny matriarch power. The penultimate power and structures of authority may be in the hands of the patriarchs, but the ultimate power lies in the laps of matriarchs hence the saying "mother is supreme". (110-114).

Patriarchy

The word patriarchy is derived from the Greek word "Patriarkhia" or 'Patriarkhis' which is associated with male norms and standards of rulership which cuts across every strata of the society. It was officially used in the 1630s to depict a system of government by fathers or elder males of the community.

According to Daniel –Inim:

Patriarchy has been a symbol of men's superiority complex over women. Superiority in the sense that, men's words and standards are the accepted societal norms. In patriarchal set up, the men wield the power and the authority that organize the social structure. He is the authorizing force behind the social, political, economic, and religious decisions in the society. (224).

Teresa U. Njoku laments that woman's predicament, (which is a constant threat that keeps every woman worried), has been traced manifesting from the lore of patriarchy (195). The effect of patriarchal lordship is silencing the woman,

muffling or muting her voice or browbeating her to remain voiceless. Ogunjide – Leslie claims that, patriarchy takes different and complex forms in different societies. It poses a common challenge to women, silencing them (15). Silence, however, represents “the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy, that form of social organization in which males assume power and create for females an inferior status” (D’Almeida i). Patriarchy favours men and subjugates women. One does not expect the contrary since according to Teresa U. Njoku, patriarchy is a social system controlled mainly by men. It results in sexism which attributes importance and superiority to the male and inferiority to the female. Men created this parochial system and women have no hand in the management of patriarchal institutions, which results in their being marginalized (277).

In Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, Beatrice (Mama) and Kambili are the most suppressed, silenced and brutalized, psychologically, emotionally and physically. They are the worst hit by Eugene (Papa), the symbol of patriarchy, whose mere presence sparks off the fire of danger that keeps the females under tension and fear. Adichie frowns at the unfriendliness, cruelty and brutality of the man against the woman. She seems to mobilize support to pull down the threatening wall of patriarchy. “Patriarchy imprisons women and violates them by denying them rights as individuals and as members of a larger collective. Through imposed cultural practices women are repressed, contained and monitored under the constant gaze of a male, first the father, their brother (where there is one) husband and sometimes the son” (Eke 50).

Childlessness

Childlessness is a situation of having no children. This could be due to “lack of the fruits of the womb or the deaths of the children”. (Okodo 507). Childlessness constitutes the worst tyranny for married women and it defies any solution till date (Chukwuma 121) Agnes in Flora Nwapa’s *This is Lagos and Other Stories* “driven by desperation, becomes a child thief. In order to keep her marriage, she employs all kinds of deceit and finally resorts to stealing a baby from the hospital” (94). The agony of a barren woman is indescribable (Orabueze 88). Emenyonu laments:

Speak me to all barren women, she admonished as I strained my ears to hear her faint and dwindling voice. Speak me to all mothers who have only one child in a land and among a people where the value of a woman depends upon her capacity to fill her husband’s house with children. Speak me to all who have a daughter as an only child.... Speak me to all women who forfeited the love and respect of their husbands because they could not fill the dreams of multiple sons to inherit the men when they have joined their ancestors. (1)

The quotation depicts emphasis on humiliation, degradation, injustice and dehumanization that women experience in a patriarchal society as a result of childlessness. The main purpose of marriage in the African society is to bear children, to build a family and to extend life. Through marriage and child rearing, the parents are remembered by their children when they die. Childless marriage is a source of grievous disappointment and a major determinant of marital conflict, broken home, divorce and incentive for adding more marriages by the aggrieved husband (Anagbogu 7).

It is very worrisome that despite people's exposure to Western civilization and education, attitude towards infertility still remains hostile. African society attaches much importance to children and inheritance. The philosophy of marriage emphasizes procreation more than even the relationship between the couple. A bride is expected to bear children within the first two years of marriage. Infertility in any African marriage is the woman's fault and the women themselves have been made to believe so even without any medical proof. A childless mother is regarded as a failure. "A woman is nobody, a wife is everything and a mother is next to God" (Spock, 39). "A Woman would be forgiven everything as long as she produced children" (Emecheta 28). Thousands of innocent women are tagged barren in Africa without proof. Efuru in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* confides in Ajanupu without a medical examination, "I want my husband to have children, I am barren" (180). Amaka in Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough*, Anowa in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*, Ije in Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* among others are victims of the circumstance.

African traditional society has, in many forms, encouraged humiliation of childless mothers, "forcing them to consult various medicine men, doctors, prophets or leave their marital homes in frustration" (Nnolim 140). Ifeoma Okoye, however, calls for examination of the female image, suggesting that men could also be the guilty party in a childless marriage. In her *Behind the Clouds*, she portrays the traditional attitudes to childlessness in African marriages and exposes the implications. Many other female writers have equally expressed in many ways the plight of barren women in Africa and the extent

such women can go to have children, to save their marriages in a child hungry society. Lewu equally illustrates that:

due to the preference for boys in most cultures, a woman without a male child is almost regarded as barren. This is borne out of the belief in male physical, psychological and social superiority. Only the male child is regarded as capable of perpetrating the lineage, while the female gets married into another family. Consequently, girls are treated as temporary members of their families, sometimes denied equal access to education, feeding and inheritance. (564)

In extreme cases in Igbo culture, where a man does not have an heir, one of his daughters may be kept in the house to continue the genealogy of the man. She procreates after the traditional rites have been performed. This usually happens if the man loves the wife and does not want to inconvenience her with the presence of a second wife (Orabueze 89). In Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Last of The Strong Ones*:

it was Aziagba who solved the problem and saved all of us from slow death. She was willing to remain at home with us to produce male children for her father. After we had performed the *nluikwa* ceremony, she chose Okonji as a mate. And he was willing to enter the relationship with her. It was a big relief to all of us. (33)

The rights of a woman in her husband's home depend on the number of male children she has. Unfortunately, this outright humiliation is also aided by woman. Adaku in Flora Nwapa's *Wives At War and Other Stories* laments:

I have seen girls brought into my home by my mother-in-law for my husband. When I objected, she reminded me that she had four sons, and said that if I did not like what she was doing, I should go back to my parents with my band of girls. (45)

Due to the possibility of divorce, a woman is treated as a stranger in her husband's family and the situation is worse if she is childless or has only female children. According to Davies "to marry and mother a child (a son preferably), entitles a woman to more respect from her husband's kinsmen for she can now be addressed as mother of ..." (243). Steady supports that:

the most important factors with regard to the woman in traditional society is her role as mother and the centrality of this role as a whole. Even in strictly patrilineal societies, women are important as wives and mothers since their reproductive capacity is crucial in the maintenance of the husband's lineage ... (243)

Motherhood is respected, but the feminist questions the stigma a barren woman suffers and the traditional favouring of sons as opposed to daughters (Gloria Eme Worguji 143). Orabueze notes that the African woman carries a double yoke; to have plenty of children and to have male children in the majority. The birth of a male child unarguably heralds great jubilation. It can be a great disappointment for a woman's first fruit of the womb to be a girl (108). Adah in Buchi Emecheta *Second Class Citizen* for instance:

was not even quite sure she was eight because she was a girl. She was a girl who arrived when everybody was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. She was so insignificant. (7)

Widowhood

Widowhood is a description of the circumstances and status of a widow. A widow is a woman whose husband is dead and who has not remarried (Emmanuel Ibezim 167). Justina Okoye describes widowhood as a "state in

which excruciating hardship, inflicted by tradition and culture, is assigned to women who lost their husbands” (38). Widows, in most parts of Africa, are persistently traumatized for the loss of their husbands. Ezejiolora remarks that;

Widowhood in Nigeria is not only perceived as a state of being but more importantly as an institution... when we take into account the very many rituals and practices together with the regulations and impositions that go along with it, we will find out that widowhood is, more or less an institution... interpreted and understood in the context of the culture and tradition of people which regulate its operations. (140).

Ibezim confirms that “there is hardly any ethnic group in Nigeria that does not subject the widow to one dehumanizing condition or the other. The difference is said to lie in the gravity of the procedure which varies from culture to culture” (167). Okoye also points out that at the death of a man, customary law, in some parts of Nigeria empowers certain male members of the family to inherit the widow of the deceased. In others, sons of the deceased are permitted by culture to inherit their fathers wives, not their own mothers. Evidently, the entire concept of widow inheritance according to Okoye, bounces back on men’s consideration of women as property, things and accessories (39). In as much as “those who practice this custom believe that by passing the widow from the deceased husband to his next of kin will guarantee the upkeep of the woman and her children and ensure a proper maintenance of the widow” (Omonubi - McDonnell 101), widow inheritance is a form of slavery and ultimate in gender oppression (Okoye 39).

It may be necessary to review some widowhood practices in Nigeria at this point. Before the advent of Christianity, a widow’s traditional mourning begins

in the night of the burial. She would be compelled to sit on a few leaves spread on the floor as a mat for seven days at the back of the house. The only water she had access to would be for drinking purposes. At dusk and dawn, she would come out to wail at the loss of her husband, an indication of how much she missed him. On the seventh day, she would gather all the leaves, all the things she used for mourning including the small cloth, she had been tying and proceed for cleansing. At midnight of that day, the *umuada* would accompany her to a local stream, square, evil forest or a cross road. She would be stripped naked and shaved in all parts of her body after which she would be washed. She would be led to her house naked (Okoye 42). In spite of the role of Christianity to curb the excesses of these rites, some of the widowhood practices still persist in the contemporary society.

In most parts of Nigeria, a widow is compelled to shave her hair and clad herself in white or may be black from head to toe, for the mourning period which lasts for six months or one year. It may be interesting to note that the widower is not under any such obligation. In addition to being clad in white or black and having shaved her hair, a widow may be required to prove her innocence in the death of her husband. As part of the funeral rites, she is compelled to drink of the water used in washing the corpse of her late husband, thereby confirming that she had in no way contributed to his death, just like Anayo in Ifeoma Okoye's *The Trail and Other Stories*. Among the Emohua people of Rivers State, a "widow is subjected to drinking water used in washing the anus of the corpse so as to ascertain her innocence in her husband's death" (Ibezim 168). It is equally observed that women accept these degrading and

inhuman widowhood practices because refusal to comply will cause them to be ostracized. Their male children will be disinherited of their father's estate. Their daughters and sisters will die as old maids because no man will marry a girl whose mother or sister murdered her husband. In summary, widowhood practices are obnoxious and debasing. The "dethronement", (the widow is compelled to sit on the floor), "defacement", (her hair is clean-shaven and she is not allowed to change her mourning dress) dehumanizing and purification rites and rituals, disinheritance and suspicion (prime suspect as murderer of her husband (Ibezim 167); are detrimental to her physical, emotional and psychological health.

Circumcision

According to Tobe Levin:

Circumcision of the clitoral prepuce is indeed an anatomical possibility, given adequate surgical instruments in a clinical setting. But such a delicate operation is nearly impossible to perform on struggling little girls and women on the cold floor of the bathroom or compound. Nor can it be properly carried out during initiation rites, within a framework of "sex education".
(207)

According to EL Saadawi, circumcision is part of the patriarchal package that involves cutting the sexual organs of female children, especially the clitoris to guarantee their virginity before marriage and their fidelity after marriage. As a medical doctor and a psychiatrist, she emphasizes that female circumcision has nothing to do with the morality of women, it does not make them more monogamous or more faithful to their husbands. On the contrary, cutting the clitoris increases women's sexual desires, for two reasons, because the brain is the main site of sexual desires and because circumcised women have difficulty

reaching sexual satisfaction with their husbands, they look for this satisfaction outside marriage (194).

Nawal El Saadawi records, “my thighs had been pulled wide apart, and that each of my lower limbs was being held by steel fingers that never relinquished their pressure. Then suddenly the sharp metallic edge seemed to drop between my thighs and cut off a piece of flesh from my body. I screamed with pain despite the hand held over my mouth for the pain was not just a pain, it was like a searing flame that went through my whole body. After a few moment I saw a red pool of blood around my hips” (7-8).

Evelyne Accad in her novel, *L’Excisée* equally expresses the horror of the tradition through the narrator, E, a foreigner who is forced to witness the ‘slaughter’ in her home. E narrates in the editor’s translation how:

the women seized the first little girl held her on all sides. They raised her dress and made her sit on a stool that overhung a white basin. They spread her legs apart and exposed her shaved pubic area. The mid-wife separated the Labia majora from the labia minora, whacked off the clitoris and tossed it into the basin. The girl wailed with pain, the blood running. The woman held the girl tighter. The sorceress continued her mutilation. She cut off labia majora, like large ears red with fright, that joined the clitoris in the basin... The little girl’s cries sounded like those of a dog being slaughtered. (121 – 122)

Indeed, the clitoris severed from the body is a telling symbol of female status in phallocratic culture. Once amputation has occurred, no regeneration is possible (Tobe Levin 207). Tradition has made the women to believe that to become a woman, one must accept the knife. When E asks her husband how he can condone his compatriot’s mutilation of women’s “most delicate, most precious

and most important sexual organs”, reminding him that they had originally come together to his country as social revolutionaries, he replies “it’s tradition” (Accad 140). The theme of female circumcision is expressed differently by different African writers. Nuruddin Farah demonstrates a high degree of feminist awareness in tackling the issue of infibulation. The Egyptian physician and activist Nawal El Saadawi renders so sympathetically the initiate’s state of mind during the ‘massacre’. She recalls the rasping metallic sound which reminded her of the butcher when he used to sharpen his knife before slaughtering a sheep. According to her, “the memory of circumcision continued to track me down like a nightmare” (8).

Circumcision, according to Ebikere in Julie Okoh’s *Edewede*:

is part of our culture. My mother was circumcised so also were her grandmother, great grandmothers and great, great grandmothers. It is a rite that every woman in this land goes through. (3)

The playwright reassures that this obnoxious cultural practice is as a result of ignorance and superstition. She equally portrays that the practice is “detrimental to the women folk and froth with all kinds of infections for the women” (Ebo 244). In the words of Edewede; “Circumcision has destroyed many women in this village. They suffer from different types of infections and complications after the operation.”

Quoting, Erialala (Mama Nurse) she (Edewede) reports that:

during circumcision, when the clitoris is being removed; the labia and the surrounding tissues are damaged. The girl suffers from stenosis that is healing, with the narrowing of the birth canal. Later in life, during labour the narrowed birth canal makes it difficult for the baby’s head to come out easily. The baby’s

head is forced to create an opening between the walls of the bladder, urethra and the vagina. If a woman survives, she begins to leak urine because the damaged bladder, urethra or vagina outlet can no longer control the urine. (31)

Although, most female circumcision is culture-oriented, Okoh reassures that women can in a non-confrontational manner fight this war and win it. They should only come together and express their grievance using any weapon that can make men listen to their plight and request. Saadawi deals with the theme of female circumcision from a non-compromised perspective. According to her, circumcision is a permanent and extremely serious violation of integrity that cannot be condoned. In *The River Between*, Ngugi wa Thiongo deals with female circumcision from a humanist point of view and not feminist. The issue serves as a battlefield in the clash between conservative tribal elements and the patriarchal Christian church in Kenya. Female circumcision is equated with the return to traditional kikuyu values, hence resistance to its abolition confirms an oppositional gesture against colonialism (Levin 210).

According to Efua-Graham of Ghana, female circumcision is a very sensitive and political subject tied to complex socio-cultural structure and to underdevelopment. It is directly related to the depressed political and socio-economic position of women in these societies (3). Saadawi believes that, for this deep -rooted custom to be eradicated, “there must be combined efforts to mobilize men, women, youths and children so that they become organized and constitute a political and social power capable of changing the existing patriarchal values and laws” (195). She sums that women should stand firm and reject the medicalization of females circumcision either by safe or unsafe methods, in a mild or in a semi-mild form.

Furthermore, Echendu warns that female circumcision constitutes one of the foremost harmful traditional practices that infringe on the sexual and reproductive rights of women. Women suffer shock, urinary tract infections, hemorrhage and high risk of HIV/Aids (2-3). Okoye sees female circumcision as a violence. She laments that the girl-child watches herself dissected during the excision of the prepuce of the clitoris and even the entire clitoris cut off without any anesthesia. This is outright woman on woman violence occasioned by institutionalized hierarchical female space that makes women victims and collaborators in patriarchal violence. (31). In conclusion, female circumcision symbolizes the subjugation of women and control of female sexuality.

Battery

Battery is the crime of attacking somebody physically. Battery is usually used conjunctively with assault because every battery includes assault. While assault includes verbal abuses, threat to use unlawful forces or pushing, battery involves the actual use of any unlawful force. Women are more vulnerable in their roles as wife, mother or daughter-in-law and such crime transcends class, culture and race. In Africa, assault and battery are reinforced by patriarchal structures and Islamic laws. According to Ibezim, the Penal Code Law (Cap 89 Laws of Northern Nigeria, 1963 third edition), which applies to the sixteen Northern States of Nigeria and is enforced by all the courts ranging from Alkali courts, Magistrate courts to the High Courts:

Nothing is an offence which does not amount to the infliction of grievous hurt upon any person and which is done... by a husband for the purpose of correcting his wife, such husband and wife

being subject to any native law or custom in which such correction is recognized as lawful (285).

This implies that the husband is entitled to beat, flog or apply other disciplinary measures on his wife for the purpose of correction. This depicts the relationship between husband and wife as being comparable to that of a headmaster/pupil or master/slave. A reflection of this is found in El Saadawi's *Women at Point Zero*, where Firdau's aunty-in-law states that her husband beats her, and that their religion permits such punishment, therefore; a virtuous woman should not complain about her husband, her duty is to obey (44).

This implies that women are not protected from assaults and battery. Peni's mother advises her after the husband battered her in Alkali's *The Descendant*:

A little beating from your husband and you run home like a spoilt child, if your mother had run away each time your father had beaten her, would you have been born?... Tell me why you can't remain quiet in your husband's house like other married women. (21)

Wife beating is very common in many African countries and wives often condone such nefarious activities. For instance, Firdaus' father constantly beats his wife in El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, while the wife accepts the daily assault like a virtuous woman. He discriminates against his children even in death. At the death of a daughter, life goes on as usual, but the death of a son provokes him and he punches his wife who willingly submits her body to him which he brutalizes in order to appease his ego and emotions (Eke 179):

When one of his female children died, my father would eat supper, my mother would wash his legs and then he would go to sleep, just as he did every night. When the child that dies is a boy, he would beat my mother, then have his supper and lie down to sleep. (18)

Eugene (Papa), in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, beats Beatrice (Mama) and she loses her pregnancy. He pours hot water on Kambili. His mere presence sparks off the fire of danger that keeps the women under tension and fear. Papa is too cruel, brute, powered by his paranoid fanaticism. With little or no provocation, he attempts to kill his wife, making her spend months, laying on comatose for one and half months at the hospital (249). Mama discloses:

You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly... My blood finished on that floor even he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it. (248)

Mama could only respond to crises by only crying and remaining calm. Ibezim states that repetitive assault and battery is a form of human rights violation that requires national and international actions aimed at enshrining the prohibitions of violence against women in national constitution (289).

Intra Gender Subjugation

The word 'intra' means within or inside while 'gender' is referred to as the fact of being male or female. Gender, however in this context, may as well be used as synonymous with femininity. Intra Gender subjugation therefore is a type of marginalization, intimidation, oppression or sabotage meted on women by their fellow women. The subjugation is within the same sex as against inter gender whereby males oppress females. Intra gender subjugation portrays women as a group suffering from self-inflicted wounds. Justina Okoye states that "in-law especially mothers-in-law are the greatest perpetrators of woman-on-woman violence" (361). Ebekue adds that "numerous young women pass through series of unimaginable abuse and intimidation in the hands of their mothers-in-

law whose overzealous quests to protect their sons make them monsters in dealing with their daughters-in-law” (90). Intra gender marginalization has been evident in Africa as expressed in some fictions.

Albert Isaac, however dismisses the rationale behind men’s sole responsibility for women’s trauma. He asks; who are those that make life difficult for their daughters-in-law? Are they not women, mothers and sisters who pretend to have better knowledge of women than men? (67). Nnaemeka endorses that the oppression of women is not simply a masculinists flaw as some feminist analysts claim, (19). In Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen*, for instance, Adah is deprived of starting school because her mother does not support education of females. It is very obvious that “if not for Ma, Pa would have seen to it that I started school with Boy” (10). The day she sneaks to school, her greatest worry at the end of the school is her mother, because, “Pa would be alright ... but Ma ... she would smack and smack and then nag and nag all day long” (12).

Ojukwu affirms that, women “sometimes not only constitute obstacles to the progress of their fellow women but also partake in the sabotage of other women’s programmes when pressurized with envy and jealousy” (318). When Wazobia, the heroine, in Tess Onwueme’s *The Reign of Wazobia*, ascends the throne as the regent king, the women are the first to complain. Bia expresses doubt in the capacity of women to rule seeing them as a weak vessel who need a man to function properly (Ode 98). Anehe is willing to be used by men to poison the food meant for Wazobia.

Irene Salami-Agunloye observes that in *Saadawi's Women at Point Zero*, also, we see:

a society that is not only oppressive to women, but one in which women also act as oppressive agents towards other women. In an attempt to concretize solidarity amongst women, many feminist writers were initially silent about woman to woman oppression, however, many theorists of African feminism are beginning to draw our attention to the fact that in many African society, women act as oppressive agents to other women especially as co-wives, mother-in-law, older women, step-mothers. (182)

Sharifa, the female pimp, who wields her power over Firdaus and converts her to an unpaid commercial sex worker, is a typical example. Sharifa exploited Firdaus like the previous men in her life. Awua equally admits that “a battle for supremacy among women, mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law contribute to humiliate the wives of their sons and brothers” (138). Women fight their fellow women even when the battle and victory are for the benefit of men (Uto-Ezeajugh 138). Stellamaris Ogbonna, on the same note, grants that:

... it is women, who propagate all these negative socio-cultural expectations against themselves. Women compete with themselves. They are the mother who learn that another woman's daughter married a rich man at 18years and encourage their own daughters to abort their education and do the same. The same women snatch the fellow women's husbands, frustrate their fellow women out of their jobs, and build hostility and spirit of competition amongst themselves. They are the mothers who start to worry and fix marriages for their daughters before they graduate from the University... Mothers are quick to assert cultural values, even against their daughters. (391)

Enejere, on the contrary feels that economic backwardness, ignorance, religious prejudice and obsolete ideas contribute to the problems of women (49). It is

based on poverty that parents will force their daughters like Ogwuoma, in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, to marry a man she does not love simply because Adigwu could afford to pay her bride price which was used to pay her brother's hospital bill (Opara 389). Enejere, therefore, recommends that:

women need to educate their members to read and write, to know their constitutional rights and duties. Women should organize their members into trade unions and form cooperatives to secure loans... women should contest elections in the political parties as well as in various government positions. (50)

Orabueze expresses with disgust, the fact that "a woman loses the right to complain about male domination if she helps to maintain the status quo ante" (99). She can be a contributory factor to her own imprisonment. "The walls of her prison will crack and crumble, if she willingly raises her voice against obnoxious cultural and religious practices, antiquated legislation, and the inimical acts of home and state dictators" (101). To achieve this, Orabueze suggests that, she needs the complement voice of men, because it is very evident that silence in either gender is no longer golden.

Abandonment

According to Florence Orabueze:

abandonment may take the form of the man physically leaving the woman and her children or he may be there but does not fulfill the traditional roles assigned to him as the head of the family or it may even take the two forms. (156)

This is one of the terrible challenges hanging on the neck of the African traditional woman. Barrenness is an avenue through which a woman is betrayed or abandoned in a patriarchal set up. A man may also abandon his wife when she is sick or in difficulty. Adizua for instance left Efuru and eloped with

another rich woman in Nwapa's *Efuru*. Apart from husbands, some sons abandon their parents and other family members, which they owe a duty. Abandonment has a negative implication on wives and children who are mostly the victims. Nnuego, having been abandoned by her husband and children went mad and later died in Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood*.

Polygamy

This is a tradition whereby a man marries more than one wife at a time. During the pre-colonial era, many hands were needed on the farm and the virility of the man is shown through the number of children he has, hence the type of marriage. In the olden days, a man's achievement and social status can be determined by the number of wives he has; Achebe describes Okonkwo as a wealthy farmer with two barns full of yams and had just married his third wife (6). According to Orabueze, the cultural novelists present the rosy side of polygamy; where there is love, peace and harmony in a polygamous home. The head of the family fulfills his responsibilities to his wives and children. He is fair and firm in his treatment to any member of his household. The women know their positions and seniority is respected. The women also love one another as well as the children from co-wives (151).

African female writers on the other hand, project the ugly picture of polygamy. They content that polygamy has failed in the present-day society. With the Western civilization and education, a lot of things have changed. Men do not live up to their responsibilities in their families. Most women fend for their children. There is too much jealousy and competition in polygamous homes.

There is no tolerance. The senior wives will like their rights to be recognized while the younger ones will deny the existence of such rights. Muslim women also decry polygamy. Chioma Opara commends Ramatoulaye's rejection of Daouda Dieng's marriage offer, in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*. She admires Daouda though, she places his wife's feelings and happiness above her own desires. "It is evident that the emulation of Ramatoulaye's stance by all African women would not only put an end to the institution of polygamy but would also open up vistas for the realization of women's thwarted hope" (149).

Trafficking

Trafficking is the movement of vehicles, ships or persons in an area or along a street. Human trafficking is the trade of human beings for the purpose of forced labour and sexual exploitation for the traffickers. It is also a recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, or abduction or deception. Problems associated with poverty, low wages, unemployment, rural underdevelopment and rapid population growth coupled with lack of resources push people into leaving their countries of origin in search of greener pastures. "Poor governance, patronage and corruption, human rights violation, political instability, conflict and civil strife, the real and perceived opportunity for a better life, high income, greater security, better quality education and health care..." (Olusegun 552), contribute to a decision to migrate. Human trafficking has been on the increase in recent times; women and children are the most vulnerable. The modern information technology, communication system and transport infrastructure, encourage this process of migration .

Women are usually trafficked into sex work. The traffickers exploit their trafficked victims, capitalizing on the victims' unfamiliarity of the new environment and limited right to mobility. The trafficked victims most times, lack basic social rights in their host countries because of their status as non-nationals or undocumented workers. The development of modern information technology, communication systems as well as transport infrastructure equally enhance the urge to leave one's country of origin. The demand for the services of nurses, teachers and other domestic workers typically dominated by women contribute to women's migration. On getting to the host country, the working condition of some of these women in domestic and sex trade unfortunately leave them vulnerable to exploitation and slavery especially when migrated through trafficking process. Trafficking is not easy to track because it is outrageously profitable to traffickers. The trafficked victims are often forced to pay debt to their traffickers to earn their release in a most agonizing way. The trafficked victims have no choice but to comply because they have no right to mobility and freedom.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical premise for this study is hinged on feminism. Feminism, which can be described as the organized movement which supports and promotes equality for men and women in political, social and economic issues, has been critically extended into several theoretical schools (Nnolim 135). It encompasses work in variety of disciplines; sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, women studies and literary criticism. Feminist theory aims to understand gender inequalities and focuses largely on gender politics, power

relations and sexuality. It provides a critique of these social and political reactions and focuses on the promotion of women's right and interest. Themes such as discrimination, patriarchy, victimization, sexual oppression are explored in feminist theory.

Eclaine Showalter, an American critic and feminist, describes the phased development of feminist theory. The first phase, she calls "Feminist critique, in which the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind literary phenomena. The second phase is "gynocriticism", in which the "woman is the producer of textual meaning" including the psychodynamics of female language. It also includes "the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career and literary history". The last phase she calls "gender theory", in which the ideological inscription and literary effects of the sex/gender system are explored. This model has been criticized especially by the scholar Toril Moi, who perceives it as an essentialist and deterministic model for female subjectivity and for inconsistencies (Ogunlewe 215).

The feminist movement has produced a lot of feminist fiction and non-fiction and has created a new interest in women's writing. It also prompts a general reassessment of women's historical and academic contributions in response to the assertion that women's life and contributions have been under-represented at areas of scholarly interest. The growth in scholarly interest even warrants the reissuing of long out of print texts by various press such as Virago Press and Pandora Press. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote one of the first works of feminist philosophy *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* which calls for equal

education in 1792 and her daughter, Mary Shelley also became an author best known for her 1818 novel, *Frankenstein*. The Australian feminist, Germaine Greer, publishes *The Female Eunuch* (1970) and this becomes an international best seller and an important text in the feminist movement. In the 1960s and 1970s, authors use the genre of science fiction to explore feminist themes. Notable in this genre are Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1970) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (Nnolim 137).

Apart from the above, several movement of feminist ideologies have over the years developed. For instance Womanism which is the term coined by Alice Walker in her collection of essays titled *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* in 1983. Her first entry describes womanism as the opposite of girlishness (which means frivolous, irresponsible or not serious). Womanism is derived from the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanishly" indicating outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. The four adjectives refer to doing something that is not easy, with strong determination and a lot of motivation. 'Willfulness' is emphasized because for so long, many black women have not been considered to be in possession of their own free wills. Womanism is associated with being responsible and in charge of the fate of black women.

Walker defines womanism in her second entry, by referring to the different types of relationships that can occur between women. Womanists should love other women and cherish their nature. She is not hostile towards men in as

much as she pleads with her women to love one another because of the fact that they are females. Womanism, in fact, supplies a way for black women to address gender oppression without attacking men. She states clearly that womanists are not separatists, but rather traditionally universalists. She illustrates this by means of the metaphor of the garden in which the women and men of different colours coexist like flowers in a garden yet retain their cultural distinctiveness and integrity. There is an indication that tolerance is desired for a peaceful co-existence of both male and female.

In the third entry, she defines a womanist, associatively. She enumerates what womanists love. Womanists love struggle, which probably means that they do not give up too easily in their striving. Walker includes music, dance, love, food and roundness as symbols for the worldly, bodily pleasures in life as well as the moon and the spirit as symbols for the spiritual dimension of our being. The fourth and last entry consists of the statement “womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender” (Walker xii). She indicates that womanist is a synonym for a black feminist. Her reason for the choice of colour purple and lavender is not known. She lays so much emphasis on the beauty. As an ardent feminist, she states that “black women are the most fascinating creations in the world” (Walker 251) regardless of the fact that they are victims of both racism and sexism.

On motherhood, Walker portrays being a mother herself as well as her own mother, whom she associates with flowers.

Like Mem, a character in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, my mother adorned with flowers whatever shabby house we were forced to live in ... whatever she planted grew as if by magic, and her fame as grower of flowers spread over three counties.

Because of her creativity with her flowers, even my memories of poverty are seen through a screen of blooms – sunflowers, petunias, roses, dahlias, forsythia, spirea, delphiniums
(Walker 241)

This image of a garden full of flowers lies as the basis of the title essay, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (which is also referred to as a womanist prose) and has become very important in Walker's womanism as the symbol for her universalist attitude. The theory of womanism is black oriented. The womanists are accommodationists and not separatists. They desire a peaceful co-existence of both men, women and children. They advise black women to address gender related issues without attacking men.

Marie Umeh adds that in a womanist novel, "whereas feminist plots end with the separation of the man and woman... womanist novels are committed to the survival and unity of males and females" (265). Womanism ideals, according to Ogunyemi, are for black unity:

... it wants meaningful union between black woman and black men and black children and will see to it that men will change from their sexist stand. This ideological position explains why women writers do not end their plots with feminist victories. (5)

Nnolim, however laments that "men and women could have lived comfortably with this ideology if restless feminists did not invent more ideologies" (218). Alice Walker's Womanism appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and commitment to the survival and wholeness of both male and female. Walker's approval of lesbian love is however unacceptable to most African women as can be illustrated by Kolawole's assertion:

To the majority of ordinary Africans, lesbianism is a non-existent issue because it is made of self-expression that is completely

strange to their world-view. It is not even an option to millions of African women and can therefore not be the solution..(115)

Kolawale claims that this is one of the “several other issues at the heart of the rejection of feminism, not only by African women but by many Third World and non-Eurocentric women” (15). Clenora Hudson-Weems rejects Walker’s terminology and prefers the term *Africana Womanism*. This, according to her, is more grounded in African culture and therefore focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African woman (Adimora-Ezeigbo 16).

Ogunyemi is the first African critic to use the term ‘womanism’. According to her:

Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom... this philosophy is a mandalic core: its aim is the dynamism of wholeness and a self-healing that one sees in the positive, integrative ending of womanism novels. (72)

Africana Womanism is distinguished from Alice Walker and Hudson-Weem’s brands by its identification with “what Ogunyemi calls the four Cs-Conciliation, Collaboration, Consensus and Complementarity” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 20). Though Ogunyemi advocates an atmosphere of peace and mutual respect between men, women and children, she remains conscious of the fact that men often constitute a stumbling block to women in African patriarchal society; a factor Hudson-Weems seems to overlook in her *Africana Womanism*. Writing about the difficulty women sometimes have in their relationship with men, Ogunyemi adds that husbands oppress women more than fathers, brothers and sons. Her theory of *Africana Womanism* is based on her research into the works of some Nigerian female novelists including Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta,

Ifeoma Okoye, Zaynab Alkali among others. Her theory aims to establish healthy relationships among people, despite ethnic, geographical, educational, gender, ethnic, class, religious, military and political differences (123).

Kolawole confirms that womanism as a theory is “the totality of feminine self-expression, self-retrieval and self-assertion in positive ways” (24). Womanism, according to her, “manifests and enhances African woman’s collective groupings and positive bonding as opposed to ideological bondage” (27). The womanist theory appears to be the most acceptable to most African writers and activities because it has very distinct characteristics emerging from African values. Many African female writers, based on their creation of “strong women confronting destructive traditions but coming to terms with the limits of individuality” (Kolawole 39), are said to be womanists. In whatever form or manner womanism distributes its brand, what is constant in all its shades is the determination of each brand to uplift womanhood and strive towards liberating and emancipating women.

The women in this theory, “associate with men and enjoy a close relationship with them. But it has to be a relationship of equals or partners. Not one between a master and a minion” (Adimora- Ezeigbo 2). Womanists are “religious and have faith in God. They love being women; see themselves as victors, make commitment to men and society and are silent on sex and promote marriage” (Nwaneri 14). They prefer to be seen as victors rather than victims. They desire to be in charge of their own destiny. They do not see men as their primary

enemy and would work hand in hand with the men to ensure stability in the homes and in the overall interest of society (Onuora Bendict Nweke. 201)

Liberal feminism seeks individualistic equality of men and women through political and legal reforms without altering the societal structures. It further propagates the idea that total equality with men (in jobs and pays) must be realized or based on individual skill, expertise and proficiency. Alice Paul, Elizabeth Boyer and Judith Hole are the key proponents of this feminist ideology.

Radical Feminism considers the male-controlled capitalist hierarchy as the defining feature of women's oppression. It argues that Western civilization is patriarchal and therefore seeks the total restructuring of the society as necessary. The major precursor of this is Virginia Woolf the author of *A Room of One's Own* (1929) (Utoh-Ezeajugh 142).

Socialist Feminism connects oppression of women to exploitation and labour. Socialist feminists are trade union oriented and urge for the emancipation of women from sexual abuse. Socialist feminists like Kate O'Hare, Allison Jaggar, Emma Goldman and Christone Obbo are the leading proponents of this.

Cultural feminism believes in making the best of what is biologically endowed with women. A woman is inherently more kind and gentle. The world will be a better place, according to them, if women are given the opportunity to rule. Women uphold interdependence, co-operation, joy and trust while men value independence, hierarchy, competition and dominion. The major advocate is Carol Gilligan (Iyav, Ben Due 253).

Eco Feminism believes in the link between the woman and nature, hence the term Mother Earth. It sees men's control of the land as responsible both for the oppression of woman and the destruction of the environment. It focuses mainly on the mystical connection between woman and nature. The major proponent is Van Dana Shiva. The European and American theorists have written so persuasively for the total emancipation of women and have depended on the merit of logic and legal means to convince men to see reason.

African feminist scholars see feminism of the Western World as alien, hence; the reluctance to embrace it. This is partly because African society is made up of diverse cultures within its diverse regions. What is practiced in one region could be the opposite in another. African feminist scholars believe that African feminism should be founded upon principles of traditional African values that view gender role as complementary, parallel and autonomously linked in the continuity of human life (Adimora- Ezeigbo 13) Looking at feminism as an agent of women liberation, Asigbo and Nwosu imply that:

Feminism, in all its shapes and permutations, is concerned with emancipating women from the supposed shackles of oppression, giving women a place in the scheme of thing and generally mainstreaming them especially into the decision-making policy formulating position.
(20)

Feminism is a broad movement embracing numerous phases of women emancipation. This entails, freedom to decide her own destiny, freedom from sex determined roles, freedom from society oppressive restrictions, freedom to express her thought fully and to convert them freely into action" (Hooks 23).

Justina Okoye equally confirms that African feminism is introduced by African women to address particularly the conditions of women in Africa (64), thus giving rise to such variants like femalism, Stiwanism, Nego –feminism, Gynandrism.

Chioma Opara’s theory of femalism states that:

Femalism, a hue of African feminisms, is a softer tone than liberal feminism and highly polarized from radical feminism. Unlike womanism, which was made popular by Alice Walker and Africanized by Ogunyemi, Femalism, is essentially African and accentuates the body. (18)

Nnolim sees it as a mish –mash, a conflation of undigested ideas about feminism and the female point of view. It urges fellow feminists to raise the consciousness without much opposition to the enemy man, who is tolerated as long as he allows woman opportunities for self-actualization (217). Femalism recognizes the affinity between the peculiar African women question and the beleaguered African condition (Justina Okoye 66).

It is pertinent to mention that feminism as both a movement and ideology has enhanced, in no small measure, the growth of African literature. African feminists have created a livelier consciousness about the significance of women in the society. Their fictional and critical writings have also enriched African literature such that one can freely talk of African feminism in a world where literature is becoming a universal or global phenomenon. They have really tried in creating a woman’s world in which women characters exist in their own right and not as mere appendages to a male world (Horne 120). The voice of African women writers is being heard though according to Nwapa (98) “inaudibly”.

There is no doubt that generally women are better off today than they were at the beginning of this century (Adimora- Ezeigbo 61).

Focu Feminism

The theory of focu-feminism is formulated by Onyeka Iwuchukwu in 2015. The new brand of feminism proposes the need for each woman to focus on herself for liberation from perceived oppression. Iwuchukwu believes it is a panacea for self-assertion and self -actualization for the Nigerian women. It refutes the notion of blaming men, patriarchy and tradition as the only and major source of female oppression. She points out that the feminist attack should be redirected to the real enemy which is the woman herself who hides behind the mask of culture or convention to justify her actions.

Traditionally, the woman's position however, as a second-class citizen is not in doubt. A girl child is constantly reminded to comport herself well and is limited in her desire to explore her environment. A male child is preferred and given privileges. At the national level also, a woman does not enjoy the right and privileges of a citizen on equal basis with her male counterparts especially in terms of appointments to various political positions. These point to the oppression of women by men, but Iwuchukwu interrogates the role of women in the subjugation of women. How many women support a woman in politics who decides to vie for an elective post? When a woman succeeds through hard work in a chosen career, do fellow women not ascribe it to "bottom power" and see such a woman as a stooge? She regrets that women tend to degrade and marginalize themselves. Some women form organizations that reflect their

husbands' lofty social statuses and are proud as appendages to their husbands. Examples of such associations are Police Officers' Wives Association, Army Officers' Wives Association, Legislators' Wives Association etc. Such women portray that their personalities, self-worth and dignity emanate from being the wives of legislators, police or army officers.

Some women use their gender as cheap blackmail. Women sometimes say things like "Is it because I am a woman? Don't you know that you are talking to somebody's wife?" It is a clear endorsement and admittance of an inferior subordinate position as well as the fact that the exalted position of a woman comes from being a wife and not from her abilities and capabilities as a person. At any slightest provocation, some women shed tears and claim they are oppressed because they are women. Such women have also marginalized and degraded themselves and therefore have no right to say they are being marginalized.

Iwuchukwu insists that the feminist fight for rights should also be extended to women who run down fellow women. Although the socio-cultural oppressive structures in most cases are entrenched in the society, but women are usually the agents for implementation. There are other forms of oppression, sabotage and subjugation by women against women that are neither institutionalized nor forced on women by men, culture or tradition. For instance, who forces the unkind and sometimes abhorring relationships some women have with their maids, sisters, mothers, daughters, sisters-in-law, mothers-in-law? Should men, tradition or patriarchy be held responsible for these? Iwuchukwu depicts that "a

woman is usually responsible for most broken homes either as a mother-in-law, sister-in-law or the other woman outside, who edges herself in eventually” (13). Some women are sustainers of ignoble and oppressive factors against other women either as primary agents, conspirators or willing instruments. The fact that none of the numerous shades of feminist theories tackle the role of women in the perceived oppression resulted to the birth of focu-feminist.

It posits that oppression is oppression, subjugation is subjugation and marginalization is marginalization. None is superior to the other. The concept of focu-feminism tends to reduce intra-gender subjugation to the barest minimum. It postulates that the society is dynamic and cultures evolve as they undergo transformation. This means that the obnoxious cultural practices will eventually fade away. The woman is enjoined to ... journey into self, see what fruit it bears (because) true knowledge lies deep within the self” (1). This journey into self will enhance the woman’s understanding of her strengths and weaknesses, to accept who she is, what she wants, what she can do to be able to face her challenges and succeed. Each woman’s oppression is peculiar and should be addressed differently. Each woman should therefore try to acknowledge her challenges first and devise survival strategies. She should also study the disposition of her oppressors to enable emancipation.

Focu-feminism counters collectivism in the drive for women emancipation, not only that it has the potential of being subverted by some women to exploit others, but because challenges differ and therefore no one concept can take care of all the problems affecting women in their various homes, work places and

communities. It is difficult to create a monolithic voice for the expression of the female experience. Instead of waiting for a feminist movement to help, each woman should try to identify her problems and tackle it based on her abilities and circumstances. If each woman gets it right, the family would be right and the nation would be better because her well-being and that of her family rest squarely on her shoulders. The solution lies in the ability of each woman to resolve to work for her progress and the well-being of people around her.

Focu-feminism sees positive bonding emphasized by womanism as unrealizable in a highly capitalist society. It argues that no positive bonding can easily exist between rich women and their poorer counterparts, rural and urban women, junior and senior women members of staff, the mistress and her maid, police/army officers' wives and the wives of ordinary ranks to mention but a few. There may be however, at one point or the other, where a woman requires an assistance of other women.

On the issue of equality of men with women, Iwuchukwu counters that there can never be any type of equality between men and women or between any two individuals. A man is a man and a woman is a woman. There are things a man can do and a woman cannot do and vice versa. The focus on equality should be on specific issues such as promotion to higher posts in organizations, representation in government, appointment to higher positions based on merit and not on gender.

Iwuchukwu summarizes that it is worrisome that women suffer from various forms, shades, shapes and magnitudes of oppression, which do not come from

men and institution alone; but also, from women who sometimes are the perpetrators of these acts as primary agents or willing instruments. Women marginalization by women is as torturous as any other form of oppression. Unfortunately, the African feminist critics seem to overlook it and most times the perpetrators walk away unpunished and their fellow female victims suffer silently.

This issue has not been specifically tackled and the consequences of the heinous crime tend to hold long time negative effects on the unprotected victims. She recommends that women should embark on some money yielding ventures to help themselves. The great need for self-assertion and empowerment will definitely enhance her liberation. Finally, focu-feminism underscores the need for women to put their houses in order- the theory focuses on self, if each woman focuses on herself, undertakes self-examination and soul-search and works towards her well-being and that of other women, female subjugation may be minimized.

Snail Sense Feminism

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo formulated this theory in April, 2012. The model is as a result of an in-depth investigation in the condition of Nigerian women, their reaction and response to socio-cultural and political forces that impacted and still impact on their lives in the past and in contemporary times. “Snail sense feminism is more realistic, practical and functional” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 26) than all other theories formulated over the years on feminism, as the problems women experience still persist. This theory has undergone some modification

involving the principles of shared value which encourage “one to be tolerant, to imbibe the virtues of negotiation, give and take, compromise and balance” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 26). It is derived from the habit of snails. The snail crawls over boulders, rocks, thorns, crags and rough terrains smoothly and efficiently with a well lubricated tongue that is not destroyed by the harsh objects. Women are employed to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards men. The Igbo people say:

Ire ome ka ejula ji aga n’ogwu – meaning “The snail crawls over thorns with a fine and well lubricated tongue”. Moreover, the snail carries its house on its back without feeling the strain. It goes wherever it wishes in this manner and arrives at its destination intact. If danger looms, it withdraws into its shell and is safe. This is what women often do in our society to survive in Nigeria’s harsh patriarchal culture (27).

The snail may not be a strong creature physically and can be crushed easily, yet it mounts fences, climbs up and down rocks, thorny and spiky surface with ease. It does not confront objects but negotiates its way past any obstacle. Women may imitate this wise, sensitive, resilient and determined creature to be able to survive in a society that devalue women. This is because:

no matter how gifted a woman is, no matter her ingenuity and political exploits, she can only be recognized in the society as a good and caring mother. Any other ambitious image a woman portrays outside this stereotype model earns her derogatory names like iron lady, domineering lady, or even the Biblical notorious name –Jezebel. (Nwosu 2)

The women should learn survival strategies to be able to overcome some of the impediments before them. They should not see this as a weakness or cowardice but rather a way of strategizing to complement the man and join forces with him for the benefit of all. Adimora- Ezeigbo suggests that a good education will be an added advantage for women. If a woman is educated, the family in particular

and the country in general are educated and empowered. Women cannot be empowered unless they have access to good education.

During the pre-colonial and colonial era, most women use this theory in their interactions with people in their communities. Looking at some of the issues that confront women in Nigeria like childlessness, male child preference:

our ancestors in Igbo land adopted the options of ‘female husband’ and male daughter to ease the pain and get around the ‘problem’ of not having a male child and solve the ‘problem’ of inheritance. In this way they were able to secure the family investment and properties ... (Adimora- Ezeigbo 31)

In the contemporary society, Christianity frowns at such practices and condemns polygamy. Most Islamic feminists equally decry polygamy. What can be done to tackle the situation? Adoption or Vitro-fertilization? How do young working mothers negotiate with their husbands to share the burden of housekeeping and childcare? How does a young wife who is also a mother run her home and keep her job when child-minders or domestic helps are hard to come by? How can she cope? This is where snail-sense feminism makes sense (Adimora-Ezeigbo 33). The woman has to negotiate with her husband. It is pertinent to point out that dialogue or negotiation, most times, is more effective in achieving success in human relations than confrontation. The ability of the snail to smoothen rough surfaces to enable it to make movement easy is what matters most.

The theory lays much emphasis on individual success and development. The individual must empower herself before she can empower others. If a woman succeeds, the success of the family follows naturally. Many scholars however,

criticize that the snail in Adimora-Ezeigbo's theory is a sluggish creature and therefore should not be a good yard stick of a symbol worthy of emulation in women's struggles for emancipation. Some critics argue that African women need to be vocal and revolutionary in their demand for equity and justice in their society. They believe that it will definitely be difficult to achieve the emancipation without being confrontational. After all, there is always a trace of revolt and revolution in every struggle against oppression. In fights, for instance, there are elements of force applied and quarrels do not occur in low undertones or bedroom voice. Thus, the struggles against patriarchal oppression should be sweetened with a pinch of radical salt (Molly Chilwa 105).

Finally, Adimora-Ezeigbo assures that special attributes of snail-determination, effective skills and sensitivity have nothing to do with its speed of movement. With these qualities, the snail overcomes all its obstacles. In same manner, African women are implored "to be wise, sensitive and proactive in their quest for justice and self-actualization" (37). Emancipation should not be a fight for equality with men through the "dishing out of blows and slaps". It cannot also be achieved through hatred of anything that has to do with men or throwing them out of their political offices and occupying their positions. "The ability to tolerate and incorporate differences, spells a step forward in the pursuit of equality, the dethroning of patriarchy and bringing about a cessation of the subjugation of females" (Molly Chilwa 107). Snail sense feminism advocates discretion and diplomacy by women in the pursuit of self-actualization.

The Theory of Motherism:

Catherine Acholonu's most influential work in Women Studies is *Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism* (1995), also described as "Africa's Alternative to Western Feminism". According to Catherine Acholonu, the term motherism is:

A multi-dimensional theory which involves the dynamics of ordering, re-ordering, creating structure, building and rebuilding in cooperation with mother nature at all levels of human endeavor. (110-111)

As an African feminist theory, it portrays the relationship of a woman in terms of reproduction and child-care. The main focus of the study is the relationship in the family and duties of a mother in the home. The bond between a mother and her child is emphasized. This is based on the fact that they have an edge over the men by virtue of carrying the child in their womb for nine months. They are also biologically endowed with breast milk. Motherism advocates "love, tolerance, service and mutual cooperation for the sexes, not antagonism, aggression, militancy or violent confrontation" plus "protection and defence of family values" (111-112).

Acholonu is of the opinion that women are not marginalized by men as claimed by Western writers and some African feminists. According to her, Western writers are not aware that Africa is a big continent made up of diverse cultures within its diverse regions. What is practiced in one region could be the opposite in another. She encourages personal upliftment through education and economic independence for women. She believes that a rich and educated woman who is outspoken, hardworking and fearless can hardly be oppressed by any member of

the society. Some scholars, however, criticise that the population of the group so described by Acholonu is small and as such, might not influence much change in female subjugation.

Unlike Radical feminism, which tends to use violent language springing from a radical ideology to antagonize men, motherism and womanism share similar values based on tolerance, mutual cooperation, love and service (Ezeajugh 141). African female writers have one common course; to liberate and emancipate women but their methods differ as none of them sticks to a particular conception of feminism. The motherist argues strongly that the greatest power of the woman is her reproductive power and should not be tampered with. To them African women are only 'faithfully' attending to their naturally ordained responsibilities (Ode 82). Opinions are divided amongst African feminist theorists, whether African women are actually marginalized or not. While one group sees the oppression and the need for emancipation, the other argues that women are rather faithfully performing the obligations legally, religiously and socially assigned to them. This is unlike the Western feminist theorists who have a uniform view that women are oppressed because of their sex and based on the dominant ideology of patriarchy, this view is not challenged by any other theory in the Western society. The issue of disagreement in the African setting, may have attributed to some misconceptions while some fight for emancipation, others betray their efforts and run other women down.

Catherine Acholonu advises that African feminism should “concern itself with the problems of the African continent, the starving children, the roles of women as mothers” (Awua 139). In her view:

African feminism must define its priorities and restrict the ideology of gender welfare that has been imposed upon it by Eurocentrics. This is an unfortunate distraction that removes attention from the real issues at stake....(107)

Acholonu’s ideology “counters the ideas of feminism and works within the popular gender roles and expectations that circulate Nigeria’s patriarchal society” (Ezeigbo 22). Some scholars, however, criticize Acholonu’s theory of motherism, which excludes urban women, and projects “rural women as the ideal motherist – innocent, unspoilt, unsophisticated in her world view, her thinking and her way of life” (120).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Review of General Literature on Female Oppression by Patriarchy

This section contains relevant contributions and criticisms previously done by some scholars on gender issues and concerns pertaining to this study.

Des Obi Obioma and Boniface Ifesinachi Ogbenna investigate “Women Issues: Violence against Women in Africa—An Exposition”. The purpose of the paper is to expose some of the areas of violence and its physical, physiological and spiritual impact on womanhood. To carry this out effectively, the researchers trace the history of violence against women which is tied to the history of tradition and religion. Using various literary texts, they explain with examples the meaning and types of violence against women. The reasons and effect of the

violence are also highlighted. The researchers recommend economic empowerment of women through education, employment or skilled labour which will accord them more dignity. The relationship between this study and the present study lies in their similar desire to achieve emancipation.

“Gender Violence: A Comparative Study of Mariama Ba’s *Un Chant ecarlate* and Akachi Adimora- Ezeigbo’s *The Last of the Strong Ones*”, is a study by Okoye Justina which x-rays how patriarchy breeds segregation and conflicts, fosters discrimination and sanctions marital violence against women. The paper also reviews different types of gender violence and their resultant impacts on women. The researcher observes that patriarchy uses violence against women as a legal tool to subjugate women and uphold men’s dominance over them. She points out that female discrimination starts from birth and continues till the rest of their lives. The second-class status allotted to the female gender, resign them to the dictates of culture. Like other scholars, the researcher supports that female subjugation has its source in religion and tradition. While a seventeen year old Chibuka, in Ezeigbo’s *The Last of the Strong Ones*, is reprimanded seriously for sharing in the jokes of the elderly people, Mireille, Ba’s heroine in *Un Chant ecarlate*, is assaulted and driven away from home for marrying Ousmane.

The effect of the violence is portrayed through some characters from the texts under study. When Mireille finds out that her husband got married to Ouleymatou and they have secretly set up another family, she becomes frustrated, poisons their only son (Gorgui) and attempts to kill her husband.

Ejumnaka, another female character in *The Last of the Strong Ones* also pays violence with violence by liberating herself from the oppressions and humiliations of her aged husband. In line with the present study, the researcher reviews women as victims and collaborators in patriarchal violence. Yaye Khady, Mirreille's mother-in-law rejects Mirreille and becomes very hostile. Ouleymatou also compounds issues and inflicts pain on Mirreille. She has illicit affairs with Mirreille's husband and later marries him. Ejumnaka on the other hand is harassed by her mother for deserting her old husband who illtreats her. In conclusion, she suggests that African female writers should expose and look into other types of violence used by patriarchy to subjugate women in matters of decision making and policy implementation.

Orabueze Florence carries out a research on "Womanhood as a Metaphor for Sexual Slavery" (29-72). The purpose of the study is to portray that despite the provisions made by the United Nations Organization, to protect women all over the world, the African woman is still subjected to discrimination. She is at the bottom of the scale and oppressed by virtually every member of the society. She therefore commends the African female writers who produce counter-hegemonic texts in pursuit of the freedom of the African woman. These writers use recurrent themes like motherhood, marriage, widowhood, polygamy, prostitution, child-trafficking, childlessness and widow inheritance to condemn the derogatory attitude towards the African woman.

She examines Nawal El Saadawi's *Women at Point Zero* to reveal the lowest point of African womanhood in Egypt. According to her:

The Egyptian woman is synonymous with sexual slavery. She is a sex toy in the manipulative hand of every male in her society. She is sexually defiled, raped, abused, assaulted and battered as a daughter or vagabond or lover or wife or employee or prostitute or as an accused. (33)

The writer uses Firdau's family to show the relationship between the male and female members of her society which could be best described as master/slave relationship. The women folk either as a wife or daughter do the slave labour for sustenance of the larger family, while the men do little or nothing. Orabueze laments that women are not paid for their labour despite the physical and emotional turbulence they are subjected to. The withholding of economic empowerment from the women, according to her, becomes a symbol of their continual humiliation and subjugation; because without money, the women have no power and no freedom but to continue in slavery.

Marriage in the novel, according to her is a metaphor for sexual slavery, degradation of womanhood which the experiences of all the married female characters testify. For instance, Firdau's mother's marriage is a disaster. "she does all the work in the house, satisfies the man's sexual urge, stays without food, washes the husband's feet, yet, she is battered whenever any of the husband's domestic animals or one of the sons dies" (52). Firdaus insists that the lowest status of a woman is wifedom because she is totally enslaved and emasculated by the husband. A married woman is more devalued than a daughter, vagabond, prostitute or a female employee. Her labour and sexuality are exploited without payment.

Islamic religion is used as a mask for the degradation of the populace. Firdaus confirms that only men are seen in Friday morning prayers in her village. She also contends that only the men are headliners in newspapers and magazines, the women are never discussed as they are mere concubines. Orabueze concludes that women are truly subjugated and enslaved in the African cultural milieu. In offices, junior female workers are subjected to sexual harassment. They are sex objects who offer their body to guarantee they would not be treated unfairly, discriminated against, transferred or sacked. While wandering in the street, they find themselves in the same state of confusion as when they are in their father's houses. In their matrimonial homes, the married women are degraded and oppressed, their husbands batter them and the precepts of Islamic religion, according to Firdau's uncle's wife, permits such punishment.

Gloria Eme Worguji conducts a study on "Male Child Syndrome in Selected Fiction of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo". The paper examines the predicament of a childless woman in the Igbo traditional society as expressed in Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected literary texts. The study reveals that it is compulsory to have children in marriage in Igbo society. The birth of children especially of male children, places the woman in a higher social status and lack of children is the root of her other deprivations, hence the craving for more children. The male child is the determinant of a wife's ultimate acceptability in her family. The researcher queries why so much importance should be attached to male children to the detriment of the female children. Why should an industrious woman like Eagle woman in Ezeigbo's *House of Symbols* be humiliated because she does not have a male child? Despite her strength, wealth and uncommon attributes,

her mother-in-law refers to her as “*Okenkwu*” (a male palm tree) and warns Osai; “my son, do not permit an “*Okenkwu*” to grow in your farmland” (101). Womanism is adopted for her analysis. The researcher resolves that motherhood should be respected but female subjugation associated with childlessness or not having a male child should be discountenanced. Children of both sexes should receive equal regards and treatments. The study suggests that motherhood alone cannot ensure joy for a woman, hence the need to widen her horizon beyond motherhood role.

In his contribution towards total emancipation of the African woman, Onuora Benedict Nweke argues in his study, “Deconstructing Womanism and Denigrating the Male Sex in Akachi Adimora -Ezeigbo’s *Children of the Eagle*”, that *Children of the Eagle* lack the basic principles of womanist theory. The study identifies that in the bid to create assertive female characters, the author just like some other African female writers, end up creating rebels whose desire is to subvert the intension of their creators. Mutual relationship between the sexes, as womanism advocates, becomes almost impossible because of the aggressive nature of the female characters and their hatred for men. The study highlights how male characters are castigated, vilified and designated in the text which goes against the tenets of womanism ideals. Among the ridiculed male characters are Amos, who gladly takes care of the compound, the naive and ignorant Ikechi, Nicholas, a poor stroke victim, Basil, another house boy, unambitious Okon, Captain Lanre Roberts and Major Ibrahim Audu who date young secondary school girls (one of whom impregnates Obioma). The good

males are the dead ones like Pa Josiah (who they pay homage annually at his graveside) and the very old men like Simon and Joe.

The intelligent, vibrant and responsible men are carefully avoided. The researcher concludes that dialogue, and peaceful co-existence between both sexes will be impossible to be achieved with the class of weak, mad, old, irresponsible and greedy men of Umuga. Therefore, in accordance with womanist ideology and Snail Sense feminism, the principles of complementarity and mutual respect for both sexes should be encouraged.

Mbye, B Cham, in her study on “Contemporary Society and the Female Imagination” (89-129), discovers that abandonment in African novels is predominantly a female condition. It usually comes up when a third partner is deceptively introduced into a marriage. It is both physical and psychological and transcends class, race and ethnicity. The study seeks to highlight the problems associated with abandonment using Mariama Ba’s selected novels. In Ba’s *So Long a Letter*, Ramatoulaye is abandoned by Modou Fall after twenty-five years of marriage in favour of Binetou while Jacqueline, an Ivorian, is abandoned by her Senegalese husband, Samba Diack. In Ba’s *The Scarlet Song*, Mireille, the white French lady, who disregards her parents’ opinion and commits sacrilege against both race and class by marrying a Senegalese Ousmane Gueye, is also abandoned. Ramatoulaye reluctantly accepts the situation and suffers in silence, Jacqueline becomes depressed while Mireille goes insane, kills her baby and tries to kill her husband. At the end of the study, the researcher finds out that the process of abandonment is reinforced by some

mistress' (lover) quest for materialism and the antagonistic roles of some mothers-in-law. The paper concludes that some women deliberately and maliciously sabotage the happiness of other women. In the process of abandonment, the roles of some women especially mothers-in-law convey the impression that women are the primary culprits. This concept is similar to the present study.

Molly Chilwa carries out a research on "Patriarchy versus Womanism: Rethinking Womanist Theorization", (100 -129) to ascertain the effectiveness of womanist ideology in various attempts to abrogate patriarchal structures. The study evaluates the controversy between patriarchy and African Womanism. Generally, the "liberated" Nigerian woman is better than her pre-colonial and colonial counterparts. She has the benefit of formal education, and choice of who she marries, subject to her parents' approval. Though she may be battered by her husband, depending on his temperament, and also be sexually harassed sometimes by her boss at work yet her wifely cultural virtues remain patience, tolerance and silence.

Using the protagonists in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected literary texts to project female liberation, the researcher observes that, the modern Nigerian woman asserts her emancipation through the feminist ideology called Womanism. While patriarchy is strictly associated with dominance, aggression, headship and mastership, womanism is merged with submission, obedience, servitude and silence. The heroines therefore, seem to showcase the incompatibilities of the womanist ideologies and patriarchal structures. They

subvert the patriarchal order. They move out of unhappy marriages, reject levirate marriages and refuse to honour their parental wishes of marriage partners. They advance through education and sustain their family units. In assessing African women's liberation, she concludes that patriarchal norms are still incompatible with womanist ideologies. The struggle continues until the goals of harmony and reciprocity are achieved.

In presenting patriarchy as one of the cultural structures that imprison women and violate them by denying them their rights, Praise Chidinma Daniel-Inim (223-235) conducts a study on "Battle against Patriarchy". The aim of the paper is to instruct women to dismantle patriarchal traditions against them and stand on the once forbidden grounds of societal freedom. The researcher uses Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Out of the Mask* to accomplish her goal. The researcher's mission is well reflected through heroines who decry and challenge the pride of patriarchy. The women wearing the mask symbolically instructs the African woman that what she so much dreads for years is nothing but costume and make up, which could be worn by anybody irrespective of sex. The action of the four girls depicts a clarion call for women to stop shying away from patriarchy but to rather arm themselves and fight for their emancipation from the social dictates that debase them. This study in line with the present study aims to bring female subjugation to a final stop.

In a similar study, Fatima Binta Ibrahim's "Echoes of Matriarchy: Patriarchy as Negative Contestants in Selected Nigerian Literature" investigates the concepts of patriarchy and matriarchy. While patriarchy is the male domineering

tendencies to rule women, matriarchy is a reaction or struggle by women to be domestically, financially and economically independent.

Using sociological framework, she examines the theories of matriarchy and patriarchy as treated in selected novels. Patriarchy and matriarchy are two antagonizing concepts that need scholars' attention. Matriarchy and patriarchy are the socio-cultural realities that spell out or demarcate gender roles. They indicate the division of labour in the stereotyped society. The researcher portrays matriarchy as a revolutionary gender role in some texts under study. In *Efuru* and *Idu* for example, Nwapa creates protagonists who are rich, despite the rural setting of Ugwuta. Efuru, as a result of affluence disobeys the traditional norms and elopes with Adizua without the payment of her bride price. The researcher believes that Nwapa purposely does that to bring about gender equity. Efuru acknowledges the traditional payment of bride price but she also believes that poverty or failure to pay should not prevent the marriage of two lovers. Payment of bride price, above all, is perceived as one of those traditional structures that subjugate, victimize and compel women to be submissive.

Moreover, while women are made to bear the brunt of childlessness in the African society, Ojiugo in Nwapa's *Idu* exposes her husband's impotence by having a child for his friend. Amarajeme, who couldn't bear this, commits suicide. This cleverly depicts that childlessness could be caused by either the wife or the husband. The researcher concludes that any gender role whether indicated by patriarchy or matriarchy that becomes a barrier to women's self-actualization and the realization of their full potentials should be removed.

Emmanuel Ejiofor Ebo explores “Cultural Challenges and Women Liberation in Nigeria” (236 – 248). Women struggle to be liberated from subjugation, oppression and obnoxious cultural practices that are still rampant and help put them in bondage. Using Zulu Sofala’s *Wedlock of the Gods* and Julie Okoh’s *Edewede*, the study seeks to expose the evil cultural practice in the traditional societies. Zulu Sofola, in her womanist approach, presents, a young widow Ogwoma, who revolts against forced marriage. Ogwoma uses a radical approach for her emancipation. While trying to set herself free from the shackles of the obnoxious culture, she breaks the law and suffers with her lover for their impatience and rebellion. The researcher makes it clear that poverty is the major reason for forced marriages, because the bride price is used to solve financial problems in the family. The concept of widow inheritance is equally highlighted. Julie Oko in her *Edewede* reflects female circumcision as one of the cultural practices that has terrible health implications. Edewede in *Edewede* wins her emancipation against female circumcision without being violent and confrontational like Ogwoma. The researcher concludes that women liberation should be a positive action rather than confrontational or radical approach. It suggests that women activists should concentrate on the eradication of the evil cultural practices rather than struggle for equality with men.

Discussing female circumcision, Tobe Levin (205 – 218) portrays women as the scapegoats of the tradition. He explains the horror of the tradition through ‘E’, a foreigner forced to witness the ‘slaughter’ in Evelyne Accad’s *L’Excisee*. He sees mutilation as an atrocity that should be abolished. While blaming the

tradition for retaining the terrible cultural practice, it also frowns at the attitudes of the women that helps perpetuate the female circumcision.

Carole Boyce Davies in “Motherhood in the Works of Male and Female Igbo Writers” (241-255) examines mothers and motherhood in the works of four writers: two male authors (Achebe and Nzekwu and two female novelist’s Nwapa and Emecheta). Its analyses center on motherhood because motherhood is very crucial to a woman’s status in the African traditional society. To marry and mother a child (preferably a son) earns a woman more respect from her husband’s kinsmen. Every woman in African fictions makes various attempts to ensure conception to avoid being displaced. While the female writers present the details of the woman’s experience of motherhood – its joys and pains, the male writers depict both womanhood and motherhood within the context of the larger societal problems. Various types of mothers are projected by the four novelists. While Chinua Achebe presents motherhood as a symbolic representation of tradition and Africa, Onuora Nzekwu in his *Highlife for Lizards*, brings out a positive female image in Agom but several stereotypical presentations of other women. In dealing with motherhood Nwapa titles some of her works with the names of her heroines indicating strictly what the fiction is all about. While Efuru is portrayed as beautiful, wealthy but childless, Nnuego in Buchi Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* is presented as a mother who is a slave to her children and tradition. The study resolves at the end that motherhood is one of the routes to woman’s potential enslavement. Children are not the only source of joy to their mothers. Alternative means of happiness may be chosen by women, they are not limited totally to childbearing.

“The Prison of Nigerian Woman: Female Complicity” in Sefi Atta’s *Every Thing Good Will Come*”, is another study by Florence Orabueze designed to enhance achievement of a desired gender justice. She likens women’s world to a prison with its dos and don’ts. Enitan, the heroine believes that the struggle for total emancipation should be sweetened with a pinch of radical salt. The study points out that women bear the burdens of childlessness, gender roles and stereotypes, polygamy, motherhood, male child preference, quest for an heir, lack of love in the male/female relationship, infidelity, widowhood practices, traditional system of inheritance, that negatively affect only the women, widow inheritance and the unfair treatment given to Nigerian girls at all levels of education- from primary to tertiary. The woman’s ill treatment in her places of work and homes, the role of religious institutions and a culture that demands silence from a married woman especially over her husband’s sexual escapades, humiliate women and cause them heart aches in their incarceration. The researcher concludes that the Nigeria woman lives in a prison. Her attitude, silence and admittance of the gender roles reinforce the walls of her prison. She therefore recommends, struggle and protest for a desired gender justice to be achieved.

A similar study by Florence Orabueze “The Feminist Crusade Against Violation of Woman’s Fundamental Human Rights” reflects the continuing marginalization of African women using Mariama Ba and Buchi Emecheta’s literary texts. The study shows that the religious and cultural structures still remain the major source of woman subjugation. At the end of the discussion, the study reveals that the most effective method of pulling down the walls

erected by society to cage women is to be resourceful despite all odds and walk out of any polygamous or sour marriage.

In the contribution towards total emancipation of African women, Emma Ibezim interprets violence against women as a violation of their human rights and examines possible legal strategies for protecting them. The study observes that violence is located more within the home environment. The husband who is supposed to be her companion oppresses her more than any other member of the society. The law and the society do not protect her. The researcher posits that violence against women is a human rights violation and therefore, deserves a national and international attention. Effective implementation by the courts of the human right norms should be a sine quo non for the legal protection of women. The study recommends that the socio-psychological strategies be deployed to combat violence against women. Psychological clinics or counselling centers should be established to give legal advice to battered woman and other victims. The government, feminists and activists should embark upon widespread campaigns against the ills of wife assaults, beatings and domestic violence.

Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, in her study, “Nigerian Female Playwrights and the Evolution of a Literary Style: Gendered Discourse in the Plays of Tess Onwueme, Irene Salami-Agunloye and Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh”, examines the evolved literary styles of Nigerian female playwrights. The researcher highlights the gradual shift from gender discrimination to interrogating the dual role of women as both the oppressed and the agents of oppression. In x-raying

drama as an instrument in the emancipation and development of African woman, the study reveals that the female playwrights have evolved a literary style that adequately articulates the plights of African woman from the past to the contemporary society.

The researcher identifies three major stages and shifts in the thematic preoccupation of a woman-centred drama. The first stage in the evolution, according to her, exposes and condemns cultural and religious structures that subject women to deprivations and slavery. Zulu Sofola, Tess Onwueme, Julie Okoh, Irene Salami-Agunloye and Utoh-Ezeajugh's selected literary texts belong to this stage. The plays in this stage are thematically hinged on cultural concerns and belief ranging from forced marriage, female circumcision, clash of tradition and modernity, ridiculous cultural impositions, intimidation and molestation of the female folk. The playwrights at this stage, therefore through their medium, encourage abolition of such obnoxious cultural practices.

The second stage tilts away from the old order to the new era of exposure to Western civilization, education, politics and economic empowerment. Everything changes including the instrument of subjugation. The women in Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing* for instance are relegated to the position of ordinary dancers at rallies. Their major role is to vote but not to be voted for. The playwrights hence encourage women to be independent, hardworking and determined. This is achieved through identifying their potentials that would engender their empowerment. The drama of this era is thus tagged the drama of social transformation, political awareness, cultural emancipation and economic

empowerment. The third stage in line with the present study, discovers a deepening crack in the walls of women alliances which hinder a desired gender justice. The researcher therefore recommends female-bonding, sisterhood, empathy and love devoid of envy and incessant quarrels which have kept women disunited to the advantage of patriarchy.

Discussing some measures that will expunge the negative patriarchal practices in Nigerian culture, Ngozi Ezenwa-Ohaeto examines patriarchal practices in Nigeria culture and how they could be eradicated using children's literature. The study posits that the principles of early childhood education should be the best strategy towards elimination of the patriarchal structures. The researcher suggests that the children should be exposed early enough to children's literature that portrays stories with decent and polite language that is gender sensitive and capable of reforming the mind. Writers of children's literature should create female characters who have achieved greatness through education, hard work or self-actualization rather than debauchery. She concludes that if children's literature include gender equality, eradication of obnoxious traditional structures, tenets of good relationship, negative effects of gender roles and preference in their themes, the children will imbibe these values and perceive them as part of their developmental experiences.

Chimamanda Adichie in "We Should All Be Feminists" calls for a recreation of a fairer and happier world where happier men and women are truer to themselves and not weighed down by gender expectations. She argues that despite western civilization, peoples' idea of gender has not evolved much. A

man is as likely as a woman to be intelligent, innovative and creative. He can be physically stronger than a woman, but physical strength may not be the necessary attribute for survival or leadership. Girls are policed and commended for virginity while boys are not, though the loss of virginity is a process that involves two persons of opposite genders. An unmarried lady is seen as a failure while a bachelor who is even older is not. The language of marriage is often a language of ownership rather than partnership. Adichie posits that culture is dynamic and therefore, certain gender roles and perceptions should be revisited, after all culture does not make people, it is the other way round. She therefore suggests we should all be feminists and a feminist according to her is “a man or woman who says yes there’s a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better. All of us, women and men, must do better”. (48)

Ngozi Ezenwa-Ohaeto, in her research on “Linguistic Predetermination of Conjugal Status of Igbo Women” discovers that some philosophical ideologies expressed in the linguistic repertoire of Igbo world-view serve as agents that depreciate the Igbo women and render them less significant than their male counterparts. Through proverbs, the people’s ideologies are naturalized as social conventions. Such proverbs like – *Mma/ugwu nwanyi bu di* (Husband or marriage is the prestige/beauty of a woman), *Di bu ndo nwanyi* (Husband or marriage is a woman’s shield), *nwanyi gafee onyemuru, a juba onye na-anu* (At a point in a woman’s life the question is no longer ‘who is the father but who is the husband’) imply that a woman’s worth, achievement, status depends solely on her lifelong attachment to a man. The linguistic situation is not restricted to marriage alone. It is so entrenched in the traditional society that women often

are made to willingly participate in their own oppression. While a widow is compelled to shave her hair during her mourning period, by *umụada*, none insists on a widower shaving his own hair during his mourning period. Whereas *umụada* insist that a widow should drink *miliozu* to prove her innocence over the death of her late husband, no group insists that a widower does same, in fact a man is never a prime suspect of the murder of his late wife.

The research calls for a re-creation of Igbo linguistic expressions that will accord women a pride of place in a patriarchal society. Some Igbo proverbs depict equal treatment of both sexes. For instance, *Ugwu bu nkwanye nkwanye* (respect is reciprocal), *Nwa mụọ emegbuna nwa mmadụ, ma nwa mmadụ emegbuna nwa mụọ* (Let the spirit not maltreat the human and vice versa. Golden rule), *E mee nwata ka emere ibe ya, obi adị ya mma* (if a child is given the same treatment as his/her peer, he becomes happy). These proverbs portray unity, harmony, trust and not subjugation nor dichotomy. The study suggests that the use of such archaic linguistic expressions that promote female marginalization should be discouraged.

Chinwe Ezeifeke and Ifeyinwa Ogbazi in their research “You’re Responsible for His Death: Widowhood in Igbo Gender Construction and Struggle for Agency in Selected Literary Texts”, examine the construction of widowhood in the traditional Igbo society. The study applies four research models – critical discourse analysis, Halliday’s systemic functional grammar, Fairclough’s tri-dimensional social theory of discourse and insights from feminism. The

researchers' methodology is three-fold. This intends to identify the linguistic features that encode widowhood construction; to interpret these features and to explain their motivations and implications. Using three literary texts, the researchers explore the sufferings of widows in the domestic and public spheres as a result of widowhood construction in the Igbo culture. The two stories from Ifeoma Okoye's *The Trial and Other Stories* entitled 'Soul Healers' and 'The Trial' give an insight into how widows lose the custody of their children and are regarded as responsible agents in the demise of their spouses. Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Hand that Crush Stone* focuses on the exploitation and discrimination meted out to widows because of their vulnerability in their workplace where they are relegated to cheap labour.

The transitivity analysis of the selected texts reveals that widows are predominantly presented as 'carriers' of stigmatizing attributes as seen in the following expressions; Somadi is a kidnapper "Soul Healer" (10). This woman (Anayo) is a devil, a murderer "The Trial" (54). You are wicked and ungrateful *Hands that Crush Stones* (28). Somadi, Anayo and you (widows) are the carriers of the attributes – murder, kidnapping and wickedness/ungratefulness. Sample clauses also posit widows as actors of incriminating goals that place them on positions of blame and societal disapproval. For instance, Somadi caused the death of her husband (9). Only widows do *igedu* work (slave work). In addition, widows are recipients of dehumanizing (verbiage) for instance, Ezeji said you (Somadi) put poison in your husband's food (47). I (Chief Mbu) have said to you (widows) I'm not adding a kobo to what I pay you (28). The

accusing verbiage (what is said), which the widows receive implies that power structures in their traditional society are skewed in their disfavour.

The authors of the texts under study share a common view that widows should take their destinies in their hands and subvert their plight. In conclusion, the study queries why a widow should be falsely accused of murder of her husband and such a decapitating penalty imposed on her, while the false accuser goes unpunished. It condemns the undue silence of the tradition and its inability to put a check on further molestations by predators who in their selfish interest subject the widows to deprivations and dehumanization.

Ngozi Ezenwa-Ohaeto in her study, “Recreating Femality: Reviewing the Implications of Igbo Gender-Based Expressions” examines some of the female-based expressions in Igbo and how they are employed as linguistic weapon of oppression in Igbo patriarchal society. The researcher applies the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). A total number of twenty (20) expressions are drawn from diverse discourse contexts. Descriptive method is used as the tool for analysis. The expressions are literary translated. The data collected is analyzed using purposeful random sampling. The result reveals that expressions 12 (*Anaghi egosi nwanyi oji* – ‘You do not show/present kolanut to women) and 15 (*Ihe mere aturu epugh mpi mere ya nzuzu* – What deprived the ewe of horn also made it foolish) contravene Nigerian constitutions, 1960, 1963, 1979 and 1999 of the Fundamental Human Rights Provision in almost identical terms – Right to dignity of human persona and Right to freedom from discrimination. Those expressions are therefore tools of infringement on the fundamental

Human Rights of the Igbo woman. The study condemns the continuous use of such offensive expressions and other discriminatory factors that reinforce the differences in the nature of the males and the females. The study suggests that women should help themselves by rejecting any structure that debases their image.

In challenging the gender roles that subject women to the authority and jurisdiction of men in African enclaves, Chimamanda Adichie in “Dear Ijeawele” suggests that from the cradle, a girl-child should be made to believe in herself. She should be taught to disregard the concept that marriage is the peak of a woman’s achievement because a marriage may be happy or unhappy. With the exception of breastfeeding, house chores and care-giving should be shared mathematically equal among parents. Gender roles and stereotypes should be totally ignored, because they can influence people negatively, once deeply conditioned. Feminism lite should be avoided for female equality ought to be unconditional. “Permission or being allowed by her husband” which is a commonly used expression is not a language of equal marriage. Reading culture is very important as well as participation in sports. Female misogyny however exists, but it is not enough reason to deny them their rights. The writer debunks the assumption, in the gender discourse, that women are supposed to be morally better than men. Women are human beings just as men. Their goodness therefore, should be as normal as their evil. In conclusion, equal privilege, opportunity and dignity should be given to everyone irrespective of gender, class or status, after all social norms are created by human beings and therefore, can be changed.

Gender Subjugation in African Prose

This part reviews women oppressing men and female oppression by women.

Women Oppressing Men in African Prose

It may be pertinent to point out that some men are subjected to oppression and violence by women. This, however, may not be as significant as that of the female subjugation by males. Charles Nnolim in his study, “African Feminism: The Scandalous Path” (219 – 227) discovers that men are sometimes terribly oppressed by women in African prose. According to him, Nawal el Saadawi laments that women suffer under the triple oppression of religion, patriarchy and class. Marriage for her is one of the mechanisms through which women are subjugated and marginalized because marriage breeds a master-slave relationship. To put this to an end, El Saadawi creates female characters who are avengers of the enemy-man. In her *Woman at Point Zero*, Firdaus, murders the pimp Marzouk. Firdaus knows that under Islamic religion, killing is a sin (7) yet she shows no remorse rather she declares her sense of liberation:

I walked down the street, my head held high to the heavens with the pride of having destroyed all masks to reveal what is hidden. My footsteps broke the silence with their steady rhythmic beat on the pavement. They were the foot steps of a woman who believed in herself, knew where she was going and could see her goal. (78)

Nnolim applies feminist theories to be able to analyze some of the texts under study. In Mariama Ba’s *Scarlet Song*, Mireille kills her own son Gorgue and attempts to murder her husband, Ousmane Gueye, because he takes another wife –Ouleymatou. Nnolim points out that Islamic religion and African tradition permit polygamy, so any man who takes a second wife may not be seen as callous or a breaker of any law but will rather be seen as fulfilling his religious

obligations. This is an obvious fact known by any woman converted or nurtured in Islamic religion. He therefore, sees the destructive and murderous course as a misplaced aggression, which must be condemned for real oppressors of women in a Muslim society are the Islamic religion and tradition. In El Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile*, Zakaya murders the mayor, Sheikh Zebran because he causes the jailing of her son, Gala and the imprisonment of her brother Kafrawi to enable him (the mayor) defile her nieces Nefissa and Zeinab. Nnolim argues that murder will never be the solution to female emancipation. He, however, concludes that rather than murder, bloodshed and wastage of human potentials, African feminist should chart a feminist course that aims mainly to resolve gender issues and concerns amicably.

Chinweizu in his study reports that women generally have also been expert oppressors of men since the beginning of the human society. The issues of husbands battering their wives have been well documented in social research. He argues that the incidents of husbands who are battered by their much stronger wives abound. This situation however, is hardly discussed; probably because of pride, no man will want people to know that his wife beats him. To buttress this assertion, he cites Bunmi Fadase, who related how a colleague recounted his experience with one of his neighbours. Co-tenants used to look at the husband of this woman with distaste – with her constant shrills of pain and cries that her husband was beating the life out of her. On the day in question, the colleague could no longer stand the woman's heart-rendering cries for help. He tried the couple's door, it was locked as usual. Out of desperation, he climbed through their bedroom window and was "surprised to find the woman riding on

the back of her husband and giving him a good pummeling and at the same time screaming at the top of her voice that she was being beaten to death” (4). The above statement also portrays that assault and battery may be vice versa.

Furthermore, Chinweizu is of the opinion that women also oppress men through scanty and provocative dressing which “puts men in a state of sexual unrest” (79). A woman, according to him dressed to kill, is not dressed to kill a deer but dressed to ‘kill’ some man. He cites an example with a Western lady in a mini skirt with her bra-less tits tossing about under a see-through blouse. Contrary to the general belief that she is walking innocently along her way. She is indeed a trouble maker, “a walking provocation deliberately assaulting the equanimity of men, huntress in a battle gear set to disturb the peace of the male world” (37). While male chauvinism is declared sexist and largely condemned, female chauvinism goes unrecognized and uncriticised. A wife of any king is automatically a queen whereas the husband of a queen is not a king. In the division of labour, within each class, women get the lighter and less risky tasks, during the war for instance, women are exempted from the risk of bearing arms, risks which are obligatory for men. A divorced woman gladly collects alimony for services she no longer renders to her ex-husband. Chinweizu concludes that the feminists who crusade for equality between sexes should also demand equal treatment in all aspects of life.

Female Oppression by Women

Emmanuel Onyeka Ebekue examines women on women oppression in Nigeria. Using Stephnie Okereke’s Nollywood film *Dry*, he seeks to establish the

existence of intra gender oppression among women in Nigeria. The researcher hinges his research on Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze theory. Qualitative research method with the case study approach is used for the data analysis. The research also finds out the psycho-social damages are caused by women. The study observes that women also have a history of gender marginalization but the fixation on patriarchy makes it almost non-existent. Women on women oppression is very evident within the socio-cultural relations, as exemplified with the relationship between Halima and her mother, who conspires with her husband to push her out to marriage because of material benefits at the age of twelve.

It can also be found in the relationship between Halima and her mother-in-law (Mama Sani) who dubs her a witch and instigates Sani to throw her out. Halima's co-wives isolate her and make her an object of scorn because of her obstetric fistula. The community women also disgrace her out of their meeting and ban her from coming close to them. The market women throw all sorts of food stuff on her and humiliate her out of the market. Zara, another female character, is also a victim of intra gender oppression. The researcher concludes that the Nigerian feminist should look inwards in their fight for emancipation

Benjamin Awua carries out a study on "Women on Women Violence in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*" (138 – 145). The purpose of the study is to ascertain that women on women violence are as oppressive as male domination. The paper applies the theories of feminism to analyze the texts under study. In *So Long a Letter*, Ramatoulaye complains

about the roles some women play to inflict pain, suffering and humiliation on their fellow women in the novel. These female characters include Binetou, her sister-in-law, her greedy mother and Aissatou's mother-in-law. Ramatoulaye, while recounting the bitter experience of polygamy, recalls with agony the experience of losing her husband to the best friend of her daughter. Some women play dubious roles in marriage. Benetou's mother (Dame Belle Mere) encourages her daughter to destroy the happiness of another woman in marriage because of wealth. These attitudes according to Awua, is common in African societies. This is because any woman married to a rich and educated man is regarded as fortunate by other women, hence the competition for the love of such men by other women outside wed-lock.

The researcher also focuses on the negative roles of sisters-in-law to destabilize marriages in the novel. The sister-in-law and the mother-in-law interfere and disrespect the legitimate wife in her matrimonial home. The wife is reduced to a nonentity and a slave in her own home by her fellow women who exploit her. A battle of supremacy among women, mother-in-law and sisters-in-law contribute to humiliate wives of their sons and brothers. Female characters like Binetou and Nabou are not role models. They scheme against women and encourage men to humiliate their own sex instead of helping other women to fight marital disharmony.

The study reveals that women truly oppress their fellow women. For instance, Flora Nwapa, the first African female novelist published her first novel *Efuru* in 1966. The novel received critical reviews and the most hostile was the piece by

a fellow woman Adeola Jones. She condemned Nwapa's writings and concluded:

considering her performance in both *Efuru* and *Idu*, one cannot help wondering what motivates Miss Nwapa beyond the elementary wish to write which kicks you in the pit of your stomach. If this impulse is absent one expects, at least to be compensated by other things such as beautiful narrative style, amusing and vividly described incidents and powerful characterization. All these are sadly missing in both *Efuru* and *Idu*. (152 – 153).

This kind of hostile criticism, according to Awua, by a female critic against a fellow female writer undermines the legitimacy of her creative effort. In *Efuru*, Omirima, a female character creates problems for other women. She instigates Gilbert's mother to find another wife for her son, citing Efuru's childlessness as her reason, "He cannot remain childless. His fathers were not childless. So, it is not in the family, your daughter-in-law is good but childless" (163).

The paper confirms that any woman who mocks a barren colleague has given voice to the male's maltreatment of childless women. Some mothers in *Efuru* just like *So Long a Letter* expect their daughters-in-law to be servants. This is evident in the fact that a woman is married to the family. It becomes absolute difficult for the wife to serve and please her husband and other family members. This becomes a constant source of tension and stress to the daughters-in-law. The study in line with the present study exposes the suffering and limitation that female characters impose on their own sex and recommends more positive bonding and love amongst women.

Falooore Omiyinka Olutola conducts a research “Wife-Mother-in-Law Relation and Violence Among Yoruba Women of South Western Nigeria”. The study examines the causes, intensity and frequency of family violence which is rife among daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law of Yoruba extraction. The theory of cultural feminism is applied. Both primary and secondary data are gathered for the study. Primary data are obtained through questionnaire administered to 180 women (90 wives and 90 mothers-in-law) who are selected purposely from three communities in the South-Western Nigeria.

Furthermore, three Focus Group Discussion Sessions are conducted among wives, mothers-in-law and unmarried girls for the study. At the end of the study, it is discovered that violence is common among educated daughters-in-law than their semi-literate and illiterate counter parts, though physical abuse is not very common. The results also show that most unmarried girls wish to marry men whose mothers are dead. Mothers-in-law with excessive psychological and emotional attachment to their sons are over-protective of their sons while daughters-in-law complain of their mothers-in-law’s unsolicited visits and interference on issues associated with childlessness or not having a male child. The mothers-in-law blame their daughters-in-law for preventing their husbands from rendering enough assistance to their mothers and other family members. The researcher recommends that the two parties should try to understand each other’s stand and responsibilities so as to eliminate feelings of insecurity. The son/husband should prove to both women that even though they have different roles to play for him, that none is less important to him than the other.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Most of the related studies reviewed share a common view that African women are generally marginalized and oppressed. Their major aim is how best to liberate these women from the bondage imposed on them by men, patriarchy and tradition. None of these studies has addressed specifically the issue of oppression of women by fellow women or the role of women in the perceived oppression in the literary texts under study. The researcher therefore seeks to interrogate the roles of female characters, their affiliations with some socio-cultural structures and their interaction with other females in various situations in the selected literary texts by African female writers to determine if women also aid and perpetuate their own oppression.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIO-CULTURAL STRUCTURES VERSUS FEMALE OPPRESSION

This chapter discusses and analyzes in details some factors that instigate female subjugation along side issues related to marriage, childlessness and widowhood in a bid to reveal the roles played by women against the female gender in the perceived oppression.

MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SELECETD LITERARY TEXTS

According to Ogbeide Victor, the building blocks of most successful marriages are mutual love, trust and understanding by both partners. Couples who have agreed to get married are expected by societal conventions to see each other as equal in the union devoid of master-slave relationship (53). Violence and abuse mock and negate the essence of marriage institution. Many marriages just break up or wobble due to some socio-cultural factors which often lead to spousal viciousness. Women are often the helpless victims in such pattern of violent behaviour by one partner against another in a marriage. Obioma Nnaemeka believes that the abuse of the female body is global and should be studied and interpreted within the context of oppressive condition under patriarchy (571). All forms of spousal violence have one major purpose which is often to gain and maintain control over the victim.

Women, who are usually the worse hit, have various reasons why they are compelled to stay in the abusive relationship. Some stay because of their children, while others hope their spouse will change. Some factors ignite domestic violence. For instance, in Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, Shange does not want to provide Kauna with her personal kitchen. She shares

kitchen space with eight other women in his father's compound. She cries daily. Cooking time becomes her worst nightmare. Everybody disappears leaving her alone to cook for at least twenty people, excluding the neighbours who are often around at mealtimes. Kauna shares her in-law's kitchen for an entire year and lives in their homestead for a two and half years. Each time she complains to her husband, he will ask her to be more patient until his father intervenes and forces Shange to build her a kitchen. According to Kauna:

when it was built I celebrated. I was so happy. My father in-law was a good man. He was the only person in the house I felt comfortable talking to. Sadly none of his children seem to have taken after him. When he died of malaria, I grieved as if I had lost my own father. (20-21)

Mee Ali, Kauna's best friend, has a near perfect marital relationship with Michael who builds her kitchen within one month of marriage. Michael, who is contrasted with most young men in Oshaantu, believes that a wife should have her own kitchen as soon as possible. Mee Ali also has her one homestead after five months.

The Purple Violet of Oshaantu is a one hundred and eighty one page novel. It is set in Oshaantu village in Northern Namibia. It portrays the status and roles of women in post-colonial Namibia. It is the first Namibian novel to be published in the African writers' Series (Fredua-Agyeman, 6). The story is revealed through Mee Ali, a friend and neighbor to Kauna. The two women have contrasting relationship with their husbands. The title of the book comes from the reference to the beautiful flowers that grow round the homestead in the village. As a young girl, Kauna is regarded as beautiful as the Purple Violet flower that grows in Oshaantu. Her beauty gradually vanishes after a series of

battering and abuse by her husband, Shange. Shange also spends his night away from home. He keeps a mistress, whom he has built a white house. Kauna becomes emotionally distressed and loses respect in the community because her fellow women blame her for allowing her husband to leave her for another woman. Mee Ali, on the other hand enjoys a peaceful marriage. Michael her husband loves and protects her (Ogbeide 55).

One morning Kauna's husband dies in his chair soon after returning from his lover's white house. Rumours spread that Kauna had bewitched or poisoned him, an accusation which proves to be untrue as it is later revealed he died of a heart attack. Kauna goes in sane for couple of hours. She is hysterical and tries to convince everybody that her husband has just returned home, has not touched her food and therefore there is no way she could have poisoned or bewitched him. In addition to her misery is refusal to shed a tear and lack of interest in the preparation of the funeral. Sadness is totally lacking because she cannot pretend to be affected by her husband's death. This is considered insulting and humiliating by the family as well as the community. Kauna's decision not to mourn her husband shocks relatives on both sides of her family. Perhaps she considered him dead even when he lived. As a widow, she has no rights to her husband's property. The headman visits her, a month after her husband's death and demanded for payment of the homestead if she intends to stay on. Kauna is familiar with the custom but needs time to raise the fund required. In a week's time, her in-laws pay for the homestead and cast Kauna and her children out of the village.

Oshaantu, is however, a fictitious town in Namibia. Namibia is a country in the Southern part of Africa. It shares a common boundary in the East with Botswana, South with South Africa, North with Angola and Zambia and West with Atlantic Ocean. The history of Namibia has passed through several distinct stages of being colonized in the late nineteenth century to Namibia's independence on March, 21st 1990. The earliest and most famous inhabitants of the region comprising today's Namibia, Botswana and South Africa are known as San (also called Bushmen). At that time the Nama (also known as Namaqua) and the Khoihoi settled around the Orange River in the South on the border between Namibia and South Africa where they kept herds of sheep and goats. Both the San and the Nama were Khoisan peoples and spoke languages from the Khoisan language group.

The London Missionary Society worked in Namibia and built a church in 1811 in Bethania – South Namibia. The church was considered to be Namibia's oldest building. In 1840, the German Rhenish Mission Society also joined co-operating with the London Missionary Society. When the European sought to carve up the African continent between them in the then "Scramble for Africa", German and Great Britain became interested in Namibia. The first territorial claim on a part of Namibia came when Britain occupied Walvis Bay. In 1883, a German trader, Adolf Luderitz bought Angra Pequena from the Nama Chief Josef Federiks II; At the cost of ten thousand (10,000) marks (M) and 260 guns. He renamed the coastal area after his name Luderitz. He advised the German chancellor, Otto Van Bismarck, to claim it. In 1884, Bismarck did so and declared Luderitz and a vast area along the Atlantic Coast a German protectorate (Thombery 9-11).

In 1908, diamonds were discovered in Namibia. With this discovery as well as being a German colony, Namibia attracted a large influx of German settlers. As at 1910 their number increased to 13,000. The production of diamond continues to be the source of Namibia's economy. The German settlers encouraged by the government expropriated land from the natives and used forced labour that could not be distinguished from slavery. As a result the relationship between the German settlers and the natives was no longer cordial.

On 21st March 1990, Namibia celebrated their independence, with Sam Nujoma sworn in as their first President. In four years time, the coastal exclave of Walvis Bay and twelve offshore islands were transferred to Namibia by South Africa following three years of bilateral negotiations between the two governments and the establishment of a transitional Joint Administrative Authority (JAA). This peaceful resolution was praised by international community. After the country's independence, Frankie Fredericks participated in international athletics competition. At the Barcelona 1992 Summer Olympics, Fredericks became the first Namibia's Olympic medalists. In November 2002, *The Purple Violet of the Oshaantu* became the first Namibian novel to be published in the African Writers' Series. It is Namibia's own version of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and best recommendation for any Namibian literature student. Apart from some people who work in the mine, the Namibians are predominantly farmers and hunters. The most important part of their diet consisted fruits, grains, nuts and roots. They are often very superstitious and live communal life. Their women are usually placed at disadvantaged positions. They are made to believe they cannot survive without

men. Power, however is tilted in favour of men like many other African countries (Beukes Jemina 1-5).

In Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets*, Ginika's father as a medical doctor knows that education especially of women is a fillip to economic empowerment and essential antidote to perjury (Angela Fubara 245). He therefore insists that Ginika, her only daughter will not marry until she finishes her studies. Ginika, a student of Eledenwa Girls' School, Port Harcourt, is also aware of the importance of education, but the oppressor in the house, who is ironically a female gender, pushes her to embrace marriage as the only option for an immediate emancipation. The zeal also results from ignorance of the implications of marriage. This can be compared with the enthusiasm of numerous Biafran boys who rush in, in thousands to join the army. They are mostly aged between sixteen and twenty-four years, and ignorant of tragic dimensions of war.

Ginika's insistence on the marriage without losing focus on her education demonstrates Snail sense Feminism which is centrally keen in the pursuit of individual success and development (Adaobi Muo 259).

Ezeigbo uses Ginika and Eloka's marriage to illustrate the corrosive impact of war on marriage and the family institution. She also presents in a subtle manner the ever existing violence amongst daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law. In most African traditional societies, marriage is regarded as a union between the families of the bride and the groom, rather than just an activity between the intending couple. A wife, according to the tradition is married to all extended

family members and not only to her husband, although her sexual obligation is restricted to her husband alone (Faloore Omiyinka Olutola 2). Being a wife is like becoming a glorified servant – waking up early, sweeping the compound and the house and preparing the meals at appropriate times for her husband and other family members. To Ginika it is a new experience and she is succeeding and enjoying it especially as she is being assisted by Ozioma her sister-in-law. Ozioma is very pleasant and very supportive. She is always willing to assist Ginika in the house chores. The author uses her to “elevate the youths, far above their parents, as models in a distorted world”. (Adaobi Muo 267). The youths are presented as unconquerable and ready to make a bright day after a dark night. She is contrasted with her mother, who still believes in the old ways, that house chores should strictly be women affairs. When Eloka sweeps his room and tidies it up, he tells his wife who compliments. Ozioma cautions, “Mama will have a fit if she hears you swept your room... don’t let her hear you ...” (196).

Mama’s insistence that all the house chores should be done strictly by Ginika alone originates the cause of her rape, controversial pregnancy, hostility from her parents-in-law, failed marriage and double bereavement. When Janet invites Ginika to a party at Nkwerre, she rejects the offer – “Enjoy yourself, count me out” (264). When Ozioma leaves for Ijeamasi’s house, Mama devises ways of making sure Ginika does all the house chores alone. She keeps Osondu and Micheal busy doing other things so they could not come to help. Neither of them pounds fufu anymore. Ginika pounds the fufu and cooks the soup. Mama once stops her from going to work and orders her to go to Orié market to buy

what they need for the house. When Ginika complains that she has not officially obtained permission from Mr Asiobi, her mother-in-law says:

Who is Mr Asiobi? Is he not the one Onwaora made the camp warden? He cannot do anything if we decide to stop you from going to work one day. When you see him on Monday tell him I sent you to the market. If he makes trouble let me know. (265)

The subjugation by her mother-in-law becomes worse than that of her stepmother. The following day she moves to the kitchen:

Ginika, you will clean my room as well as Onwaora's in addition to yours, Ozioma's and the kitchen. Osondu and Michael will clean the rest. Remember you will prepare steamed cocoyam for dinner, that's what I want Onwaora to eat, so you have to work fast... if you can't give me a child, you can at least keep the house clean... you are not pregnant and you are not nursing a baby, why should you not work in the house? It is only a corpse that lies idle. (265)

The above statement represents power, subjugation, intimidation, persecution and oppression. The use of derogatory vocative presents Ginika as a second class citizen. She is like a servant for all members of the family. Secondly, she is childless at the moment which puts her as at a more disadvantaged position. She has no reason whatsoever not to work all day. She has no need to rest since she is not yet a corpse. Ginika's reaction to the violence of her mother-in-law is that of quiet reproach and escape. Ginika carried out the order but with so much bitterness. She boils up inside her with her hands shaking and no one to complain to. She concluded that none can make her a slave or prisoner in that house. She therefore seeks for an alternative way to escape temporarily from the prison yard. She declares – "I'm going to the party with Janet" (265). The

following Saturday she leaves for the party at Nkwerre, where she is drugged and raped.

Almost every married woman in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* experiences battering from her spouse. Bruises, sprains, broken bones, head injuries and internal bleeding are some of the effects of battering. In most cases the victims are hospitalized. The pregnant women run the risk of miscarriage, preterm labour or death of the foetus. Most women carry bruises and scars which they try unsuccessfully to cover with brown shoe polish. Shange, who is also notorious for his infidelity in the village, is usually mean to his wife. On one occasion, he becomes very irritated that his wife has possibly discovered the nature of his work as a chef in the mine as seen in the photograph. He beats her and she screams. When Michael runs to her rescue:

Kauna was lying on the ground covered in a blanket of sand. She moved like an old cloth as Shange's shoes struck her mercilessly all over her tiny body. The heavy mine shoes sounded as if they were breaking every bone. She had covered her face and part of her head with both arms and hands. (59)

Michael, however, manages to hold Shange and pushes him to their three-bedroom concrete house. Kauna's body – face, mouth, nose, eyes, ears and head are covered with blood mixed with sand. The children have become used to his regular beatings of their mother. Kandiwapa, the oldest, treats her bruises each time he beats her. This time they cry helplessly because the beating is too much for them to handle. Lack of physical strength and the intractability of kinship hierarchy make confrontation difficult for the children. Mee Ali then goes to look for Sustera the village nurse.

Almost all the men with the exception of Michael are either wife beaters or drunks who cannot protect the women in the family. The author portrays the general acceptance that it is ideal that a woman should be mistreated by both society and men. Most people see domestic violence as a private matter as well as normal part of most marriages. Michael, who does not abuse his wife, surprisingly does not see anything abnormal in the lethal beatings that Kauna endures, he refers to them as nothing but family problems and warns his wife to stop interfering. Most women have one scare or the other that always remind them of the horror of physical abuse. Ironically, women discuss these issues as if it's what they deserve, as Ali and Kauna discuss:

Why do you think he beats you like this? I asked Kauna. Well, I don't know, I really have no idea. Usually he beats me for nothing, but this time I am not sure if it was for nothing. I did something, I am just not sure what. In the hospital I tried so hard to think of what I had done to annoy him ... (64)

This depicts total acceptance that a woman deserves to be punished by her husband if she does any thing wrong. Kauna is a daughter of a pastor and a teacher. Married as a high school girl and a virgin, she still portrays herself as unworthy of Shange. She acknowledges a husband's right to hit his wife. She believes that it is part of marriage. Anybody, who is not subjected to beatings like Mee Ali, in her own estimation, is lucky:

Your husband doesn't beat you? Nooo, I answered, totally surprised by her question.
Has never beaten you?
Has never beaten me.
Not even a slap?
Not even a slap.
You are lucky... (65)

This is unheard of that a woman in Oshaantu has never been beaten by her husband. This attitude depicts a situation in which women experience violence and accept the act as non-violent, especially when it is not too harsh or very frequent. The traditional women regard spousal abuse as part of their tradition. Mee Ali specifically refuses to accept spousal violence as the norm by emphasizing her status as a partner. Whenever she is referred to as lucky for being married to the gentle Michael, she resists being incorporated into oppressive traditional practices by declaring that she should not be treated like a filthy animal. She minces no words in telling Kauna that if she had been married to an abusive husband, she would have left him because she wants to be a wife and not a punching bag . As far as Mee Ali is concerned, those oppressive cultural practices must be resisted without compromise.

Similarly, Mukwankala, an elderly lady is another woman who publicly condemns spousal abuse and obnoxious cultural practice. She fearlessly confronts Shange at the cuca shop:

I heard you beat her again and this time I heard you almost killed her... why did you beat the child like that? If you don't want her any more, why don't you send her back to her parents...? How do you feel when you beat a person who cannot beat you back? ... Do you know that since you married that child she has not gained any weight...? Now if you are such a fighter, tell me how many men have you beaten in this village the way you beat your wife? Kauna cannot walk among other women with her head uplifted and straight and it is all because of you. Are you not ashamed of yourself? ... Why didn't you marry one of the many women you whored with and fathered children with? What made you think you were worthy of her? ... Men who beat

women are the ones who cannot stand up against other men. (62-63)

This public confrontation is a metaphor for the women of Oshaantu to stand up to the bullying antics of their heartless men whose masculinity begins and ends with wife battering and ego massaging. Shange is humiliated. He wishes the earth would part below him so he could disappear. Nobody attempts to stop Mukwankala. According to Alexander Pope as recorded by Alving Kerman; “Proud to see men not afraid of God, afraid of me, safe from the bar, the pulpit and the throne, yet touched and ashamed by ridicule” (54). Pope maintains that men who commit follies without fear of the court, religion or law are really touched by ridicule. Like magic, Shange’s ridicule under the acerbic tongue of Mukwankala stops him from beating Kauna again. He only asserts his domineering attitude over her by deciding when she is allowed to visit her parents and continuing his extramarital affairs. By ridiculing Shange in a public arena-cuca shop, Mukwankala, the mouth piece of downtrodden women in Oshaantu, makes wife battery a public matter to arouse the people’s revolution against it. In a patriarchal society like Oshaantu, violence against women especially rape and wife beating goes unreported due to silence of the victim and their families. The community and the church are not helping matters – they are unsympathetic to the suffering of women. They rather lessen the severity of violence against women, claiming that anybody can err.

Like Eugene (Papa) in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, Shange’s house is like a luxurious prison where indices of battering abound. Eugene, a violent figure in his household submits his wife (Beatrice) and children to severe battering. Like

Kauna, Beatrice frequently gets “black eyes” as a result of brutal beating. Beatrice, just like Kauna loses two pregnancies as a result of severe spousal battering. Contrary to the attractive purple in the violet of Oshaantu, Adichie’s ‘purple’ depicts the purplish colour of the bruises resulting from the series of beating Eugene inflicts on his wife, as observed that “Mama’s face was swollen and the area around her right eye was the black purple shade of an overripe avocado” (190). In Oshaantu, most marriages are synonymous with brutality and oppression. In *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, almost every women not only carry bruises but also tell lies to the doctors, when they go for treatment that some cow had kicked them in their faces while they were milking, to hide their shame and embarrassment (61).

The situation is compounded more by the fact that most of the women unfortunately still remain in the abusive relationship. According to Kolawale, divorce is almost a taboo in many African societies and this accounts for the high degree of tolerance by women. Usually, young men feel triumphant in the marriage but the girls expect worst and this prepares their mind to tolerate abuse and violence in marriage (57). A woman’s ambition in African traditional society is marriage. The strong desire to be a wife and mother compels a woman to remain in an abusive relationship. Amaka in Nwapa’s *One if Enough*, for instance, buys a car for Obiora but refuses to accept praise for it. She also intervenes in a ‘ministry’ crises to save her husband’s job (Chukwukere 1470, in other to sustain the prestige of her marriage. A single woman is without honour in Africa, as a result, women at times “accept unfavourable treatments as part of their lot. (Chukukere 151) in marriage. Social and economic heights

of any single woman is usually believed to be attained through illicit association with men.

Kauna's mother advises her not to divorce Shange, having taken an oath before the entire congregation to love and cherish him till death do them part. She should rather exercise patient that some day Shange may overgrow his anger and two of them will be together. Her mother's sister, Mee Fennie, has a different view. She tells Kauna times without number, "Leave him. If you think you deserve more than what you get out of your marriage, divorce that man. It is not an easy think to do, and nobody enjoys a divorce, but sometimes it is a decision that needs to be taken" (66). Fennie talks out of experience. When she divorces her husband, the entire villagers including her own relatives, who frown at such open defiance of supposed community convention, predict her downfall and starvation of her children. To their greatest surprise, she carters for her children single handedly up to tertiary level without going to her former husband for assistance.

Mee Fennie laments that they don't have very strong men as brothers or uncles, such who need to march down to Shange and give him a beating that he will remember all through his life. Her brothers are drunks and loafers. Peetu, for instance is a drunk, his wife and children leave him. Joshua, the elder brother, marries a woman who beats him up, but whenever he comes back home he plays the strict uncle to cover up this shame. Through this, the author proves, though very rare, that a husband can equally be a victim of spousal abuse. Joshua, Kauna's uncle is regularly beaten up by his wife. In addition Mee

Nangula, Jacopo's wife is another woman who dares against the strong customary beliefs by divorcing her abusive husband.

DEVALUATION OF MARRIED WOMEN IN THE NOVELS UNDER STUDY – A REVIEW OF THE ACCOMPLICES

The mighty hand of tradition is visible in the marital institution in African societies. Marriage acts as an avenue for violence and a plethora of injustice against women, a phenomenon Emecheta sees as a form of slavery for women. In her *Second Class Citizen* for instance, Adah is saddled with a husband who is perpetually unemployed and does not bring home a dime. She provides everything, yet her husband, Francis, beats her up and destroys her hard-earned property. Most spousal abuse, marital rape or physical assaults in most African homes are concealed. Most women who are battered, usually do not react for the fear of being thrown out of the home. According to Olawale:

Violence related to marital homes is usually private and confined to bedrooms and homes... incest and sexual violence are more often than not a hidden problem. Women often fear that further harm may be done to them by their husbands if they make public the indignities suffered under them. (8)

This makes it difficult to measure the rate of frequency or to prosecute cases of spousal violence.

Patriarchal affiliation are very strong and have left lasting impressions on the minds of both men and women that they protect these structures rather than protest. As Toubia rightly observes:

... even the most highly educated individuals become defensive when they feel their culture and personal identity are being attacked ... The fear of losing the psychological, moral and

material benefits of “belonging” is one of the greatest motivators of conformity. When the demands of conformity conflict with rationality or individual need, denial intervenes as a mechanism for survival. In this way many women justify their own oppression. (37)

In the World Conference of the United Nations’ Decade held at Denmark in 1980, feminists from Europe and America condemned female circumcision while some feminists from the third world, especially from Africa were in favour that the age-old tradition should not be abolished (Thiam 752). Gowon Ama Doki believes that cultural stereotypes and prejudice constitute another form of violence against women. Wife battering, in most cultures is greeted with praises as a corrective measure. Any man, who transforms his matrimonial home into a battleground through consistent wife beating and physical assault is applauded as a great disciplinarian. Such beliefs render the law helpless since the tradition confers on the man the right to decide what happens in his home or how his wife should be treated. The patriarchal structures have the magic prowess of imprinting on the psyche of the women, the impressions that may not be easily wiped out by mere verbal persuasions (403). Omede equally supports that cultural interpretation of masculinity and femininity underlies the divisions of roles and labour between sexes. Role differentiation, job ascription and economic opportunities are often determined by cultural conditioning rather than economic determination (2).

Neshani Andreas presents different views of marriage through inter connected stories to offer a clear picture of African woman’s predicament. With the exception of Mee Ali’s husband, almost all the men in Oshaantu abuse their wives. One who does not batter his wife is considered to be under his wife’s

control and therefore seen as weak. Hence, Mee Ali and Kauna ask, “Why are people suspicious about a loving husband? What is strange about a good father? What is evil about a man who does not abuse his woman and children?”(5). Unfortunately, they are not able to find answers to these questions. It may be however very important to find out also who suspects or castigates a loving husband or one who does not abuse his wife? Man, woman or both? What is the woman’s view of an ideal marriage and what do men think of marriage?

Apart from Mee Fennie, Mukwankala and Mee Ali (Kauna’s friend), other women are either indeliberate or support wife battering. Mee Maita’s view is expressed through the chief character:

... she does little or nothing for the women and widows who are mistreated by their husbands and in-laws, despite her position. She believes that marriage should be one miserable lifelong experience. Husband and wife should fight every day, he should abuse her and the children, he should go after other women otherwise *okwa tukwo mo* (he is under her thumb). (4)

Mee Maita is a woman leader in the church whom young women look up to.

Mee Ali’s mother in-law accuses her of bewitching her son (Micheal) because Michael loves his wife (Mee Ali). Surprisingly, Michael’s sister, Sana, is also married to a man who loves her, who does not beat her or go after other women. Unfortunately, their mother does not see it as bewitching and does not say a word about her daughter’s untidiness, “her children’s snotty noses and shitty buttocks.” (25). Her impression about her daughter in-law is revealed through this conversation:

You should hear what she has to say about me. Oh my son, I feel so sorry for him, the woman he married, so lazy, so lazy.

In-laws always give their daughters-in-law a hard time, Kauna said. Especially the women, uuuh, they are worst

Yes, the women

The bitches

And witches

You can say that again

The witches. (26)

This scenario points out the fact that women aid and abet female subjugation in marriage.

Kauna suffers physical battery from Shange and emotional torture from her in-laws (most often the women). They laugh at her and stigmatize her as if it is her fault that her husband beats her or looks at other women. They also want to know “how her husband who was not sick and did not complain of any illness died just like that, just like an animal” (98). Looking at the married women among them, the narrator wonders if they are not afraid that a similar thing might happen to them if their husband die. Watching Shange’s relative struggle over his wealth, Mee Ali wonders, “I did not know who were worse, the men or the women. Greed demonstrated itself equally among them” (102). It is very obvious that women of Oshaantu have a history of intra gender marginalization, persecution and subjugation. There are some women who try to impose old values that oppress other women, others gossip and accuse one another of witchcraft, which, in line with Focu feminism, is neither imposed by the tradition or patriarchy.

A woman in African traditional society, bears the brunt of everything that is absolutely wrong in a marriage – infertility, extramarital affair, battering, superstition, disinheritance. The community as well as the church shows no

sympathy towards her plight. Sara for instance is maltreated because a fetish priest claims she bewitched her husband. When her husband's colleagues come and testify that he died of AIDS, that nobody bewitched him, her mother-in-law insists:

Well, if this is the case, Mee Sara, you are partly to blame for Victor's behaviour... He impregnated other women – you didn't confront him. He did not sleep at home – you didn't confront him. He did not send you money – you did not confront him. It did not matter what he did, you did not get angry with him. You spoiled him completely. (107)

Sara's sister-in-law, who inherited their television, supports her mother. The hostile attitudes of Sara's mother-in-law and sister-in-law reveal tendencies of intra gender subjugation. Man's atrocities are overlooked even when they are glaring while accusing fingers are rather pointed to wife as the reason for her husband's misbehavior. Furthermore, Mee Maita, who always tells women at the choir and at the Wednesday evening meetings to come and discuss their problems with her, shows no interest in discussing Kauna's marriage problem when the case is brought to her. Instead of helping to find a solution to the way Shange cheats his wife, she broadcast the report to the whole village despite its confidential nature.

Andreas seems to condemn how Shange publicly cheats on his wife and downplays that women are also accomplices of the act of infidelity. The woman of the white house engages in an illicit relationship with a married man. She does not consider her fellow woman whose home she is disintegrating into consideration. She is pregnant for another's husband who lives close by. The

worst is that the villagers (including women) see nothing wrong with that. At the cemetery, when the body of Shange was being lowered:

the woman from the white house cried like a hungry hyna. ... she made everyone cry all over again. Friends and relatives held her up as if she could not stand on her own... Her pregnancy was clearly visible. They put her on the ground and patted her forehead with wet cloth. She leaned against a relative. She too was wrapped in black. (163)

This depicts the societal acceptance of the relationship between Kauna's husband and the woman from the white house. The woman from the white house is unrepentant. She knows that the man she is going out with has a wife. She does not care what would be the outcome of her immoral behaviour. She does not put her fellow woman whose husband she is enjoying into consideration. Daba's question to Dame Belle-Mere (Bineteau's mother), in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*, "how can a woman destroy the happiness of another woman? (61) is constantly implied amongst African women. Is this attitude not woman's inhumanity to fellow woman? Is this instigated by patriarchy or tradition? Is this less than male oppression? Should men, tradition or patriarchy be held responsible for this? Should women, in line with Focu Feminism, not be their sisters' keepers? Most unfortunately, such perpetrators go unpunished. Apart from Mee Ali – Kauna's friend, no other woman sees anything wrong with Shange's extramarital public relationship with a mistress from a nearby village.

There is also an indication that woman interferes in the selection of wives of their sons. Michael's mother rejects Mee Ali as wife to her son without offering a genuine reason for her action:

Why do you want her? Her of all people? Her with those hands that look like chicken claws. That one with the high hips and small legs that make her look like a wild cow. Why, why, my son? There are so many good girls around here, decent girls who will make you happier than that woman ever will.(16)

When her son makes it obvious that his choice is made, she changes her tactics. She degrades her – that she is an *Oshikumbu* (whore). “A woman who opens her legs so easily for any man is not a woman, she is a whore” (17). Sana, her daughter supports her. In her view – “I swear she has given my brother some mountain *mutakati* (medicine). He is abnormally in love” (17). Mother-in-law and sister-in-law gossip and subvert the happiness of Mee Ali. The aggressiveness of some mother-in-law remains a nightmare to most daughters-in-law. Awua Benjamin affirms that:

...mothers-in-law also contribute in making marriage a painful experience. Mothers regard the wives of their sons as displacing them in affection and also everything to cause disaffection in the homes of their children. Many sons over look the complaints by their wives of the humiliating manner their mothers treat them. This accords their mothers-in-law absolute powers in the home. The mother-in-law can also pressurize her son into a second, third or fourth marriage... (141)

Ideally, a mother is a symbol of succour. One begins to wonder if this virtue is strictly reserved for only the children or blood relatives? The undue hostility of these women is not extended to their daughters. Mee Ali’s mother-in-law loves her daughter and over looks her inadequacies. Ginika’s mothers-in-law tolerates her daughters Ozioma and Ijeamasi. In line with Snail Sense Feminism and Motherist theory, a positive female bonding is very necessary. The daughters-

in-law, daughters and nieces should learn to show more affection to the older mother-in-law, step mothers or uncle's wife. According to the study, majority of the young girls express more emotional involvement in their relationships with their own mothers than with other women. The older women should on the other hand try to accept younger females as their own daughters and correct them with love.

The women in the texts under study however are hard working individuals-cultivating farms, selling at markets after trekking long distances. The women sometimes enjoy supports from the network of friends formed among them. For instance; Okakungungu (group cultivation, working festival) is a tradition, whereby the women of Oshaantu come together to help a fellow woman, who is probably bereaved or indisposed, in her farm, as they gather together to help Kauna and her children prepare their fields before the rains. Almost all the women attend Kauna's Okakungungu most surprisingly, Kauna's "arch enemy also came, a woman who had apparently said that Kauna was barren because of Depo contraceptive" (114). Mee Ali prepares food and Omalovu (home-brew) for the women. They work as they sing songs of joy, sorrow, forgiveness, unity and hope. They beckon on their ancestors to wake up and watch their bent backs and bless them. "The women understood Kauna's situation. There was a wonderful spirit, a spirit of sisterhood. For once, all ill-feeling and hate were forgotten" (116).

Finally, there is no doubt that patriarchy and its consequent oppressive structures are not in existence. The researcher does not deny the fact that women are not placed in a more disadvantaged position than their male

counterparts. Despite these, intra gender oppression, subjugation and marginalization still abound among the female gender. The oppression of women by women serve to justify the male oppression of women. Women seem to lend a helping hand to men and patriarchy to suppress female gender.

CHILDLESSNESS AS A WEAPON FOR FEMALE MARGINALIZATION

In most African societies, the ability and privilege to bear and rear children, especially male children are the most honoured and exalted position or role of any woman. Motherhood accords women with personal satisfaction and societal approval. From the onset, a girl's training is channeled towards preparation for marriage. According to Orabueze, a man may however:

marry because he wants somebody to cook his meals; help him in his farm, clean his house, wash his clothes, keep him company, but most importantly, he wants somebody to bear him children especially sons that will replace him when he dies. To achieve this last purpose, the bride is expected to start having children within one year of coming into the house. (141)

The greatest achievement of any women is motherhood. The value placed on children in the African cultural milieu is so high that a childless woman is perpetually in agony. Names associated with a child in Igbo cultural society typifies this assertion. For instance, *Nwabundo* (a child is shelter), *Nwabueze* (a child is king), *Nwakego* (a child is more valuable than money), *Nwadijuto* (a child is sweet), *Ifeyinwa* (there is nothing like a child), *Nwabuona* (a child is gold), *Ifeadikana* (nothing can be compared to a child), *Nwamaka* (a child is good), *Nwabugwu* (a child is an honour), *Nwabunwanne* (a child is a relation), to mention but a few.

Ideally, a woman is supposed to have many children because they are regarded as good asset. Her position and inheritance in her matrimonial home depends solely on the number of children she has, especially sons. A celebration of ‘*ewu ukwu*’ (slaughtering a goat) is performed in honour of a woman who gives birth to several sons in succession in Igbo traditional society. Achebe records in *Things Fall Apart*, that when Okonkwo’s first wife had her third son in succession, “Okonkwo slaughtered a goat for her as was the custom” (56).

The African society frowns at any married women who commits adultery. It is a very serious offence that can lead to divorce if discovered. Surprisingly, the atrocity could be excused if the woman has a child, because a woman can be forgiven everything as long as she has a child. Barrenness is a curse that every married woman dreads. As a result, childless women go extra mile to achieve pregnancy. Beatrice, in Ifeoma Okoye’s *Behind the Cloud*, slept with Apostle Joseph. In fulfillment, she declares:

my infidelity has saved my marriage for my husband was on the verge of sending me away and taking a new wife. If my marriage breaks down now at least I have a child who will look after me in my old age. A childless woman in our society does not realize the extent of her handicap until she grows old. (61-62)

For the fact that a child is involved, infidelity in this case changes from vice to virtue and a saviour of the marriage. In addition, the system of inheritance makes it very essential that a woman ought to have children especially male children. A woman who has only female children is regarded as barren. A woman with an only son is always in a state of panic because her position in her husband’s house is shaky. This may be probably why:

the training regime for a boy that comes after many girls or is the only son of the mother or is born after many years of childlessness is usually defective. He is pampered that he grows up a spoiled child. No household chore is allotted to him. Such a person grows up to be lazy and likely to abandon his responsibilities to his family later in life. (Orabueze 148)

This equally makes it difficult for contraceptive methods of birth control to be accepted. There is no room for a childless woman in Africa. She is a disappointment to everybody. She is the cause of every calamity in her community as she is tagged a witch. Her life is full of misery as a result of the humiliation and oppression she is subjected to.

Orabueze mocks that despite Western civilization, modern scientific and technological breakthrough, Africans still believe that a woman makes and determines the sex of a baby. The patriarchal society is totally convinced that women are the only cause of childlessness in any marriage. Women are also conditioned to believe so (142). This is why some mothers find it extremely difficult to believe that their son may be sterile, because the cause of infertility ideally is supposed to be from the daughter-in-law. This is the major reason why Obiora's mother, for instance, in Nwapa's *One Is Enough*, tells Amaka to her face:

You are barren. That's all, barren. A year ago, you said you had a miscarriage. My son came to tell me I laughed at him. I did not let him know you were deceiving him. So, my son's wife, you were never pregnant and you will never be. (14)

A childless woman is humiliated, intimidated, abandoned and displaced. Nobody seems to consider that other factors like incompatibility or making love at the wrong time of a woman's ovulation may affect conception.

Chinweizu has a different perception of motherhood. He sees motherhood as one of the conditions which enable women to get what they want. Women have the privilege of training and shaping the child from the very early stage of his/her life. They equip the girl-child with a narcissist personality and boys with a heroic personality. The hero is taught to regard women as the weaker sex and to consider it heroic to provide for and protect his women-folk. He learns to take risks and perform extra ordinary duties. He is also meant to believe that being given a beautiful woman is the most precious reward for heroism. If he is a Fulani in Northern Nigeria, “he learns that lesson from the flogging contest whose victors are rewarded with admiration and love by beautiful maiden” (31). Motherhood is a platform unto which one objective or the other is successfully achieved. Lack of it therefore places a woman in a disadvantaged position.

In *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, Kauna could not achieve pregnancy immediately. She is depressed. She prays every day for a baby. She is accused of having used and abused some Depo Provera contraceptives during her teenage years, which apparently have ruined her womb. Shange has children with his previous girl-friends, so automatically the cause of childlessness is hers. Just like any other patriarchal society, every body stares at her whispering through their eyes that nothing has happened yet. Her mother is another headache – ever reminding her, “All the women who married around the same time as you have babies now – even the ones who were married after you” (21). Mee Ndapandula shares the same experience. She has her own baby after ten years. Kauna has hers after three years and names her *Kandiwapa* (God I cannot thank you enough).

Mee Ali ironically is pregnant before marriage, so she does not suffer any humiliation associated with childlessness. She rather attends a ‘forgiveness classes’ which is equally a terrible experience. She walks ten kilometers to make an appointment with Pastor Theodora. After several attempts, he grants her audience and demand why she wants to see him. Mee Ali explains she violated the sixth commandment – “I became pregnant out of wedlock” (24). He informs her that the elders’ council will be present. On that day, “the church elders asked a lot of personal questions. Where we did it? When we did it? How many times we did it? What did we think? And, would we do it again?” (24)

On a particular Sunday, about fifteen of them are forgiven. Twelve girls and three men. They have to stand in front of the congregation for people to see them, so that when they go to receive Holy Communion, nobody will ask questions about their forgiveness status. Neshani Andreas in a subtle manner uses the ‘improper fraction’-twelve over three to buttress a society where the women are under the yoke of patriarchy. No woman can ever make herself pregnant. Why should it be twelve girls versus three men? Why not twelve girls and twelve men? Why should the Pastor and the entire council of elders ignore this crucial issue? Why should the remaining nine men not be compelled to partake in the forgiveness class? This is a mark of partiality, also exhibited by the Pastor himself. His fifteen year old daughter is put in a family way by her teacher, barely a month after Ali’s forgiveness. She does not attend any forgiveness class or appear in front of the congregation. She is just forgiven. Women in African cultural milieu bear the brunt of childlessness, adultery, infidelity and any marital conflict. The traditional system seeks to silent women.

Kauna has a problem of conception in the first few years of marriage. One of the days her husband keeps late night, she asks her sister-in-law, Shiwa, the where about of Shange. Shiwa, a fellow woman, said, *okwa yi ku yakweni mbo baya vala* meaning “He went to those with fertile womb” (21). What could be worse that this verbal oppression meted out on a woman by a fellow sex? Kauna laments, “That killed me, can you imagine how I felt? Since then I have never asked anybody where Shange was: I worry silently” (21).

In Adimnora-Ezeigbo’s *Roses and Bullets* another major reason for the sour relationship between Ginika and her mother-in-law is Ginika’s admittance of her husband’s disapproval of getting pregnant or having a baby during the war. The following dialogue explains it better:

Tell me, are you pregnant? ... Didn’t you hear me? I asked if you are pregnant. Is it wrong for me to ask my son’s wife if she is pregnant?... no, I’m not pregnant... you allowed your husband to leave you, to join the army without making sure you are pregnant... Eloka said he didn’t want us to have a baby during the war, that we should wait for it to end and finish our education. He said this to you? And you agreed? Why do you people get married? Is it not to have children?... Go. But I want you to know that I’m disappointed with you. I know Eloka is partly to blame, but it is the duty of a wife to make sure her husband plays his role properly, especially in the matter of getting her pregnant. (222-223)

Eloka’s mother confirms that the only reason for marriage is to bear children. In other words, they should not have married in the first place since they don’t want to have children yet. She also regrets that a pretty girl like Ginika cannot exercise her feminine powers fully and thwart such an order. Ifeoma Okoye also

believes in the efficacy of female powers. According to her, traditional women are not as passive as feminists think. They are radical and active. They have ways of asserting themselves and making men respect them. They enjoy being mothers and don't see motherhood as imposition or punishment. It is a natural instinct in a woman to be a mother (110). Eloka's mother is highly disappointed in Ginika's inability to exhibit the highest professionalism in husband management to achieve pregnancy, considering the fact that her husband is an only son. Ginika's mother-in-law, in line with Motherist theory argues that the greatest power of a woman is her reproductive power, which Ginika has failed to realize. According to her, Eloka is a man and does not know much in a matter like this, but "I'm amazed at your lack of common sense – a woman who is not anxious to have a child for a husband who is a soldier... you allow Eloka go away again without at least attempting to get you pregnant... I said it when I first saw you that your beauty is skin-deep, *ocha ka omaka*. (261). She laments that if Eloka had agreed to marry the girl Adaeze found for him, the situation would have been different. She abuses her, "you have no sense... you want me to be childless. I will show you *anyi ohiya*, bush animal, you will see something in this house" (261).

In African society, the joys of motherhood could be reaped by women who could give birth. Those who could not bring forth may be cut off from the group of venerated, hence a married woman without a child considers herself as a 'wayfarer' without future or any thing to be inherited. Emecheta, however in her *The Joys of Motherhood*, suggests that motherhood should not be used as a yardstick to measure a woman's relevance. She sees no 'joys', no future, no

inheritance for a woman who denies herself everything for the sake of her children who deserted her at last. Her point of view is depicted through the paradox; “if you don’t have children the longing for them will kill you and if you do, the worrying over them will kill you” (Nnolim 241). Given the choice, most African women will choose to have children first and face the consequences that follow rather than not. Childlessness, in a patriarchal society, is seen as a curse and spiritual problem which must be faced squarely so that the woman does not reincarnate with it in her world to come (Worguji 136). The birth of a child especially a male child is the determinant of a wife’s ultimate acceptability in the cultural context. It places the woman in a higher social stratum in the communities, in fact, it is compulsory to have children in an African marriage. Nothing can be compared to a child. It gives a woman a sense of success, hope and fulfillment. As a child bearer, the woman is pivotal to the perpetuating of community and social norms. The societal belief that childlessness is solely the woman fault is however very wrong and should be properly addressed.

THE ANGLE OF WOMEN IN CHILD-RELATED CRISIS

Daniel-Inin comments that, societal norms and traditions have been formulated by men to the detriment of women (223). Since the feminist awakening, many female writers have been empowered to use their writings to condemn the oppressive acts of patriarchy towards women. There have been discourses and counter discourses on the position of women in African societies. Flora Nwapa points out that:

In Nigeria and other countries of Africa, there have been tremendous changes in all facts of life which contribute to the

continent-wide awareness and rethinking of women's problems and roles in the society. The changes are affecting both men and women in many ways and creative writers are responding to them by recreating meaningfully women's culture and worldview in this age of female awakening and feminist consciousness. (89)

Her *Efuru* is a pacesetter in debunking the marginalized role and whittled down image of the Nigerian woman in Nigerian male-authored works (Orabueze 85).

Arrow of Destiny portrays the domestic related affairs of family life while making the condition of women the central concern. It is a two hundred and forty-five paged fiction written by Ann Iwuagwu. The story is centered on a young girl, Cynthia who lives with her grandmother when her parents travel overseas. Her mother dies and later on her grandmother. She is forced out of the house by her uncle's wife. She gets married to an arranged husband – Idris who works in Port-Harcourt with Agip Oil Company. Cynthia is presumed barren and a great deal of anxiety and money are expended on her, while Idris refuses to see a doctor and check his potency. Idara, a loose undergraduate displaces her and moves in with her children. Cynthia is heartbroken and later thrown out. After passing through these ordeals, she moves on with patience, perseverance and courage. Eventually she gets a good job, remarries to Mr. Boma and has a set of triplets. At the end, Idara's tricks are revealed, the father of her children (David Ikem) comes and picks his children. Idris is abandoned and also confirmed impotent.

Ann Iwuagwu, through her protagonist, explores the burden and agony of an African woman as well as the perpetrators of her violence. Unlike Chimamanda

Adichie in her *Purple Hibiscus*, who “uses the first point of view of a dynamic character to narrate the story of the prison world of the Nigerian woman and how her protest gains her freedom” Orabueze (86), Iwuagwu creates a world that has no place for a childless woman with a protagonist who, in line with Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo’s ‘Snail Sense Feminism’ uses her “natural intuition, soft nature and stereotypic frames to subvert agents of patriarchy” (Chinwe Ezeifeke and Ifeyinwa Ogbazi 4). To accomplish this mission, she carefully exposes the perpetrators of women violence.

Fitimis attitude is expressed in Cynthia’s lamentation:

She saw nothing good in all I did. She called me a witch and accused me of killing my mother and grandmother. There were times I didn’t eat because she wouldn’t give me food. There was no difference between morning and night, I worked until everyone else had gone to bed before crawling into mine. There were bruises all over my body. How could I tell my uncle, that I had lost peace in his home? (37)

Fitimi is presented as a hypocrite, who pretends to love and care for Cynthia in order to achieve her aim. Every new day brings new trouble of its own. One day “while she was flogging me with food turner, she knocked out my tooth. She wanted to flog my hand, but I mistakenly placed them on my face. She hit my mouth and my tooth flew out with a trail of blood” (37). The wicked act is not played alone by Fitimi, her friend who visits the house always, and a prophetess. The prophetess orders that Cynthia be sent away because she is responsible for Fitimis inability to bear a child. According to her too, she used the same mystic power to kill her mother and paralyze her grandmother.

Paul is compelled to believe their tale, he sends his niece away because he is desperate to have a child. Fitimi however is too wicked and inconsiderate to be true, just like Cynthia who exhibits ideal features that is too rare to be found in any adolescent in real life. The writer paints the picture of what most children go through with their step mothers, who hate the sight of any child born by another woman. The worst is that they often scheme and lobby their way into the marriage using the children to win the men's heart.

Mrs. Isa, who recommends marriage for Cynthia with her only brother in Port Harcourt, means well for her. The marriage seems to go on well until infertility sets in. According to Frank:

in African culture, barrenness, is perhaps the worst affliction (even crime) a couple can endure (or commit), and it is almost always attributed to the woman. In traditional society for a woman to lack reproductive power is to lack all power, indeed to be deprived of her very identity and *raison d'être* in life. (20)

Amaka in Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough* regrets that "God has deprived her of the greatest blessing bestowed on a woman, the joy of being a mother". She then goes on to ask, "was that really the end of the world? Was she useless to the world if she were unmarried? (23). Despite a woman's high economic profile in her husband's family and society, she is still regarded as nothing if she fails the test of motherhood (Orabueze 107). Ada, in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* is intelligent, hardworking and determined but above all, she is productive:

She did not disappoint her parent's in-law on that score. For apart from the fact that she earned enough money to keep them all going, she was very much prolific, which among the Ibos, is still the greatest effect a woman can have. (28)

Infertility in a patriarchal society is deployed to relegate and confine woman against progress. Women always bear the brunt of childlessness in the African society. They are always blamed for infertility even when men are at fault (Binta-Ibrahim 483). Iwuagwu debunks this notion and arrived at a moral conclusion that it is not proper to blame all cases of infertility and childlessness on the wife and subject her to all sorts of psychological or emotional torture without also testing the man to ascertain his potency. Dr. Chukwudalu emphasizes that:

infertility is not only found in woman, but in men too. Our African mentality has deceived a lot of men, who felt that they cannot possibly be the cause of their childlessness. With the sensitization programmes going on, men are still living in stone age. Even if a man is found to be infertile, medical treatment can help to boost it. (239)

Mrs Isa loves Cynthia well enough to have recommended her for her only brother to marry. As the only son of their mother in a polygamous home, who desperately needs children to keep their mother's name alive, she refuses to listen to the voice of reason. She could not stop her brother from taking the step he took.

Cynthia is a rare gem with perfect qualities for marriage, unlike Idara. According to Mrs Isa, "I confess today that I supported my brother in bringing in Idara because we desperately wanted a child ... I regret my secret support to push you away for Idara to be in full control" (106). Cynthia, forgives without any pre-conditions confirming that anybody in her shoes would have been compelled to react the same way:

Who am I not to forgive you? You did what you did because your blood brother and your parent's lineage were at stake. Who wouldn't do what you did? I only felt you should have let me

know you were involved. Don't worry ma, it is all in the past now... (106)

A woman is judged by the degree of her fertility, especially her ability to bear sons. If she is childless, she is considered a failure in her primary duty and often suffers considerably as a result (Chukukere 2). Childlessness is an experience every married woman dreads. Cynthia sincerely explains to Boma:

I cannot give you children. I am barren and you know it. I cannot imagine myself going through that trauma again. I do not have to inflict you with my barrenness. Go get another woman who can make babies for you. I love you but my love is not enough. (122)

Even Amaka in Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough* shares the same view as she tells Rev. Fr. Mclaid:

I don't want to be a wife... a mistress, yes of course, but not a wife. There is something in that word that does not suit me. As a wife, I am never free. I am a shadow of myself. As a wife, I am almost impotent. I am in prison, unable to advance in body or soul. Something gets hold of me as a wife and destroys me. When I rid myself of Obiora, things started working for me. I don't want to go back to my 'wifely' days. No, I am through with husbands. I said farewell to husbands the first day I came to Lagos. (132)

Cynthia, Amaka and Ije in Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* experience their childlessness as a taint, an inability to fulfil their functions as wives, mothers and reproducers of the family.

Iwuagwu describes Cynthia as a virtuous woman who is faithful to her husband and her infertility is not connected with infidelity. She is contrasted with Idara, the hard-hearted schemer, who desperately wants an access into the wealth of an Oil Company employee. When Idris told Idara of his wife's inability to give him a child, Idara took advantage of that vacuum. She suddenly came up with a

pregnancy tale. Idara knows that “hooking him would mean goodbye to poverty and the hardship she had suffered all her life” (198). She pressurized him with the excuse that her mother would kill her if the man responsible did not come and pay her dowry; because the worst misfortune that could befall a man in African society was to be childless, Idris gives in to Idara’s demand.

Idara eventually moves in with her two children. Cynthia is turned into a slave in her own house. Occasionally, Idara’s mother and siblings will visit and order her around disrespectfully. Idris treats her much more coldly and distantly. Idara instigates Idris to push Cynthia out of his house. The climax comes up when a domestic accident, involving Henry putting his right hand into hot water, occurs. She is thrown out eventually, she leaves for an unknown destination believing that out there might be better. Iwuagwu successfully expresses that childlessness may not necessarily be the fault of a woman as presumed in the African society. She equally condemns the social custom that make the social position of a woman dependent on if she has children or not. Mrs Isa is a representation of that unjust society. The writer equally uses Idara, her mother and siblings to condemn the sick materialistic nature of our society, who get whatever they want by fair or foul means.

Sandra, Cynthia’s friend is a lady who uses charm to hold her husband. While Sandra believes that love is an ancient history told by William Shakespeare and our forefathers, Cynthia insists that true love cannot be gotten by charms, that natural love still remains better than that got through questionable means. The writer equally indicts some women who use charms to control their husbands. The fact is that women generally share a common enemy – man. This common

enemy may be “debased, poor, irresponsible and improvident” yet these women are never interested to be freed from those “traps” marital, biological, cultural, psychological – that bind them with iron hoops to patriarchy” (Nnolim 139). These women complain bitterly about male oppression and still remain in the house with the devils – men. Amaka’s statement in *One is Enough*; “A woman’s ambition was marriage, a home that she could call her own, a man she could love and cherish and children to crown the marriage” (25) confirms endorsement. The dilemma of the woman is the dilemma of the proverbial chichidodo which hates excreta with all its soul but thrives on maggots that breed inside faeces. This means that; woman hates or at least confronts man, her vaunted oppressor, but needs love; and the love she needs for emotional fulfillment can only be provided by ‘enemy’ man (Nnolim 135). This is evident in Cynthia’s request:

Sandra dear, my marriage is crumbling; Idris just told me that he has children outside our matrimonial home. Please take me to a native doctor, I want charms that will prevent the girl from coming into this house, Idris has threatened to send me away if am not careful. Even though I am not happy, let me be allowed to stay here. (78)

Cynthia is tortured, emotionally and psychologically first by her uncle’s wife, her friend and the prophetess, secondly by Idara and her mother and thirdly ill advised by her friend Sandra. Cynthia would have complicated her problems if not for the spirit of her dead mother who appeared to her in a dream advising her not to visit the native doctor. She advised her to pray and wait for God’s blessing.

Who really tortured Cynthia most - men or women? Are women really oppressed directly by men? Are they really so powerless as to be tormented so easily by men? According to Chinwezu:

If the essence of power is the ability to get what one wants, the women are far from powerless. Women do get and always did get, what they want – be it riches, or throne, or the head of John the Baptist, or routine exemption from hardships and risks which their men folk are obliged to endure. That women operate by methods which often differ from those available to men does not in any way mean that women are bereft of power. (11)

Men do not directly oppress women. According to Orabueze, “There is no way a man can think out evil or carry it out against a woman without an active connivance of another woman. It does not lie in his nature” (167). The downfall of Cynthia’s marriage started from the first night Idris met Idara on one of his reckless outings with Tunde at the night club. Idara and her friend Nnenda are the uninvited call girls from University of Port Harcourt, who run after married men because they paid more than the young bachelors. Nnenda becomes Tunde’s girlfriend while Idara, who always escorted Nnenda to see Tunde, became Idris girlfriend as well. Subsequently, Idris told Idara about his wife and her inability to give him a child. Idara takes advantage of this vacuum, as she confesses:

I tried getting pregnant by you, but to no avail. I made sure I slept with you during my ovulation, it still didn’t happen. I sort advice and somebody said that I should sleep with another man to see if I would get pregnant. It was then that I met David Ikem who promised to help. We agreed that I would pay certain amount of money, which I did. One month after I conceived the twins and claimed they were yours. After watching you for two years, I knew that the trouble is not your wife but with you ... I thought it wise to meet David again so that the children would be fathered by one man. (201)

Who will believe that a woman can hire a man to put her in a family way in order to displace another woman? What can be more humiliating than this? The

sin is more terrible when she already knows that the fault is not Cynthia's. She destroys the happiness of a fellow woman and also pushes Idris to send her away. Idara's mother, a teacher, and an experienced mother, who would have understood the plight of the young lady, makes the situation worse for Cynthia by warning her and consistently reminding her of her predicament. This by all standard is worse than male subjugation.

Idris could succeed in oppressing Cynthia because of the active connivance of Idara and her mother as well as the secret support of his sister, Mrs Isa. "Because every man has as a boss; his wife, or his mother, or some other woman in his life, men may rule the world, but women rule the men who rule the world" (Chinweizu 12). Idris is the head though, but Idara is like a neck that controls and turns that head. Probably, if Idara had not come to the picture, Cynthia would have lived with her husband till a solution to their problem is sought. Idara knows fully well that "a woman with a fruitful womb is most precious to a man, contrariwise, a woman without a fruitful womb is of scant value to a procreative man, and holds little power over him. The quest for a fruitful womb dominates the male's behaviour once he assumes the age of puberty. It is so intense that even in England, Henry VIII, in his quest for a womb that would yield him a male heir caused him to seek annulment of his first marriage so he could marry some other woman, when the Pope denied him his wish, Henry VIII broke with the Church of Rome, set up the Church of England with himself as its head; and got his desire (Chinweizu 19).

In Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds*, Dozie, "falters once in his life for which he vows he would never forgive himself" (Nnolim 33) because he wants children desperately. Ije's only obsession is to have children for her husband,

whom she loves deeply, she does everything in the attempt to become pregnant. She visits doctors and dibia, undergoes treatments which repeatedly endanger her life, yet to no avail. For this reason, Virginia succeeds in coming between them. When she becomes pregnant and demands that Dozie marry her, Dozie knows well that this would definitely hurt Ije and that he may even lose her. In a dilemma:

he could not afford to offend either Ije or Virginia for he needs them both. He loved Ije dearly and owed his success in life to her... But he also needed Virginia, because she was carrying his baby, a part of him, and to throw her out of his house means throwing away his body, perhaps the only one he would ever have. (79)

Hence, he gives in to Virginia's demand. Dozie, Idris and Obiora in Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough*, are victims of such circumstance. Their behaviour is not unusual since "only a Nigeria in a million would not take a second wife if the first one failed to bear him a child" (Okoye 104), yet none can accomplish this without an active connivance of another woman. Some women exhibit the highest professionalism of male (husband) management. To them, man is like a domestic animal, which according to, Jilly Cooper, if treated with firmness and kindness can be trained to do most things (Fred Metcalf 162). According to Chinweizu:

He is given his assignments and made to perform them. He is routinely henpecked and spied on. If he is particularly recalcitrant, he is threatened with starvation, with loss of peace of mind or with loss of sexual privileges. He is subjected to the full force of what some Nigerian husbands call bedroom terrorism. (67)

To get whatever they desire from a man, they (women) use their circle of female friends and female relatives as spy network, gathering information on their husbands' activities especially when they are out of sight. Occasionally,

they converge to teach one another how to make any intractable husband “as calm as ice water” ... since “men of our days have refused to love, so women ... have discovered ways of following them and getting peace by any means” (Iwuagwu 74).

A popular saying goes that behind every successful man stands a woman. Behind every successful boxer, athlete or pop star is a trainer or manager. Likewise, a woman stands behind every successful man. She as a wife, mother, girlfriend, sister or mistress drives him on like a charioteer drives a horse that is pulling him along. In her hands, she holds the reins of criticism and admiration, of sexual rewards and punishment; with these she controls his ego and guides his efforts in making sure that he decisively deals with a fellow woman. Male power tends to be crude, confrontational and direct while female power tends to be sublet, manipulative and indirect. Male power seems to be hard, aggressive and boastful unlike the female power that is soft, passive and self-effacing. Women are gifted psychological maneuvers – Fitimi, Idara, Virginia (in Ifeoma Okoye’s *Behind the Cloud*) Obiora’s mother and second wife (in Flora Nwapa’s *One is Enough*) are typical examples.

If women are truly marginalized, oppressed and exploited directly by the enemy – man as alleged, if marriages were “a system built on the most cruel suffering for women” (Nawal El Saadawi 87), if a wedding ushers a woman into that prison, that house of domestic slavery, that vale of misery which is marriage” (Chinweizu, 59); would women like Ije, Virginia, Cynthia, Idara, Sandra, Fitimi, to mention but a few voluntarily and eagerly wish to remain in their matrimonial homes? The illusion of female helplessness is a handy weapon

against man, both exaggerating that weakness and shedding tears to prove it all help to get men to work for them better.

In conclusion, the study has revealed that women are truly subjected to intimidation, maltreatment and oppression in the African society. It also shows how female characters inflict pain on their fellow women. Some women seem to be more ruthless than men in their dealings with fellow women. Most of the obnoxious cultural and religious practices that subjugate and intimidate women are encouraged and honoured by some women, while some fight earnestly to abrogate them, others betray their effort. There is need for re-examination of the relationship that exist amongst women. It may be imperative to borrow the thought of Adichie, who says that, “the only way we can get away from this, is feminism. I think women should be educated on what it means to be a feminist, that we should help other women” (Onukaogu A. and Onyerionwu E. 193).

Orabueze equally agrees that the first step in regaining emancipation is for women to probe and reassess themselves. They ought to discard and disregard the outdated imbibed religious and cultural doctrine that they are born inferior (118). As soon as they become aware of their indispensability to the men, the myth of male superiority will automatically disappear (Chukwuma 25). If women see themselves as victims of oppression and stop being used as tools for victimizing their fellow victims, it will be difficult for men to directly oppress them. A desired gender justice could be achieved “in a patriarchal system where fathers rule and males matter” (Chukwu 559), once women foster positive and genuine ‘bonding’, support one another (Adimora-Ezeigbo 60) and refuse to be accomplices of female marginalization.

WIDOWHOOD PRACTICES: AN OVERVIEW

As the authors draw an attention to the misfortune in the African women's experience, they delve into the world of the widow. They expose what goes in there, how the widow is coping with widowhood, society's reaction to her condition, her pain, loss, desire and stand. A woman becomes a widow at the instance of death of her husband. Widows are found in every community of the world but in Africa, the widows become victims of a tradition that denies women of their rights and inheritance. In Nigeria, for instance, the Fundamental Rights states that every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his/her person. Accordingly, no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment. Unfortunately according to Justina Okoye:

... Widows are oppressed, discriminated against, marginalized especially when they have no grown males. This goes to prove why African women writers, in their struggle for women identity and freedom from such wickedness of patriarchy, fight relentlessly to collapse humiliation of women including widows.
(40)

In Namibia, just like every other African country, widows go through a lot of hardship that stems from tradition, religion, society and patriarchy. Most widows are left in abject penury because their in-laws who are supposed to give them succour and aid often deprive them of their husband properties and subject them to a universe of vile treatment (Akinbi 67). The maltreatments include, throwing the widow out of her matrimonial home or denying her inheritance rights, forcing her to shave her hair, wear black or white cloth through the mourning period, weep and wail loudly at intervals to show how much she misses him, or subject her to any ordeal or unpleasant tradition.

It is almost a tradition that the widow is always suspected for being responsible for the death of her husband. In Nigeria for instance, she is made to prove her innocence by following some rigorous process of absolution. This may take the form of forcing her to drink *miliozu*, (water used in washing the corpse of her late husband) to exonerate her from the accusation. This mere suspicion attracts certain opprobrium against her. A widow in the course of fulfilling funeral rites is subjugated to a greater agony than the grief of the loss of her husband. According to Onyekuru, B. some discriminatory practices against widows are reduced due to the forces of social change such as education, religion, and changes in values of society. Women however still find themselves without inheritance rights and being compelled to dehumanizing widowhood rites (356).

The excruciating widowhood practices are upheld and perpetuated by *umuokpu/umuada* (daughters of the lineage) in the Eastern part of Nigeria. they are made up of patrilineal relations of the husband-his aunts, sisters, nieces and female cousins. This formidable force is reputed to be ruthless and resolute in its decisions even in matters concerning its members. The group is equally notorious for applying rigidly the clans traditional laws and sanctions and for being easily offended. This groups in Ifeoma Okoye's *The Trial*, insist that Anayo should drink *miliozu* (water used in washing the corpse of her late husband) to prove that she has no hand in his death. Eletty their leader declares:

we have our traditional way of dealing with this type of accusation, she turned to the women, don't we? She asked. Yes! The women shouted in unison. And we must abide by it, don't we? ... Ye-e-e-s, the women shouted ... Later today, she began,

before your husband's body is committed to mother earth, you'll go through our traditional trial by ordeal to prove your innocence. If you refuse to do this we'll ostricise you. She turned to the women. Have I spoken your mind? She asked. Ye-e-s! the women shouted together. (48)

The *umuada* retains intense influence over what happens in the family in which they were born. In some cases this means near tyrannical power over women married by their 'brothers', especially at the death of any of those 'brothers'. They usually try to establish the fact that the wife has not come from another kindred to kill their relative in order to acquire his wealth (Korieh 31). The irony of the issue is that every woman in a traditional Igbo society is *Nwada* (a daughter) somewhere, while those who administer the ill treatment on her are wives somewhere else. Each time a man dies, some group of women will go home as *umuada* determined to revenge or carry out the rituals which they have received as married women in their matrimonial homes.

Remi Akujobi points out greed and poverty as the major reasons for exploitation of the widows. The urge to acquire material wealth, particularly what is considered "free" wealth controls the treatment of widows in society. All widowhood practices, including 'levirate' may serve the same purpose. In the same light, the dehumanization and deprivations the widow passes through will be nothing but a ploy to make her economically dependent and vioceseless (9). Bentina Alawari Mathias observes that in Eastern Nigeria, inhuman widowhood practices are initiated and perpetuated by the kinsmen (*umunna* and *umuada*) but the severity of these treatments depends on the socio-economic status or other attributes of the widow. The widow who is highly educated, who is a

wage employed worker, or who resides in the urban area is more protected than the widow who is not educated and resides in the rural area. Educated women do not accept some of the cultural practices especially the dehumanizing ones. They go to the court or any human right protection organization to seek for redress. The widows that suffer most are childless widows, very often they are labeled as witch. Widows, who have grown up sons especially if they are wealthy, are protected by their children from some of the cultural rites (229). The society equally respects any widow whose son is a priest or whose daughter is a Reverend Sister and this to a large extent determines the severity of the treatment given to her.

The death of a loved one brings trauma, grief and a total restructuring of one's life. In African cultural milieu, it is a period of hardship and deprivations, it includes varying degrees of physical seclusion for ritual purification. Widows truly experience economic hardship, emotional and social problems. Mee Sara, Victor's widow, in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, is torn apart by her husband's relatives. Victor died of AIDS which is regarded as strange and incurable:

Nobody had seen anything like that. He had blisters all over his body. First, they thought it was a disease of the water. then the blisters disappeared and sores came instead. He had non-stop diarrhea. He lost more than half his weight, even though there was plenty of food in his house. (103)

Sara cares so much for her husband through out this period. When the doctor could not do much, she takes him to various herbalists, who have nothing at that point to offer. Victor deteriorates and does everything in his pants. Sara nurses him until he dies. His relatives consult "all knowing" Great Ngaanga from the

River, who tells them that his wife, Mee Sara bewitched her husband. It is heart breaking. Sara looks like a frightened bird. Her face is wet with sweat, like a woman in labour. Her lips are dry as if dipped in chalk. Their living room is packed with the relatives who shout; “You killed our relative... you are a murderer” (103). Mee Sara denies causing her husband’s death but her in-laws are not convinced despite her explanation. Michael, her husband’s cousin tries to intervene but they warn him to stay clear insisting that their act is in line with their tradition. “They dragged her to the bank to withdraw their relatives’ money. They took everything from the house, even the electronic appliances” one of Victor’s sisters, a teacher ... inherited the television set for her children” (104). Sara, like a fish hauled out of water, to the ground, is helplessly harassed by her in-laws. She mourns the death of her husband while her brothers-in-law and cousins scramble for the properties. They collect everything in the house including electronic appliances, even when most of them have no electricity in their homesteads.

The Saturday after the funeral, Tate Phillipusa, Sara’s uncle, calls for a meeting with Victor’s relatives. In the meeting, he brings Victor’s colleagues, who explain that Victor died of AIDS and is not bewitched by his wife or anybody else. It is however, not surprising that Victor could get that kind of a disease considering his sexual escapades – “we all know how he loved women. He chased every dress and skirt that passed him by” (106). Despite his inadequacies, Sara loves, tolerates and nurses him till the end. Neshani Andreas writes to redefine African woman as an honour. Having made the cause of Victor’s death clear to his relatives, Tate Phillipusa declares:

One more thing, before we go. Since you have stripped her of everything that belonged to your relative, Victor, we ask you to take her black clothes as well. She will not wear any of those mourning clothes. Why should she? (107)

Sara protests feebly, as a powerless widow, who is in the midst of mourning. The concept of “voice throwing” by Siga Jajne, quoted in Kolawole Modupe states:

I believe that by ‘throwing’ in one’s voice, a disruption of discourse can take place. The act of throwing one’s voice can create an epistemic violence to discourse that will create a space for hitherto unheard voices. (6)

Tate Phillipusa, lends such voice that really fights for Sara. The women’s voice throwing is not a new phenomenon. It has been in existence but in varied intensities and restricted forms. Sometimes, women deliberately choose to refuse to throw their own voice.

According to Akachi Ezeigbo, “women have the tendency to keep quiet and suffer in silence” (15) However women’s voices even when vocally silent can yet make powerful statements through silent actions. After all “silence, is power” (Tavis 271). For instance, Mama, in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, does not talk back or challenge Papa’s violence against her. She takes action that speaks the loudest. Her action may be wrong, though Chinyelu Ojukwu defends that “there is an extent to which a woman would be subjugated, oppressed and intimidated and she would be forced to defend herself courageously” (116). In *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, Kauna decides to be voiceless, not because she does not have a mouth. The voicelessness also may be used as an instrument in

order to subvert patriarchal traditions. She is humiliated terribly by her husband's frequent infidelity and battering and in a moment of utmost distress she becomes silent.

Unlike Sara, Kauna refuses to cry on the sudden death of her husband. Her best friend conveys to her:

There is a rumour that apparently you are not behaving like a widow... That you are not mourning the death of your husband... You are not crying... No tears ... Your face is so dry that some people say they are embarrassed ... (48)

Despite being a widow in the midst of mourning, she strongly maintains her stand; "I cannot lie to myself and to everybody else in this village. They all know how I was treated in my marriage. Why should I cry? For what? For my broken ribs? For my baby, the one he killed inside me while beating me? For cheating on me publicly? For what... Ali?" (49). This is rare in African traditional society. Though the wailing on the death of a man is not limited to his widow alone. His other relatives (both men and women) as well as friends join. There is an undeclared competition on who wails longer and more bitterly than the other. Obviously the widow, who is more or less regarded as the owner of the corpse, is expected to come out top in the competition, hence the saying, an outsider does not weep louder than the owner of the corpse (Korieh, 2.2).

Apart from not crying for Shange, Kauna also refuses to speak or designate someone to give a speech on her behalf at her late husband's funeral. It is a custom that the speech on behalf of the widow will contain some favourable words which may have been told or written by the widow herself and must reflect her personal sentiments. When Shange's cousin, Mee Kiito asks her,

“Will you not have somebody say something on your behalf about your husband as all widows do?” Kauna, without mincing words replies, “... No, I will not have anybody say anything on my behalf. There is nothing to be said” (137). She disobeys the custom which is equivalent to a taboo. The church service program has a long lists of both speakers and the ‘on behalf’ speeches followed by the speaker’s name as follow:

Omuwiliki Gwoshituthi (M.C)	Mee Kiito
Funeral service	Paster Shoopala
Welcoming remarks	Tate Lukasa
On behalf of Shange’s clan	Tate Salomoon
On behalf of the widow	
On behalf of the widow’s clan	Mee Frenne Nangolo
On behalf of the neighbours	Tate Shuuya
On behalf of the friends	Mr Jackson
On behalf of the colleagues	Rickie (158)

The on behalf of the widow speech is the only item on the list that shows a blank space. This tells a lot by what is left untold. This is not only a big blow to patriarchy but also a protest against the hypocritical practice that a widow must sing praises of her late husband at the funeral even if he illtreated her while alive (Ogbeide, 58). According to Kauna:

... No! I am not going to tell the lies that widows tell at their husbands’ funeral. I am not going to say what an honourable, loving and faithful husband he was, while everybody in the village knows what type of a man he was. No, I will not make a laughing stock of myself. No, not because of Shange... (139)

Kauna’s repetitive use of the word ‘No’ is a clear indication of total refusal to honour, like other widows, the obnoxious culture. Her decision is not only against her late husband but against the tradition and hypocritical religious set

up that over looks all the sins that a man may commit provided he fulfils his financial obligation to the church. When the master of ceremony repeatedly calls for a voluntary speaker on behalf of the widow, and nobody moves, people began to whisper. Later, Kuku Peetu, her favourite uncle spontaneously decided to hold the speech. Peetu appears in a “navy-blue wrinkled blazer, pink shirt and yellow pants” (159), which contrasts with the morning scene. Kauna’s solid decision to be silent makes unspeakable oppressive experiences visible (Weiss, Bettina, 18). Silence, according to Audre Lorde quoted by Stone Elena:

... is a site not only of resistance but of transformation, the home from which new dreams and visions are born. ... silences are deep pools where ‘each one of us holds an incredible reserve of creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling. (20)

Kauna resistant silence establishes an autonomous voice for herself within the patriarchal structure.

Kauna’s consciousness seems to be awakening immediately after the death of her husband which invariably is the symbol of patriarchy. When Shange’s relatives come to know about the wealth of Shange – “We need to know about his money, bank accounts, insurance policies, his cattle and all sorts of other things, who owes him what and who does he owe...” (100). Kauna responds “Do you honestly think I would know anything about Shange’s wealth?” she reminds them of how her husband treated her and as such would not entrust her with his money or the papers being demanded. She even refers them to his mistress – the woman he built a white house. Unlike before, she bravely responds to their questions and counter questions. She could not be intimidated. At one point, she tells them, “you can get angry and shout at me, but it will do

no good. I know nothing and I can't make things up" (101). At the death of Shange, Kauna gets some freedom and liberation. She now asserts herself, talks loud and her real self is revealed having been mistreated and pushed to the wall of frustration. Her husband's death has freed her from several years of physical battering from a man who had no regards or respect for her feelings.

Kauna is eventually stripped of her husband's belongings and sent away with her children. Without any means of sustenance, she leaves with her children happier, more ready and determined to build a better life for herself and her children. The novelist uses Kauna's transformation from the abused woman to a strong independent, liberated 'silent' widow to demonstrate that the battle against oppressive patriarchal structures could be achieved. Kauna's analogy of the Mahangu Millet is as illustrative as her transformation. She compares herself to Mahangu Millet, the plant the women of Oshaantu cultivate. The plant is repeatedly destroyed by cattle – considered as men's property and under their care. Despite the merciless destruction, the Mahangu finds the strength to repair itself and grow better often bigger and more vibrant than the millet destroyed and threatened by any danger.

Andreas adopts a first person narrative point of view and a subtle pattern of poetic justice. Her choice of words are simple. It obeys the simple sentence structural pattern of English language – subject, verb, object, adjunct, adverb (SVOAA). The essence of her linguistic simplicity may be to encourage wide readership. The author also includes words from Oshiwambo, her native language in Namibia, with translations in her glossary.

The narration of the story through Mee Ali does not allow the reader to judge the characters based on the three cardinal critical parameters – what the character does, what he says about himself or herself and what other characters say concerning him or her. There is an excessive infusion of personal feelings and subjectiveness as the reader hears the voice of the author instead of the action and personal speeches of the characters. Though as a writer, Andreas is free to agree or disagree with her society, but in doing so, she should stay detached and unstained by her personal prejudice. She should be objective enough to allow her readers see her points, agree or disagree with them. For instance:

I should be used to this by now, I think, but I feel angry every time I see Shange behaving like this towards his wife. His latest marital affair is with a young woman from the nearby village. He is often seen with her at the *cuca* shop belonging to his friend, the local teacher, Mr Jackson. Shange has built her a two-roomed blockhouse, painted white. Since then, his wife Kauna and I have nicknamed her the woman from the ‘white house’. Shange does not even bother to conceal his relationship. His car is often seen in the broad daylight packed in front of the white house... I don’t think he has any respect for his wife at all. (3)

From the above illustration, it is obvious that the narrator is subjective. She makes the reader see the misdeeds of Shange in her words rather than the actions or words of the characters. The author and Mee Ali share a common identity which reveals “the voice of Jacob operating under the hands of Essau” (Muo 259). The author mirrors her voice on the status and subjugations of women, in post-colonial Namibia.

Using Kauna, Andreas implies that a widow can stand against conventional widowhood practices that oppress her. She must not imitate, she can carve out her own principles and the ideologies because eradicating long-standing traditional practices does not take place overnight. Akinbi suggests that an education of the girl child therefore should be very important since it may serve as future security against various forms of violence against women especially widowhood practices (72).

CHAPTER FOUR

CIVIL WAR AND BUSINESS OF TRAFFICKING – THE ROLES OF WOMEN

This chapter implores the female experiences and their roles in the Nigerian Biafran War as well as the business of human trafficking.

INTRA GENDER OPPRESSION IN ADIMORA-EZEIGBO'S *TRAFFICKED*

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* is a three hundred and eleven paged book of twenty-nine unequal chapters. Nneoma and Efe are used by the author to expose the intricacies involved in the abominable trade of human trafficking. The two women share similar experiences of being tricked into becoming victims of trafficking. In Europe they are subjected to prostitution, severe torture and dehumanization. Lack of basic social rights makes it extremely difficult for the victims to escape. Despite all odds, the girls braved it and managed to escape from their captors but are shortly caught by the police and deported back to Nigeria at the rehabilitation center Oasis. Efe later gets married while Nneoma secures a place at the university.

Adimora-Ezeigbo uses the victims to expose the ordeals surrounding the crime of sex trafficking. Sex trafficking is a modern-day slavery whereby women are forced into transborder prostitution. According to Jorgan Carling "... between 1990 and 2005, 40,000 to 50,000 Nigerian women have become victims of trafficking (sexual exploitation, forced labour, the removal of organs or servitude)" (45). Using Efe and Nneoma, the author reveals the physical and emotional horror faced by the trafficked as well as their attempts and efforts to escape from their captors. Adimora-Ezeigbo presents trafficking as a very

profitable modern business because acquisition of labour is free in most cases, as victims are kidnapped women forced to carry out any assignment given to them.

Efe and Nneoma share similar experiences of being tricked into the dubious job opportunities and economic freedom. Nneoma discloses the extent to which traffickers could go to convince their victims of how legitimate their businesses are. She recounts how she travels to Lagos with other young women between the ages of seventeen and twenty to meet their sponsors. “In no time, they get passports and flight tickets for us, and keep them, they show us pictures of the schools where we’ll be teaching and give us appointment letters signed by people with English name” (127). The above statement makes it hard for Nneoma to doubt their genuineness, despite being a graduate and a qualified teacher, she falls a victim. Efe on the other hand is deceived into becoming a victim through an advertisement in a newspaper. Quite a number of them are interviewed in a decent normal office. Some are rejected. About ten of them that are selected are given travel schedule shortly. However, that none of the men interviewed was taken could have alerted them to the danger ahead if not for desperation or naivety.

The women are made to understand that they will pay back their debts to the agency when they start earning money in Britain. To buttress this point, they are forced to swear an oath using Bible and an image of an *arusi*. Nneoma becomes worried... “we have to take an oath and they tell us the consequences will be severe if we disregard the terms of agreement, disobey them or cut links without settling our debts” 128. Efe and her group are taken to a shrine somewhere between Lagos and Ibadan for oath taking.

At the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Eddie and Marrie, their Nigerian contacts, introduced them to a man and woman who will travel with them to Europe. At the airport, they are told for the very first time that they will get to Italy before travelling to Britain. In Italy, Nneoma laments, “I discovered I am trafficked, I have no say in the matter” (128). She is handed over to Madam Dollar, who owns her and other victims. She (Madam Dollar) keeps them prisoner in her flat and nothing comes between her and money.

In disgust, Nneoma details the torture and exploitation the trafficked go through. Nneoma narrates:

I am completely devastated by the life I’m forced to live: hit the night street, waiting for customers ... I sometimes refuse to cooperate with the customers... when they refuse to use condom or make one of their nasty demands... when I am difficult, the men beat me and throw me out of their cars... I go home with little or no money. Madam raves at me and captain beats me up... sometimes, while we are standing in the red-light area where other prostitutes line up, youths come shouting, *Putu! Putu!* At such moments, I am completely overwhelmed by shame. (129-130)

This depicts torture meted on the victims to ensure total submission which will erase any thought of emancipation. Siddharth Kara puts it rightly that “the more broken a slave’s spirit was, the more acceptance she was of the life of a slave” (11). Though the women blame their misfortune on extreme poverty and unemployment but Justina Okoye advocates that “parents have a task, a challenge of ensuring their children’s security and holistic formation from childhood by inculcating in them sound moral, social, cultural and religious values” (68).

The terrible ordeal of the victims correlates as they express how they are sold from one pimp or broker to another to perpetuate their slavery. According to Efe:

Madam Gold sold me to a pimp a white man-after four years of slaving for her. I worked for my 'new owner' for two years before I escaped. Then I fled to Verona and teamed up with a prostitute I met there and worked independently for about another year because I wanted to save some money to return home. If I had had money of my own, I would have returned home straight after my escape. (100)

Just like Efe, Nneoma is sold to Baron after three years of servitude to Madam Dollar, thus cancelling her debt. Baron, according to Nneoma, "is a sadist. He rapes and beats me... Baron locks me up in the flat, and does not allow me to go out except when he takes me with him" (132). This is an evidence of slavery in the contemporary society.

Efe and Nneoma represent the fraction of women who are bent on freeing themselves from the shackles of subjugation and oppression. The ability of the women to escape from their captors despite the tightly watched environment and their trafficker's threat confirm this. Nneoma's escape depicts the courage, determination, and risk involved in a desire for freedom. As soon as Baron stops to buy newspaper, in line with the special attributes of snail-determination, effective skills and sensitivity of the snail sense feminism, she quietly opens the door and disappears round the corner of the next street. She roams the city for two days until she meets Chindo Okehi, a Nigerian lady, who takes her home. According to Shalini Nadaswaran; "the climax of the novel, which depicts the female character's total transcendence into empowerment, is seen when they

experience the threat of being re-trafficked” (170). Efe meets Baron, Nneoma’s former trafficker who renames himself Fyneface and is tricked into a relationship with him. When Efe finds out that Fyneface is indeed Baron, she confronts him and threatens to expose him. The courage displayed by Efe as well as Nneoma represents women who are ready to assert their authority and total emancipation.

TRAFFICKERS AND THE TRAFFICKED: AN EVALUATION OF THE FEMALE CHARACTERS

According to Justian Okoye:

... women are part of propagators of certain ethnocentric social ills, violence and violent conflicts, corruption, fraud and cultural aberrations. Today in Nigeria, human rights and woman rights are in jeopardy because women play major roles as traffickers, kidnappers and other criminal acts. (63)

Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked* is a true representation of modern-day form of slavery whereby women are used as commodities in the sex trade. It is a terrible type of business that traumatizes the victims so much that rehabilitation of their psyche becomes a pre-requisite. It may be necessary to note that women are collaborators in this game. Tracing Nneoma’s ordeal and involvement in the international sex trade, a friend and class mate of hers informs her about the teaching appointment in the United Kingdom. “I head for her hometown, which is near mine, to find out if the invitation is still open... we travel to Lagos together to meet her sponsors...” (127). A woman is used as conveyer of the idea. Probably Nneoma wouldn’t have been a victim if her friend hasn’t come up with the information. The second stage of this business involves Eddie and Maria, the Nigerian contacts. According to Nneoma, “while in Lagos, we relate

with just two people, Eddie and Maria. Everything seems normal. They joke with us as if we were their younger sisters” (127). It may be necessary to note that all the trafficked are women, mostly teenagers, so the use of a woman to erase fear or doubt at this stage becomes imperative. At the International Airport, on the verge of departure, the victims are handed over from Eddie and Maria to a man and a woman who will travel with them. The woman that replaces Maria is meant to accompany them to Europe to sustain confidence and legitimacy of the nefarious activity.

In Italy, Nneoma eventually is sold to Madam Dollar, who makes a hell of their life in Rome. Madam Dollar owns them and Captain, her bodyguard. They walk the night, selling sex to Italian men and foreigners for her. She insists on dressing her girls in revealing clothes to ensure customers (267). The ‘shylock’ pours out her venom on Nneoma each time she comes home with little or no money; “The less money you bring me, the longer you will have to stay with me, you know ... you must pay me back every kobo I used to buy you” (130).

Nneoma narrates:

I walk the streets of Rome for Madam Dollar for three years and still she claims I have not repaid my debt. There is no hope of escape. I do not speak Italian. I know no one in the city. I fear the police like plague as I don’t have valid documents. So, I remain with Madam Dollar. Biding my time; dreaming of freedom.
(131)

This type of oppression and intimidation meted out on Nneoma by Madam Dollar as informed by Focu feminism, is neither institutionalized nor forced by patriarchy or tradition. After three years of active service Madam Dollar sells her to Baron. This implies extension of her perpetual enslavement. Efe’s

experience is not as detailed as Nneoma making it difficult for the readers to know who are at the helm of affairs. She sees an advertisement on a newspaper attends the interview and is fortunate to be selected. In her words; “to cut a long story short, we were taken to Italy and ended up in Palermo. It was terrible. I was sold to a woman called Madam Gold, a Nigerian” (99). The author has not given an in-sight of the people involved prior to Madam Gold during the process of trafficking. However, Madam Gold is as good as Nneoma’s Madam Dollar. She (Madam Gold) “was vicious. She used us shamelessly, made us walk the streets every night” (99). The narrator’s choice of words; terrible, vicious and shamelessly confirms the state of torture and humiliation they are subjected to. After four years of slaving, Madam Gold sold her to a white man – a pimp. The words ‘slaving’ and ‘sold’ portrays a relationship between a master and his domestic animals.

There is no clear difference between the treatment received from the male traffickers and that from the female traffickers. The narrative of Nneoma and Efe, the trafficked, reveals constant state of slavery experienced as they are sold from one pimp to another irrespective of gender. Madam Gold and Madam Dollar are synonymous with Baron and the white pimp; none is portrayed as a credible character, worthy of emulation. Though nothing is said about Madam Gold and Madam Dollar’s religious or educational background but to a large extent, they are presented as principal actors. It is inexcusable for any man or women, to engage in the business of human trafficking because of austere measures. There is no unity in slavery. Reforms and policies designed to abolish it should be encouraged and effectively implemented. The government should

create job opportunities to discourage young school leavers from travelling overseas in search of greener pastures.

In conclusion, women are the most vulnerable and the worst hit in this act. The question is, is it proper for Maria and the other woman at the Airport to be part of this exercise? Why should they be used as accomplices? Could this business have been successful without them? In all fairness, they may have been ignorant of the nature of business the girls are being prepared for in Europe, but the truth is that they (women) have been used as tools to accomplish the business of human slavery. Would Efe, Nneoma and the other teenagers have proceeded with the venture without their presence? The mere presence of Maria for instance erases doubt or fear and reinstates their confidence that there is a mother in the house and so all is well. The chief executive posts of Madam Gold and Madam Dollar in this business deserves a serious attention.

The evidence of women being the convener of international sex trade reechoes in Saadawi's *Women at Point Zero*. Sharifa is a female pimp. She presents herself to Firdaus as a mother, offers her shelter, comfort and clothes, but turns out to be more exploitative than the previous men in her life. According to her (Sharifa), "my skin is soft, but my heart is cruel and my bite deadly" (54). Being a woman, Firdaus has some confidence in her, not knowing that she is hunting for girls she would initiate into prostitution. Ideally a woman or mother should be a symbol of nurturance. She should be a trusted ally and a shoulder to lean on, but unfortunately, the likes of Madam Gold, Madam Dollar, Maria betray such trust. Why should some women wield their power over their weak sisters?

Why should they allow themselves to be used as agents of female exploitation? Is there no decent form of acquiring materialism other than becoming a pimp? Did tradition or patriarchy impose such posts on them? How can they use their fellow women as unpaid sex workers? What is the difference between this type of oppression, Baron's persecution and that associated with patriarchal and cultural structures? There is evidence of intra gender subjugation in Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*. Women are used as the traffickers against their fellow sex (trafficked). An adoption of Focu feminism is imperative. There is need for a positive female bonding, a biblical golden rule, empathy and love.

FEMALE EXPERIENCES/ROLES IN ADIMORA-EZEIGBO'S *ROSES AND BULLETS*

The Nigerian civil war, fought around 1967 and 1970, between the Nigerian Federal forces and the break away republic of Biafra, unleashed a humanitarian crisis in Biafra. The Biafrans, who are the people from Eastern Nigeria especially Igbos, were all victims. Some of them were either killed in the outbreak of hostilities in the wake of the failure of Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference of September, 1966 or died in the actual war (Udumukwu 226). At the end of the war, "the no victor, no vanquished" refrain spread by the warring parties was for fetched. Anthonia Makwemoisa Yakubu records that:

Over a million Igbo died from the war, thousands were mentally and physically displaced, hundreds could not claim back their houses and landed properties after the war, many of the soldiers could not be absorbed back into the federal army they were either asked to resign or were dismissed, and most importantly, the war survivors still carry the horrors and scars of the two and a half years war. (299)

According to Onyemaechi Udumukwu, “wars and other forms of civil conflicts are not initiated by women, but women are drawn into these conflicts willingly. The Nigerian Civil War was exemplary of such male-initiated conflicts which affect women adversely” (227), women are rendered powerless and dependent. The civil war generated a body of literature in the major genres. Apart from Chimamanda Adichie who was born seven years after the war and Buchi Emecheta who was in Britain at the time of the war and made up a story from what people told her, most of the literary works are authored by people who experienced the war directly.

Akachi Ezeigbo’s title “Roses and Bullets” suggest love and war. According to Chris Anyokwu, love and war can also be

interpreted in gender terms, that is, as gender allegory. “love” may be seen as female or feminine while “war” can be interpreted as male or masculine. Put differently, “love” is Beauty while “war” is Beast. And both Beauty and Beast reside in all of us. (9)

The war and its outcome bring out the beast in human beings which would have been hidden under normal circumstances. The rose garden signifies beauty and love. It can be compared to the relationship between Eloka and Ginika which flourishes as the roses in the garden blossom and withers and dies as the rose garden “turned into a wilderness” (354). Eloka sighed as he stared at the tangle of weeds, thorns and roses, and felt he had lost everything that made life worth living.

Roses and Bullets is centered on the tragic events of the Nigerian-Biafra civil war. It is divided into five parts: the beginning, before the beginning, the

middle, the end and after the end. Ginika, the heroine, whose education is disrupted by war, just like many other children, teenagers and adults in tertiary institutions, gets married to Eloka. Eloka is an undergraduate of civil engineering. Their love and marriage at a point become affected by the war and its effect. Eloka is an only son. He later joins the army. Ginika and Eloka love each other. Eloka considers it not necessary to have a baby during the war which is filled with hunger and lack of health facilities.

His mother pesters Ginika to give her a grand child. When Ozioma, her sister-in-law goes to stay with Ijeamasi, who had a baby recently, Eloka's mother becomes so hard on Ginika. Out of frustration, she leaves with Janet for a party at Nkwerre where she is drugged and raped by an unknown soldier. This results to a pregnancy. She confides in Aunty Chito. They go in search of Eloka to inform him of the predicament, but cannot locate him. She therefore later informs her parents in-law who send her away in anger. Her father and her step mother also reject her. She lives with Auntie Chito. She delivers a baby boy who dies shortly after birth. Ginika weeps uncontrollably blaming herself of being responsible for the malformation and death of the baby. She believes she starves him in the womb to death (Odewumi 148).

At the end of the war, Eloka comes home with Boma. Eloka is very anxious to meet his wife. He is shocked on what happen. The next day, Ginika comes to explain things for him. Eloka is so disappointed that he refuses to listen further and ask her to leave. Ginika goes home, locks herself up in her room refusing to eat or talk to anybody. While mourning Eloka's rejection, some soldiers arrest her for killing sergeant Sule, who dies while being circumcised to be able to

marry Ginika. She is brutally gang-raped and detained. Uncle Ray and Udo attempt to rescue her but could not. Udo informs Nwakire, Ginika's brother, who confronts Eloka. After some heated argument, he shoots Eloka, he runs home, locks himself in the room and also shoots himself. Ginika is later released by Miss Taylor, her teacher. She takes her to Lagos by air where she is admitted for six months in an orthopedic hospital. She recovers and is discharged from the hospital. She takes qualifying examinations for two universities and passes two of them to study journalism in Nsukka university and education in a university that is newly opened in Benin City. She prefers journalism to education, Miss Taylor arranges everything and also helps her to earn a scholarship.

Apart from preservation of the history and memory of the war for posterity which basically informs Chinua Achebe's literary text, *There was a Country*, Ezeigbo portrays some of the events that occurred before, during and after the Nigerian Civil War. The official proclamation, that the war is ended, could not restore peace for the people. Some people who survived the war lost their lives to the after-effects of the war. Nwakire and Eloka for instance survived the war but cannot survive the domestic violence. The photographic images of unquantifiable human disaster caused by the Nigerian civil war remain permanently engraved in the consciousness of the survivors (Adaobi Muo 249). Like most other war literatures, women and children are the worst hit. Apart from the exemption of being conscripted into the army to bear arms at the war front, women also play vital roles during the war in order to save life.

During the Nigerian civil war, the legitimate instrument of warfare was starvation. The issue of hunger and starvation was fundamental. Insects and animals like rats and lizards become dietary delicacies and sources of protein. The terrible outcome of Nigeria's policy of starvation on Biafra evident on starvation induced kwashiorkor is also exemplified in Chinua Achebe's *Beware, Soul Brother*; "The air was heavy with odours of diarrhea of unwashed children with washed-out ribs and dried up bottoms struggling in labour steps behind blown empty bellies" (23). People find it extremely difficult to eat three square meals. Udo explains the situation to Ginika:

There is no problem at home except that life is becoming impossible. Food is getting scarcer. Do you know that many Oma-Oyi people queue up at the relief centres to beg for food – cornmeal, salted stock fish, corned beef, tinned fish, dried milk and rice, planes fly into the country? (286)

Ginika's aged grandmother suffers from Kwashiorkor. Ginika laments that there is no food in the house:

I went to the WCC centre a number of times but stopped when I couldn't get anything. The man in charge wanted to have sex with me before giving me anything and I refused... I heard that even some Roman Catholic Priests slept with girls before they gave them relief materials. I don't know if this is true but I don't want to find out. (322)

The situation is so bad that Udo pretends to be shell-shocked before he could only receive "two tins of corned beef, some dry milk and a small packet of rice" (324). The air raids and the starvation, through the prevention of food supplies being carried to the Eastern Region were war techniques employed by the Federal Government to wreck havoc on Biafra.

The author reveals in subtle way the contributions and risks taken by women during the war in order to save life. For instance, when many centres have nothing to give, even to the refugees whom they usually give priority, Ginika decided to go to *ahia attack* (attack trade). She can no longer bear to see the despair of her aunties eyes and agony of seeing the children cry for food. The risky venture is supposed to last for three days on reaching the end of the safe zone, where the lorry will wait for them. One day to trek to the market; the second day to buy and assemble the things bought and third day to return to meet the driver (328). The journey, however is fruitless as they are ambushed on their way back. Ginika abandons all she has bought to escape for her dear life. Out of twenty people who went to attack trade, only eight survived. Eunice was one of the twelve that lost their lives. Ginika mourns:

What did it mean that Eunice and the others were shot in the ambush and were lying dead in the forest? As the lorry jolted out of the village, she wept beside Nkeonyelu who was too depressed to say a word to her. She wept for Eunice –another flower has withered in the land ... (330)

This depicts the extent women could go to save their household. At the end of the war, people do not have Nigerian currency to buy what they need. Ginika has to prepare *akara* and sell to the soldiers. After selling she would go to Orié market to buy food stuff for the house. It is during this period that Sule got to know her.

Ginika also saves Udo from soldiers on conscription mission. She uses all forms of tactics ranging from showing them his brothers and husband's pictures in

army uniforms, Udo's scarred belly an evidence of appendix recently taken out, falling and weeping at the soldiers feet to reminding them of the drama *Mammy Wota* which she played mermaid in 11 Div in Nnewi. The officer's face softened and he commanded his men to release Udo when Ginika states, "I played mermaid and my husband wrote and directed the play. He has since joined the army. We are true Biafrans. Please, have mercy on my little brother" (234). This episode in line with Snail Sense feminism depicts an imitation of a wise, sensitive, resilient and determined creature snail to achieve her aim in a war period. Ginika is a twenty year old girl, who, like a snail, may not be physically strong, but displays a survival strategy that enables her overcome some group of armed solders. To make sure that Udo will never be conscripted, she persuades Eloka to take Udo as his batman.

Women are the prime targets of adversity in war. Women become widows overnight. Many fatherless children are kept in the refugee camps. There is so much uncertainty, Eloka insists his wife will not be pregnant till the war ends. Ekenma loses her husband, Ejike Okoro, when his house is bombed. Mgboli loses her two children in one day. She fed her children on cassava she bought from Orié market thinking it was the type one should boil and eat, not knowing it was the poisonous variety. Njide loses her life when a stray bullet hits her. In addition, women are sexually oppressed by soldiers at any slightest opportunity. When Ginika and Auntie Chito set out to search for Eloka, about four different cars stopped but when each learned that Ginika was travelling with her auntie, they started their cars and sped away. Auntie Chito laments on how these men spoil young girls. Moral laxity is at its peak. Soldiers rape women and confiscate people's property with impunity. Lieutenant Ugoro spikes Ginika

drink in a party at Nkwerre and rapes her. The rape results to pregnancy eventually which later annuls her marriage. At the end of the war, she is also gang-raped by three soldiers in the Barracks. They accused her of killing Sergeant Sule:

You don't kill Sergeant Sule. You go see pepper today. Nobody fit save you; you go pay for your crime... Na you tell Sule make him go circumcise himself before you allow him to touch you. No be so *ashawo*? The wound get infection you don't kill better man, you bastard rebel! (256)

They abducted her and locked her up in a room in the Barracks. As she struggled to free herself, they empowered her and pushed her to the ground, covered her mouth as she screamed, raped her and sprained her ankle. This is however, a subtle indictment on the soldier's horrible and shameless attitude. There is a reflection of the author's use of pidgin as a medium of communication amongst uneducated Nigerian soldiers. According to Motanya et al, pidgin is usually regarded as the language of the uneducated. It is mostly used by artisans, drivers, cooks, soldiers, or petty traders. It has no native speakers, but it is used by people who are native speakers of other languages (41). Udo's observation in the military camp as he followed uncle Ray to lodge a complaint against the three soldiers who abducted Ginika, confirms this assertion. According to Udo, the soldier's "English was good unlike that of the other soldier who spoke pidgin" (359).

Adimora-Ezeigbo's Igbo pedigree is also evident in her myriad of Igbo nomenclatures in the novel. She provides translations for all the Igbo lexical items for ease of reference and desire to establish the relevance of these Igbo

speech norms. The reader sees elements of these in Philomena's admiration of Ginika's mode of dressing in a green skirt and yellow top "*Igbojekwe*, you will kill the men with your looks" (58). This buttresses more her gorgeous look. In relation to Ginika's first menstrual experience, Auntie Lizzy advises, "you have become a complete woman. So you must take care of yourself and keep the boys at bay. If you do anything with them *afo ime achaala*, pregnancy will come" (78). The Igbo lexicon is an emphasis on the portrayal of the undesirable pregnancy outside wedlock as the implication of not keeping the boys at bay at this stage of her life.

Gender expectations and roles are perpetuated by Auntie Lizzy, "Bend down properly to sweep, *ukwu ruo gi ala*, you hear? (79). This is what is expected from any girl child in African cultural society because she will some day do these chores in her husband's house.

Adimora-Ezeigbo expresses her admiration of nature and its resources by referring to "*ube and udara* trees, all growing luxuriantly, as if the soil around them was constantly fortified with fertilizer" (59). Hence, Ginika feasted her eyes on the numerous bunches of *udara* fruit up in the one of the trees. The disappointment and frustration of Eloka's mother over her son and Ginika's decision not to have a baby during the war, is captured in the following expression:

Lekwenu muo, look at me-o. Why do people get married? ... chei! So we came to your father's house to marry you to come here and be staring us in the face? So you want to move about in the house empty, *i na-ekpokoghari ebea?* (223).

The above usages depict perceptions of people about events and situations at different points in the war tale.

In conclusion, *Roses and Bullets*, presents a complete picture of the Nigerian civil war, providing some specific and very important contributions of female gender in the warring period. It may be pertinent to note that only the men participate in the war. They are the ones that join willingly or are forcefully conscripted into the army. “In all the records and literature of the Nigerian Civil War, there is no mention of a female soldier fighting on either side the divide – the Nigerian or Biafran government” (Yakubu 306). Many of the women help along with other civilians to work in the various directorates that keep the day to day operation of the war machinery working. For instance Ginika, with the help of her father in-law works as the chief refugee officer of Ama-Oyi Local Council. She helps in the relief services rendered to refugees in the area. Janet equally works there. Njide works with the Red-Cross. She was one of the three girls selected by the Red Cross to accompany some children with worst kwashiorkor cases, to Garbon to look after them. She was hit by a stray bullet as they followed behind the troops who were fighting (263).

Like Robert Kellog et al rightly state, a work of fiction, speaks in many voices (275). *Roses and Bullets* reflects this assertion through the characters. There is mounting fear of the women as their husbands are removed from them to fight a war. Auntie Chito for instance could not be consoled when Raymond her husband, who is a school principal, is drafted to join the Military Intelligence. Thousands of women lose their husbands and sons on the battlefield. With the commencement of the forced conscription exercise, boys as young as thirteen years are torn from the warmth of their mothers to fight a war (Yakubu 308).

WOMEN AS AGENTS OF FEMALE SUBJUGATION IN THE WAR SITUATION

One of the remarkable things during the war is people's ability to adapt to the situation of economic hardship and social insecurity engendered by the war. According to Chinyere Nwahunanya this adaptability is exhibited as a result of refugee problem. People turn into their brothers' keepers overnight, either because of sheer humanism or because of an awareness that they could be in similar position of deprivation (180). Refugees, lack of accommodation, starvation, diseases become a pattern of life at this period. Air raids and stray bullets constantly kill Biafrans in hundreds and thousands. Nobody can predict what happens. The war disrupts education at all levels-from primary to tertiary. All the schools are shut down and school compounds are turned into refugee camps. The hospitals are affected. Dr. Ubaka Ezeuko stops going to work because there are no drugs in the hospital (287). The death rate increases in various refugee camps because the sick have no access to proper health care. It is not surprising that Eloka insists on not having a baby until the war ends. When Ginika tells Janet about the death of her classmate, Njide, who is a member of Red Cross, Janet in a solemn voice; "The war has taken so many people. This is why I try to be happy whenever I can. I don't know when I will die. At least let me enjoy my life before I go". (263)

The effects of the civil war on women as well as the children cannot be overemphasized as they are the prime targets of adversity in war. The war produced overnight widows and fatherless children. The women were brutally raped by soldiers. The study also reveals people's ability to adapt to the

situation of economic hardship and social insecurity engendered by the refugee problems, starvation, and deprivation. Due to uncertainties, people suddenly become humane, doing unto others what they will expect from them in a similar situation of hardship. Couples are depicted as largely complementary with husbands being supportive of their wives and vice versa. To a reasonable extent, the frequency of domestic violence is reduced. Most male and female characters are generally pleasant and very appealing.

There are traumas, catastrophies and tensions that need to be eased off. Even at the end of war, surviving the peace become another type of 'war' fought submissively with the 'vitorious' federal soldiers who march menacingly through the Biafran streets, callously killing people at the slightest provocation and raping women (Yakubu 312). The havoc wreaked on women is so intense that domestic violence seems to be insignificant. In the text, however there exists a relatively completentarity between male and female roles. Apart from Chief Odunze who keeps extramarital affairs and Dr. Ubaka Ezeuko who exhibits some patriarchal tendencies and abuses her daughter for returning late from a dance other male characters are mostly warm, yet there is prevalent of intra gender subjugation. Women oppression by fellow sex is ever present but relatively hidden and ignored. Such oppression goes unreported and this makes it difficult to measure the true extent of the problem.

The relationship between Ginika and Auntie Lizzy, her step mother is fraught with conflicts and problems. Auntie Lizzy is described as "sour and bad-tempered, distant and aloof" (7). When Philo visits Ginika, Auntie Lizzy asks Ginika afterwards, where she picked up that girl that looked so crude and did

not measure up to her class (52). The day she sleeps in her brother's room during a thunderstorm, Auntie Lizzy finds out and reports to their father who descends on them before they could explain. Ginika travels to Enugu at any slightest opportunity. A school friend once ask her why she prefers to spend her holiday in Enugu instead of Mbaino. She replies; "I like being with my aunt and her family and feel at home with her more than with my father or my stepmother" (103). Auntie Lizzy nags all day:

Ginika, where did you go? Has the time for lunch not passed or you want me to prepare it? Sometimes, it was, you will go to Orié market to buy the things we need; I am too tired to go today, or why do you allow that man, Eloka, to visit so often, and to take you to his house? (192)

Living with her becomes too much of a strain and watching her father descend more into gloom saps her energy and cast a shadow on her happiness. Her marriage to Eloka against her father's wish is a means of escape from her home especially when Nwakire has gone back to his battalion, Monday has also joined the army and Mrs Ndefo has flown to America with her children taking Amaka away. Auntie Lizzy's unfriendly attitudes toward Ginika promote rift in their relationship. Ginika's father once laments, "when I married your stepmother, she failed to play the role of a mother as I had dreamed and hoped she would" (106). When Auntie Lizzy rebukes Ginika for getting pregnant, her father in disappointment shouts her down and screams; "if you had been a mother to her as you should have been, she would not have turned out the way she did" (327).

In the absence of her mother, Ginika could not find succour in her step mother. She expects a more positive bonding, empathy, understanding and a kind of woman that will bridge the gap left by her late mother, especially in a warring period. Under this prevailing circumstance, Ginika believes, she is not wanted in the house and therefore resolves that marriage is the only answer. The incessant strained relationships existing between daughters and their stepmothers have been evident in some African traditional societies. In Flora Nwapa's *Women Are Different*, for instance, Agnes stepmother arranged a marriage for Agnes and Dr Egemba, who is not only old enough to be her father but also her stepmother's lover. Agnes marriage, just after her secondary education is pre-determined by her stepmother and another woman who posed as her family relation:

I endorse what Cecilia is doing. The sooner she gets her out of the way, the better for her. She sought my advice and I gave it to her. Marry her off as soon as possible, so she will be busy with her own family and won't bother you with yours. (52)

Agnes feels so disappointed with the marriage and the dissatisfaction is reflected on her face and attire on the wedding day. Firdaus' uncles wife, in El Saadawi's *Women at Point Zero*, hates Firdaus with passion. Her unfriendly attitude to her confirms this. She refuses to let Firdaus stay in her house after school. She recommends a university education, so that she does not have any reason to stay in her house. She eventually strikes a deal with her husband to marry off Firdaus to a man old enough to be her grandfather, with a nauseating physical disability and a wicked heart. These young girls undergo subjugation and dehumanisation in the hands of their stepmothers. The common decision to either marry or to be married off is an indication of quarrelsomeness and lack of

peaceful co-existence. Marriage therefore functions as a temporary antidote. This form of oppression unfortunately is neither male induced nor tradition induced.

Furthermore, based on the fact that the feminine gender has suffered a lot of intimidation and oppression from the patriarchy, soldiers, refugees and war related crisis, one would have thought that the cult of womanhood would gear towards comradeship and group cohesion. The opposite seem to be the case amongst some women especially daughters and their stepmothers, displaced and non-displaced women and wives and mothers-in-law. Mrs Ndefo, whose husband is Dr. Ubaka's colleague, escape with her family from Enugu to Onitsha their hometown. When Nigerian soldiers start shelling Onitsha, they move again to Dr. Ubaka's house at Ama-Oyi to take refuge. Auntie Lizzy is very antagonistic. She shouts at Mrs Ndefo:

If you cannot manage, then leave, Auntie Lizzy raged. Imagine, I should not say what should happen in my own house? Who are you? *Esi be gi eje bionye?* Whose house does your house lead to? Whether you are from America or from London, you cannot do as you like in this house. And let me tell you: you had better make your children behave well. Did you give them any training at all? They are rude, forward and lazy... others like you are in refuge camps. Are you not grateful to live in a house like this? Do not allow me to open my mouth. (176)

Furthermore, the author's use of Igbo lexical items indicates an attempt to provide useful insights into the richness of Igbo traditional speech norms and social value, 'Auntie Lizzy's reference *Esi be gi eje b'onye?* in the above quotation is an allegorical statement associated with social status. One "whose

house leads to the home of a powerful person is believed to share in the prominence and awe of that person by virtue of the sharing of a footpath” (Shodipe 181). Auntie Lizzy’s question suggests total disapproval of Mrs Ndefo’s importance.

Mrs Ndefo feels so bad and weeps. Her daughter Amaka confronts Auntie Lizzy, “please don’t speak to my mom like that... Is it because you don’t have children of your own that you abuse us” (177). Mrs Ndefo regrets the condition she finds herself-having escaped twice because of invasion by Nigerian army. Auntie Lizzy could not tolerate Ndefo’s children whom she accuses of wasting water in the tank and make a noise all the time. Ginika father, however, intervenes, but Ndefo’s family has lost confidence in her as their daughter Amaka reveals:

My dad has succeeded at last in persuading the government to allow my mom to travel out to get proper medical attention. She’ll take us with her to America... don’t tell anyone. Mom and dad want it that way. I think it’s because of your stepmother, whom they don’t trust. (187)

One may argue that Auntie Lizzy is simply being conservative and trying to correct Ndefo’s children’s excesses but shouldn’t a waiting mother like her demonstrate a child friendly attitude to those children? Can she not correct them without being too mean on them and their mother? Can she not be a bit hospitable, considering the circumstances that bring them to their home? What if she had been diplomatic in line with Snail Sense Feminism? Would dialogue not have solved the matter better? Does she feel she could not find herself in that situation? Afterall Ejike Okoro’s house is bombed in the same village, Ama-Oyi, killing him and leaving Ekenma his wife a widow. On hearing the

news the next morning, Ginika's father hired three workmen to cover his roof with palm fronds so that enemy planes flying past would not see them. The uncertainties during the war should have been enough reason for people to show love, empathy and tolerance to others.

Eloka's mother also turns her daughter-in-law into a docile being. She terrorizes and intimidates her. She crushes her individuality and Ginika cannot put up any resistance. The author reveals her dilemma in a third person narrative technique:

Ginika ran to her room, sat on the bed, thinking. What was she going to do? She felt like running away from the house, but where would she run to? Her father and stepmother would not receive her. He would blame her for disregarding his advice against getting married. Going to Eloka was not an option, as he had expressly said she should stay with his parents. She couldn't go to her aunt who was weighed down by her own worries and found it difficult to feed her family. Ginika would be another mouth to feed. How would she be able to continue to live with her mother-in-law who now regards her as an enemy? She was no better off with her father-in-law. He had not been the same since his wife attacked Nwoyibo and ran her out of Ama-Oyi. She was aware their relationship had suffered a fatal blow with that incident. (261)

All these churn in her mind as she understands that things will only get worse in the house. Ginika's marriage provides Adimora-Ezeigbo with the necessary platform to expose some of the hidden facts in wife and mother-in-law relationships during the civil war. Papa's attitude towards her implies a strong suspicion or belief that she betrays him by telling Mama about his relationship

with Nwoyibo in her place of work. Ginika is innocent of this accusation but wished she could be given the opportunity to exonerate herself.

Ginika is almost five months pregnant before she decides to tell her parents in-law about her experience and condition. She is embarrassed and disgraced by her mother-in-law who runs out of her room, “screaming to her husband, from whom she had been estranged for many months, to come and listen to his daughter in-law” (294). She is denounced and thrown out. Ginika pleads if she could be allowed to stay till Eloka comes back, but they turn down the plea and order her out. She burst into tears and leaves.

The appalling denouncement of Ginika is championed by a fellow sex-her mother-in-law. She involves her husband into the matter so that she can frighten Ginika in his name and image as bogeyman – “Get out and don’t enter this room again. You stink. You heard what Onwaora said? (295) Eloka’s mother, however, demonstrates that despite her desperation for children, she does not want her daughter-in-law to get pregnant outside wedlock. Every decent society frowns at single parenthood – she queries Ginika – “So you think my son will stay married to you after what you did, if you don’t know it this is a decent family” (295).

Ironically, parents are not much agitated when their son puts a girl in a family way. For instance in Zaynab Alkali’s *The Stillborn*, Kaka is displeased that his son disowned his grandson for getting the blacksmith’s daughter pregnant. Kaka wailed, “cursed be me that I should live to see the day a male-child is disowned for proving his manhood” (59). This perception is also expressed by Eloka’s mother, when he returns home at the end of the war with Boma. The author says

she gazed at Boma “as if she was a messenger from the gods who had brought her a gift” (34). Her eyes were focused on Boma’s protruding belly. Eloka’s parent’s warm and pleasant attitude to Boma signal willingness to accept her if the baby she carried were their sons. They are very desperate to have grandchildren who would perpetuate the family name and inherit their property, therefore could not see anything wrong or immoral with their son coming home with a pregnant woman. They do not see this as a form of betrayal, after all Ginika is out of the way. To their greatest disappointment, Eloka has nothing to do with Boma and her pregnancy. She is a woman he decides to assist to return to Port Harcourt to look for her grandmother.

Another form of betrayal, dehumanization and marginalization of woman by women also exists between Eloka’s mother and Nwoyibo. Chief Odunze, Eloka’s father has an extramarital relationship with Nwoyibo Moneke. He gives her one of the choicest living quarters in the compound and visits her regularly. Janet and even Ginika her friend see him because Janet’s room faces the house. Chief Odunze’s wife retaliates in a terrible way. Janet, an eye witness reports:

Nne di gi, your mother-in-law, was here with one man and they beat up Nwoyibo. It was terrible. They gave her a black eye and tore her dress. When some women heard her screams and went to investigate, they found her almost naked. Her blouse was torn and her wrappa wrenched of her waist and they left her with just her panties. (239)

Chief Odunze’s wife, wild with rage, tells the women who try to intervene that if Nwoyibo did not leave her husband alone, she would kill her the next time she came to the camp. One may argue that Nwoyibo’s attitude is very wrong, but it is not right for one to physically assault a defenseless woman in a refugee camp. Should she (Eloka’s mother) not have confronted her husband also? The

sin is committed by two – her husband and Nwoyibo. Why punish Nwoyibo and leave her husband? Eloka's mother could not protect the integrity of her fellow woman. Could this be attributed to feminine Oedipal Complex? Nwoyibo deserves to be thoroughly beaten while Chief Odunze is spared. He is rather served dinner at the right time, even when he eats little and stands up to leave, Eloka's mother feels concerned – “Onwaora, have you finished? you didn't touch the food” (242). The treatments, given to the two individuals under this prevailing circumstance, implies that women manifest their anger and frustration more on their fellow women than men.

Women seem to wield their power over their weaker sisters. This may be why Eloka entrusted his wife's monthly allowance to his father “... I've allotted some money to you monthly. Papa will give it to you at the end of every month after he has collected the money. You will be able to use it to buy some of the things you need” (255). It may be necessary to ask why Eloka could not use his mother to disburse this fund monthly. There is an evocative voice of intra gender subjugation. Despite untold hardships, deprivations, incessant bombing and death, some women still have the guts to oppress their fellow women.

Instances of predominant displacement during the civil war symbolize displacement of female gender. In her father's house, Ginika finds no love. She therefore gets married in order to detach herself from the wicked stepmother. In a friend's house, Mrs Ndefo could not feel at home because of Auntie Lizzy, a fellow gender. In a matrimonial home, Ginika is ousted from her husband's home at her mother-in-law's instigation. Like queen bees, Auntie Lizzy and Ginika's mother-in-law hinder the progress of fellow women.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Critical materials, essays and books on gender issues and concerns have enriched African literature and given it a sense of balance. Some scholars position woman in a perpetual state of slavery with respect to institutionalized patriarchy. According to Evsey David Domar, not all slave systems are centered on the control of agrarian labour (18). Some, just like women, might be providing administrative, domestic or sexual services. Other forms of unfreedom include restrictions on right or activities based on gender, race, ethnic origin or religion. Women are considered more docile and less able to resist harsh conditions. As vulnerable victims, they experience sexual assault and domestic violence by their abusive partners. Women are denied legal or social protection and the ability to inherit or pass on rights whereas their spouses are seen as honourable.

The major concern of the creative writers is to validate the claim that women are oppressed by the patriarchal system and also help to enhance women's self-esteem. For instance, Chimamanda Adichie, as Nnolim observes creates women who no longer carry foo foo and soup to men discussing important matters. In *Half of the Yellow Sun*, Olanna and Kainene, who have been educated abroad, are assertive and meet the men at their dictates (4). Female writers seek to register their claim of being allowed some voice and heard, given recognition to, appreciated and steamed as women, they neither ask nor want to be men (Hitch-Cock 240).

The study has revealed that, though almost every 21st century female writer commits her writing to this quest, yet women in African society are still subjugated to intimidation, maltreatment, marginalization and oppressions by men. The research also interrogated the role of women in the perceived subjugation and showed how female characters inflict pain on their fellow women. The relatively hidden and ignored form of oppression on women by their fellow women is laid bare. Women like men can also be violent, abusive and active either to men or to their fellow women. Women exercise the most effective sanction against misrule in some African traditional societies, when a king becomes intolerable to his subjects, a procession of grandmothers will march naked to his palace. No ruler survives this final and dramatic reputation by the mothers of his subjects (Chinweizu 70). The history of Aba women's Riot of 1929, the Egba Women's uprising of the 1930, the Ogharefe women's uprising of 1984, the Ughelli women's anti-tax protest of 1985 (Iwuchukwu 280) confirms the extent of what African women can do.

In addition, women have the capacity to become architects of their own destinies and decide whether to be included or excluded in the scheme of things (Uto-Ezeajugh 150). Salami equally supports that women have been voted globally to use collective action to mount pressure on the authorities in order to liberate themselves from one form of oppression or another (423). There is much in femininity that can change the world. Women are endowed with efficacy, dynamism and creativity. They possess a rare and subtle logic in their resolution of issues in the home, office and society (Justina Okoye 59). Unfortunately, they cannot stand because they are not united, they fall because

they are divided. They are faced with a double edged sword-internal war and external war (intra gender and inter gender oppressions). Both oppressions are torturous, none is less than the other.

The research has revealed that women are subjected to oppression, pains, denials, humiliation and dehumanization by patriarchal structures. Tracing the roles and activities of women in the texts under study, women, to a large extent, lend a support towards enhancing most of the factors that debase female gender. In the terrible trauma and agony of childlessness, Cynthia in Ann Iwuagwu's *Arrow of Destiny* is displaced by a fellow young girl, Idara. Idara goes out with Cynthia's husband, Idris. Being desperate to be involved with an oil company employee, she pays David Ikem to put her in a family way when Idris couldn't get her pregnant. Kauna in Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* is also humiliated by Shiwa, her sister-in-law. Amaka in Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough* and Ijeoma in Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* equally share similar experiences.

The unfair treatment given to these childless mothers is however not glorified by the authors but they have not offered enough poetic justice to put a check on further humiliation. Men hold the positions of authority and primarily are responsible for making decisions in the world of the selected literary texts, but some female characters at times work behind the scenes and get things done as they desire. There is also a subtle societal approval of displacement whenever childlessness is involved. This may be partly because of the great importance attached to child bearing in African marriage as well as the general belief that

women are the only cause of infertility. Some mothers as a result, arrange for a second or third marriages for their sons. Some young girls on the other hand willingly consent to such marriages, especially when the prospective husband is wealthy.

Most married women in the traditional society of Oshaantu for instance, are battered by their spouses. In line with Focu Feminism, most of these traditional women degrade and marginalize themselves by admitting that a husband has the right to hit his wife. Mee Ali is the only woman, who decries spousal abuse as a norm. She specifically maintains that she is a wife and not a bunching bag. Unfortunately, most women in African societies do not report cases of wife beating and their bullies go unpunished. For the mere fact that Africans frown at divorce, most women remain in the abusive relationship believing that someday their spouse will outgrow their temperament. One may argue that women lack the power to make a difference in a patriarchal system, but if they willed, they could go round to ask older relatives or neighbours to speak reasons into their husbands. The plight of every woman should attract the attention and empathy of other women. Neshani Andreas however demystifies wife battering and imbues Mukwankala, an elderly woman with the courage to publicly confront Shange. After the ridicule, like magic Shange stops beating Kauna. There is a proof that a husband can be a victim of spousal abuse. Though this may be very rare, but Joshua, Kauna's uncle, is regularly beaten by his much stronger wife. Human social relationship may not be totally rid of violence. Spousal abuse, which no rational human being desires, has been an age long practice from early periods to the contemporary periods. Adoption of Adimora-Ezeigbo's Snail

Sense Feminism, which advocates diplomacy, tolerance, negotiation, dialogue and cooperation may however reduce the rate of occurrence.

There is evidence of scarcely discussed form of violence between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The study revealed that there is no significant difference between the attitudes of Nigerian mothers-in-law towards their daughters-in-law from that of Namibian mothers-in-law and their daughters-in-law. Ginika's mother-in-law in *Roses and Bullets* is as good as Mee Ali's mother-in-law in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*. The strained intra gender relationships also exist amongst daughters and their step mothers as well as nieces and their uncle's wives. There is a demonstration of a cold war and witch hunting within the cult of womanhood. The findings show common factors causing frictions in the intra gender relationships amongst them.

In most African societies, there is hardly any death that is accepted as a natural and biological end (Afigbo 40). This makes every widow a prime suspect. Unfortunately the reverse is not the case when a woman dies. No widower is accused of killing or bewitching his late wife. The women's consent or acceptance of this fact depicts that probably women are not in control of some of the social and traditional factors that affect them. This may also be in accordance with motherist theory which posits that African women are not oppressed, they are rather carrying out their traditional and religious obligations. Otherwise why would women encourage spiteful and burdensome widowhood rituals since they will face similar treatment if their husbands die? Even if it is the custom, must they be used as the agents for its implementation? Can't they put up a little resistance? Can't they exhibit some elements of unwillingness or

signs that they are doing it under duress, after all freedom from servitude comes not from violent action but from refusal to serve.

In the business of human trafficking, a modern-day form of slavery, Adimora-Ezeigbo saliently discloses the nature of the business, its intricate networks as well as the women involvement. She is sympathetic to Nneoma and Efe, the victims of trans border prostitution. The experience of the young girls is expressed in a very simple language with images of ‘sold’, ‘slavery’, ‘vicious’, ‘shamelessly’ that depict torture and dehumanization. The real misfortune is not just that the girls are trafficked, but that some of the traffickers are women. Intra gender oppression is prominent in the business where the dignity of a female gender is reduced to the level of zero. Maria and the woman at the International Airport are used as collaborators while Madam Dollar and Madam Gold are the chief executive merchants of the abominable trade.

Some of the events that occurred during the Nigerian civil war as depicted in Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Roses and Bullets*, give an insight into the intra gender relationships amongst women and their roles during the crisis. There are few characters who are bad, just like in real-life situation. In the intra gender relationships amongst women, during the war, there are moments of pleasant interaction as well as periods of rift. For instance, there is lack of peace, unity and friendliness in the relationship that exists between Ginika and Auntie Lizzy her step-mother, Ginika and her mother-in-law, Auntie Lizzy and Mrs Ndefo, Eloka’s mother and Nwoyibo. The author’s presentation of Ginika’s step-mother and mother-in-law as repulsive and unattractive owing to their shrewish

and antagonistic attitude toward Ginika, is very instructive. It is a clear indication that oppression, acrimony and backbiting peculiar to wives and their mothers-in-law as well as daughters and their step mothers should be given adequate scholarly attention.

The writers portray the life and times of women as they are. There is conflict between them as well as cooperation. Most women, though not educated are strong and creative. There is reality of hard physical work in the farm. They carry out their stereotype roles even in a twist of fate – working in the farm, selling in the markets, bearing and rearing children and maintaining a relationship with their master husbands. Despite the exaltation accorded these female characters, an appraisal of their intra gender alliances, however, discloses that most of them are subjected to other forms of subjugation, which do not come from patriarchy alone, but also from women. This subtle exposure provides a compelling conclusion that women are both the oppressed and the agents of their own oppression. This indicates a need for a critical re-direction, for in accordance with Focus Feminism, it is only when women stop fighting one another, that they can only address properly some of the factors that reduced them to a second class status.

WORKS CITED

- Accad, Evelyne. *L'Excrisee* Paris, L'Harmatan, 1982, p.36.
- Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah*. Oxford, Heinemann, 1987.
- . . . *Things Fall Apart*. London, Heinemann, 1958.
- . . . *Beware Soul Brother*. London, Heinemann, 1972, p.23.
- . . . *Arrow of God*. New York, Africana Publishing Company, 1969.
- Acholonu, Catherine. *Motherism: The Africentric Alternative to Feminism*. Owerri, Afa Publication, 1985, pp. 100-120.
- Adebayo, A. "Tearing the Veil of Invisibility: The Role of West African Female Writing in Contemporary Times" Aduke Adebayo (Ed). *Feminism and Black Creative Writing*. Ibadan, AMD Publishers, 1996, pp. 23-25.
- Adedun, Emmanuel, A. "Interview with Professor Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo". *New Perspectives on a Literary Enigma*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. Eds. Emmanuel A. Adedun and Onuora Benedict Nweke. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, pp. 350-359.
- Adichie, Chimamanda. *Purple Hibiscus*. Lagos, Farafina, 2006.
- . . . *We Should All be Feminists*. New York, Vintage Books, 2014.
- . . . *Dear Ijeawele* https://books.google.com.ng/books/about/Dear_Ijeawele_OR_a_Feminist_Manifesto_in.html?id=LOexDQAAQBAJ&source=kp_cover&redir_esc=y
- . . . *Half of a Yellow Sun*. New York, Knopf, 2006.
- Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi. *Roses and Bullets*. Ibadan, University Press Plc, 2014.
- . . . *Trafficked*. Lagos, Lantern Books, 2008.
- . . . *Snail Sense Feminism: Building on an Indigenous Model* (Monograph series). Lagos, Wealthmith Books, 2015.
- . . . *Gender Issues in Nigeria: A Feminine Perspective*. Lagos, Vista, 1996, pp. 5-116.
- . . . *The Last of the Strong Ones*. Lagos, Vista Books, 1996.
- . . . *House of Symbols*. Lagos, Oracle Books, 2001.

- . . . *Children of the Eagle*. Lagos, Vista Books, 2002.
- Adinma Echendu. "Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights (WOSSRI)", News Letter, Vol 2, July – Dec., 2003, pp. 2-3.
- Adler, Margot, *Heretics Heart: A Journey Through Spirit and Revolution*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1997, p. 13.
- Afigbo, A.E. *An Outline of Igbo History*. Owerri, RAA Publishing Company, 1986, p.40.
- Aidoo, Ama Ata. *Anowa*. London, Longman Group Ltd, 1970, p. 21.
- Akinbi, Joseph Olukayode. "Widowhood Practices in Some Nigerian Societies: A Retrospective Examination". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Vol. 5. No. 4. April, 2015, pp. 67-74.
- Akujiobi, Remi. "Widowhood Practices and the Effects on the Psyche of Widows in Africa". <https://www.ajol.info/gab>article>view>.
- Alaka, Japhet. "Iwuchukwu Underscores the Importance of Women Empowerment". *Pmin News The Arts Comments*. Jan. 11, 2016, 12: 09.
- Albert, Isaac " Rethinking the Impact of Patriarchy on Feminist Epistemology and Methodology in Nigeria". *Critical Gender Discourse in Africa*. Hope Publication, 2002, p. 67.
- Alkali, Zaynab. *The Descendants*. Zaria, Tamaza, 2005.
- Amadi, E. *The Concubine*. London, Heinemann, 1966.
- Anagbogu, M.A. "A Handbook on Problems of the Youth: A Psychological Approach to Behavioural Change". Benin, Olivet Publishing Company, 1995, p.7.
- Andreas, Neshani. *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*. Essex, Heinemann, 2001.
- Anyokwu Chris, "Turning in the Widening Gyre" Anamnesis and the Dialogue Location in Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets*. *New Perspectives on a Literary Enigma*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimira-Ezeigbo. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, pp. 1-23.
- Apena, Adline. "Bearing the Burden of Change: Colonial and Post-Colonial Experience in Flora Nwapa's *Women Are Different*". Marie Umeh (ed.). *Emerging Perspectives on Flora Nwapa: Critical and Theoretical Essays*. Asmara, African World Press, 1999, pp. 277-289.
- Asigbo, Alex and Nwosu, Emeka. "Feminist Aesthetics and the Womanist Agenda: A reading of Zulu Sofola's *The Sweep Trap*". *The Artist: A Journal of Theatre Studies and the Humanities*. Ed. Emeka Nwosu. Owerri, Department of Theatre Arts Imo State University, Sept. 2008, p. 20.

- Atta, Sefi. *Everything Good Will Come*. Lagos, Parafina, 2003.
- Awua, Benjamin. "Women on Women Violence: A Survey of Women Characters in Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter* and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*". *Gender Studies: A Reader*. F.C. Okoli et al (eds) Nsukka, Great AP Express Publishers, 2010, pp. 139 – 145.
- Ba, Mariama, *The Scarlet Song*. London Essex: Dorothy Blair, 1981.
- . . . *So Long a Letter*. Ibadan, New Horn Press Ltd, 1980.
- Benenson, Joyce F. "The Development of Human Female Competition: Allies and Adversaries". An article in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B Biological Sciences*. Oct 30, 2013, pp. 1-11.
- Beukes, Jemima. "*The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* – A Book review" http://www.primefocusmag.com/articles/254/The_Purple_Violet-Oshaantu.
- Brannon, Linda. *Gender Psychological Perspective*. Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 2002, pp. 155-165.
- Carole Boyce, Davies "Motherhood in the Works of Male and Female Igbo writers Achebe, Emecheta, Nwapa and Nzekwu" *Ngambika: Studies of Women in Africa Literature* Trenton, Africa World Press, 1986, p. 243.
- Celis, Karen. "Introduction: Gender and Politics: A Gendered World, a Gendered Discipline". March 2013. *Oxford Handbooks Online*. Ed. Karen Celis, et al. 23 August 2017. <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10/1093/oxfordhb/9780199751457.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199751457-e-34>.
- Chiluwa, Molly. "Patriarchy versus Womanism in Nigeria: Rethinking Womanist Theorization". *New Perspective on a Literary Enigma: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodara Akachi Adimora – Ezeigbo*. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, pp.100-112.
- Chinweizu. *Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissertation of Matriarchy*. Lagos, Pero, 1990, pp.5-85.
- Chukukere, Gloria. *Gender Voices and Choices Redefining Women in Contemporary African Fiction*. Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1995, pp. 7-80.
- Chukwu, Ugochukwu. "Politicized Ontology: The Kpim Factor in Women's Oppression, Reconstructing and Rebuilding Human Communities Beyond Gender Lines". *The Kpim of Feminism: Issues and Women in a Changing World*. Eds Ukagbo, George Uzoma, Obioma Des-Obi, Iks J. Nwankwo. Victoria, Trafford Publishers 2010, pp. 556-566.

Chukwuma, Helen. "Flora Nwapa is Different". Helen Chukwuma (ed). *Feminism in African Literature*. Enugu, New Generation Books, 1994, pp. 115 – 130.

. . . *Feminism in African Literature*. Enugu, New Generation Books, 1994.

D' Almeida , Irene. *Francophone African Women. Destroying the Emptiness of Silence*. Gainesville, Florida UP, 1994, p. 1.

Daniel-Inim, Praise Chidinma. "Battle Against Patriarchy: A Reading of Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Out of the Mask*" *Gender Discourse in African Theatre, Literature and Visual Arts*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Evwierhoma. Eds Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma. Ibadan, Kraft Books Limited, 2015, p. 224.

Dobie, Ann B. *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*. Boston, Wadsworth, 2012, p. 105.

Doki, Gowon A. "Theatre and the Women Question in Nigeria". *Gender Discourse in African Theatre, Literature and Visual Arts*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Evwierhome. Eds. Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh. Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma. Ibadan, Kraft Books Limited, 2015, pp. 398 – 410

Ebo, Emmanuel Ejiofor, "Cultural Challenge and Women Liberation in Nigeria: An Analysis of Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Julie Okoh's *Edewede*". *Gender Discourse in African Theatre Literature and Visual Arts*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Euwierhoma. Eds Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh. Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma. Ibadan, Kraft Books Limited, 2015, pp. 236-248.

Ebukue, Emmanuel Onyeka. "Intra Gender Subjugation among Women in Nigeria: A Study of Stephanie Okere's *Dry*" <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/cajts/article/view/165017>

Ejinkonye, Ugochukwu. "Chinua Achebe's Uninformed Feminist Critics and Naïve Sympathisers II". *Sun Newspaper*. Vol. 14 No. 736, February 11, 2017, p. 35.

Eke, Maureen N, "The Inner Life of Being: Failed Maleness and "Modern" Love". *Emerging Perspectives on Nawal El Saadawi*. Eds Ernest N. Emenyonu and Maureen Eke. Trenton, African World Press, 2010, pp. 49-65.

Emecheta, Buchi. *Second Class Citizen*. London, Fontana, 1981.

. . . *The Joys of Motherhood*, London, Heinemann, 1980.

- Enejere, Emeka. "Women and Political Education: Nigerian Women and the Challenges of our Time". Eds Dora Obi Chizea & Juliet Njoku. Lagos, National Council of Women Societies 1991, pp. 44-51.
- Evsey David Domar, "The Causes of Slavery Serfdom: A Hypothesis", *Journal of Economic History*, 30 (1970), pp. 18-32.
- Ezeifeke, Chinwe & Ogbazi, Ifeyinwa. "You're responsible for His Death: Widowhood in Igbo Gender Construction and Struggle for Agency in Selected Literary Texts". *International Journal of Languages and Literatures*. Vol. 2, No. 3: Sept. 2014, pp. 1-10.
- Ezejiofor, Austin Obinna. "Patriarchy, Marriage and the Rights of Widows in Nigeria". *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities (UJAH)* Vol. 12, No. 1, 2011, pp. 139-157.
- Ezenwa-Ohaeto, Ngozi "Linguistic Predetermination of Conjugal Status of Igbo Women". Dol. <http://dx.doi.org/10.431/ujah.v14i/1.2>
- . . . "Recreating Femality: Reviewing the Implications of Igbo Gender-Based Expressions". *Preorcjah* Vol 1(1), 2016. www.ezenwaohaetorc.org.
- . . . "Fighting Patriarchy in Nigerian Cultures Through Children's Literature" *Studies in Literature and Language*. Vol 10, No. 6, 2015, p. 59-66.
- Fadase, Bunmi. "Talk about Battered Men", *The Punch*. Lagos, July 11, 1983, p. 4.
- Fonchingong, Charles C. "Unbending Gender Narratives in African literature" *Journal of International Women's Studies*. Vol 8 1 Nov. 2006, pp. 135-46.
- Frank, Katherine. "Women Without Men: The Feminist Novel in Africa". *Women in African Literature Today*. Eds Eldred Durosimi Jones, Eustace Palmer, Majorie Jones. London, James Currey, 1987, pp.16-34.
- Fredua-Agyeman, Nana. "The Purple Violet of Oshaantu by Neshani Andreas". *Image Nations Promoting African Literature*. 75. April 21, 2011, pp. 1-6.
- Fubara, Angela .M. "Rhetoric of Pain: Unearthing the Ugly as a Tool for the Good in Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*". *A Harvest from Tragedy. Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Civil War Literature*. Owerri, Springfield Publishers Ltd., 2011, pp. 241 – 251.
- Geottner-Abendroth, Matriarchal Society: Definition and Theory. *The Gift, A Feminist Analysis*. Roma, Anthanor Book, 2004, pp. 1-8.
- Germaine, Greer. *The Female Eunuch*. London, Paladin Publishers, 1970.

- Goring, Paul et al. *Studying Literature*. London, Bloomsbury, 2010, p. 210.
- Hendricks, C. and Valasek, K. "Gender and Security Sector Transformation: From Theory to South African Practice" SIPRI Yearbook Geneva DCAF, 2010, p.9.
- Hooks, Bell. *Feminist Theory from Margin to Centre*. Boston, MA South End Press, 1984, p. 3.
- Hudson – Weems, Clenora. *AfricanaWomanism*. Troy Mich, Bedford Publishers, 1993.
- Ibezim, Emmanuel "Gender Discrimination Against Women. A focus on Widowhood Practices in Nigeria" *Gender Studies: A Reader*. F.C. Okoli et al (eds). Nsukka, Great AP Express Publishers, 2010, pp. 164-181.
- . . . "Violence Against Women: A Violation of Women's Human Rights". *Gender Studies: A Reader*. F.C. Okoli et al (eds) Nsukka, Great AP Express Publishers, 2010, pp. 277-287.
- Ibigbolade, Simon Aderibigbe. "Womanhood in African Worldview and Religion" *The Power: Woman's Labour Rights and Responsibilities*. Trenton, African World Press, 2013, p. 686.
- Ibrahim, Fatima Binta. "Echoes of Matriarchy Patriarchy as Negative Contestants in Selected Nigerian Literature" *Gender Discourse in African Theatre; Literature and Visual Arts*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Evwierhoma. Eds Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma. Ibadan, Kraft Books Limited, 2016, p. 476.
- Iwuchukwu, Onyeka. "Revolt and Snail-Sense Feminism in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Plays". *New Perspectives on a Literary Enigma*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. Eds. Emmanuel A. Adedun and Onuora Benedict Nweke. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, pp 276-297.
- . . . "Women Empowerment is Key to Self-actualization Through Focu". *The Guardian*. April 24, 2016, p. 15.
- . . . "Focu-Feminism: A Strategy for Eliminating Domestic Violence". *The Phenomenon*. Nov. 24, 2016, p. 1.
- . . . Focu Feminism http://www.academia.edu/34734890/OFO_JOURNAL_OF_TRANSATLANTIC_STUDIES.
- Iwuagwu, Ann. *Arrow of Destiny*. Akure, Lifesteps Publishers, 2011.
- Iyav, Ben Due. "The Place of Women in Julie Okoh's Plays" *Gender Discuss in African Theatre, Literature and Visual Arts*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Evwierhoma. Eds Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma. Ibadan, Kraft Books Limited, 2016, p. 253.

- Johanna E. Bond. "Constitutional Exclusion and Gender in Commonwealth Africa". *31 Fordham Int'l I.J.*; 2008, pp. 289- 291.
- Kara, Siddharth. *Sex Trafficking: The Inside Business of Modern Slavery*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Kellogg, Robert et al. *The Nature of Narrative*. London, Oxford University Press. 2004, p. 275.
- Kerman Alving. *The Cantered Muse*. London, Yale University Press, 1959, p.54.
- Kevane, Micheal. *Women and Development in Africa: How Gender Works*. New York, Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2004, p.1.
- Kolawole, Mary E. Modupe *Womanism and African Consciousness*. Trenton, African World Press, 1997, p.2-115.
- Korieh, Chima J. "Widowhood Among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria". University of Bergen, Norway, Unpublished Thesis, 1996.
- Lapin, Deirdre. "Women in African Literature" *African Women South of the Sahara*. New York, John Wiley and sons, 1995, p. 20.
- Levin, Tobe. "Women as Scapegoats of Culture and Cult: An Activist's View of Female Circumcision in Ngugi's *The River Between*" *Ngambika Studies of Women in African Literature*. Eds. Carole Boyce Caries & Anne Adams Graves. Trenton, African World Press, 1986, pp. 205-221.
- Lewu, M.A.Y. "Discrimination Against Women in Nigeria: An Overview". *Gender Discourse in African Theatre, Literature and Visual Arts*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Ewrierhoma. Eds. Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma. Ibadan, Kraft Books Limited, 2015, pp. 563-573.
- Litosseliti, L, *Gender & Language: Theory and Practice*, London, Hodder Education, 2006, p. 10
- Mba, Nina Emma. *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria*. Lagos, Crucible Publishers, 1997, p. 133.
- Mbye, B. Cham. "Contemporary Society and the Female Imagination: A Study of the Novels of Mariama Ba". *Women in African Literature Today*. Eds Eldred Durosimi Jones et al. Trenton N.J, African World Press, 1987, pp. 89-101.
- Metcalf, Fred. Ed. *The Penguin Dictionary of Modern Humorous Quotations*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986, p. 162.
- Mills, Alice and Jeremy Smith, *Utter Silence: Voicing the Unspeakable* New York, Peter Lang, 2001.

- Motanya et al. "A Study of Nigerian Pidgin and Creole" *Interdisciplinary Journal of African & Asian Studies*. Vol 1, No 2. Awka, Amaka Dreams Ltd, 2016, p. 41.
- Muo, Adaobi. "The Voice of Jacob and the Hands of Essau is Unmasking the Masquerade in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets*. *New Perspectives on a Literary Enigma* A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, pp. 380-384.
- Mwale, Newbourne Pascal. "Where is the Foundation of African Gender? The case of Malawi" *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 11 (1), 2002, pp. 114- 137.
- Nadaswaran, Shalini. "Transcendence in Akachi –Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*". *New Perspective on a Literary Enigma*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora –Ezeigbo. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, pp. 164-172.
- Ngugi, Wa Thiongo and Ngugi Wa Miri. *I will Marry When I Want*. London, Heinemann, 1980.
- Njoku, Teresa U "Beyond Phallo- Criticism Issue Trend in the criticism of the African Feminist Novel": A Festschrift in Honour of Charles E Nnolim. Ed. Austine Amanze Akpuda. Owerri, Skillmark, 2001, pp. 195-207.
- Nnaemeka, Obioma. *Sisterhood, Feminism and Power*. Trenton, African World Press, 1998.
- Nnamani, Amuluche – Greg, "Women Struggle in the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Nigeria: Lessons for Modern Feminism" *Kpim of Feminism: Issues and Women in a Changing World*. Eds Ukagbo, George Uzoma, Obioma Des-Obi, Iks J. Nwankwo. Victoria, Trafford Publishing, 2010, pp. 212 – 223.
- Nnolim C. *Issues in African Literature*. Yenagoa, Treasure Resource Communications Limited, 2009, pp 136-219.
- . . . "The Writings of Ifeoma Okoye". *Nigerian Female Writers A Critical Perspective*. Eds Henrietta C. Otokunefor and Obiageli C. Nwodo. Lagos, Malthouse Publishing Ltd. 1989, pp. 30-36.
- . . . "African Feminism: The Scandalous Path". *Issues in African Literature*. Yenagoa, Treasure Resource Communications Limited, 2009, pp. 217-227.
- . . . *Approaches to African Novel: Essay in Analysis*. Port Harcourt, International Publishers, 1990, p. 241.

- . . . “A House Divided: Feminism in African Literature”. *Issues in African Literature*. Yenagoa, Treasure Resource Communications Limited, 2009, pp. 135-158.
- Nwahunanya, Chinyere. “The Relevance of Nigerian Civil War Fiction”. *A Harvest From Tragedy*. Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Civil War Literature. Owerri, Springfield Publishers Ltd. 2011, pp. 176 – 180.
- Nwaneri, Benjamin. “Africana Womanism: The Nigerian Woman and Cross-Cultural Justification”. Y.O.O. Akorere and A. A Asiyanbola (eds). *The Feminist – Womanist Dialectics. A Critical Source Book: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor (Mrs) Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo*. Port-Novo (Benin), National Library, 2010, pp. 13-32.
- Nwapa, Flora. *One is Enough*. Enugu, Tana Press, 1981.
- . . . “Women and Creative Writing in Africa”. Nnaemeka Obioma (ed). *Sisterhood, Feminism and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Asmara, African World Press, 1998, pp. 89 – 99.
- . . . *Efuru*. London, Heinemann, 1966.
- . . . *Wives at War and Other Stories*. Enugu, Tana Press, 1971.
- Nweke Benedict Onuora “Deconstructing Womanism and Denigrating the male sex in Akachi Adimora- Ezeigbo’s *Children of the Eagle*” *New Perspectives on a Literary Enigma*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora –Ezeigbo Ibadan, University Press, 2014, p. 201.
- Nwosu, Chukwuma C. “Sex Role Stereotype and Women Empowerment in Tess Onwueme’s *The Reign of Wazobia*”. *Nigerian Academic Forum: A Multidisciplinary Journals*, 6. Ed. Nonso Nnabuife, Awka, 2004:, p. 40.
- Nzekwu, Onuora. *Highlife for Lizards*. London, Hutchinson, Co Ltd, 1995.
- Obioma, Des Obi and Ogbenna Boniface Ifesinachi. “Women Issues: Violence Against Women in Africa-An Exposition”. *The Kpim of Feminism Issues and Women in Changing World*. Eds Ukagbo George Uzoma Obioma Des Obi, Iks J. Nwankwo. Victoria, Trafford Publishers 2010, pp 128-136.
- Ode, Regina. “Strategies for Articulating the Women Empowerment Question in Nigeria” *Gender, Power and Politics in Nigeria*. Makurdi, Aboki Publishers, 2007, p.102
- . . . “Women Empowerment, Poverty Reduction and Rural Development” A Paper presented at a 2-day Stakeholders Workshop Organized by the Ministry for Rural Development and Co-operatives, Makurdi, 2008.

- Ogbeide, O.V. "Violet without Purple: The Colour of Spousal Violence in Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*". *International Journal of English Literature*. Vol. 4(3). May. 2013, pp.53-59.
- Odewumi, O. Joy. "The Effect of the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 – 1970 on Women and Children in *Roses and Bullets*" *New Perspectives on a Literary Enigma*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, p. 147.
- Ogbona, Kelechi Stella Maris. "Golden Rule Genderism: Locating Natural Gender Traits in Ahmed Yerima's *The Sisters*". *Gender Discourse in African Theatre, Literature and Visual Arts*. A Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Mabel Ewweierhoma. Eds Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma. Ibadan, Kraft Books Ltd 2015, pp. 384 - 388.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, Molara. *Re-creating Ourselves African Women and Critical Transformation* Trenton, African Worlds Press, 1994, p.152.
- . . . "The Female Writer and Her Commitment" *Women in African Literature Today*. Eds. Eldred Durosimi Jones, Eustace Palmer, Marjorie Jones. London, James Currey, 1987, pp. 5-13.
- Ogunlewe Tayo. "Critical Interpretations of the African Woman in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Novels" *New Perspectives on Literary Enigma*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. Eds Emmanuel A. Adedun and Onuora Benedict Nweke. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, p. 215.
- Ojukwu, Chinyelu. "The Politics of Power and the Struggle for Self-Assertion: Tess Onwueme's *The Reign of Wazobia*, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Hands that Crush Stone* and Julie Okoh's *Edewede*", *New Perspectives on Literary Enigma*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. Eds Emmanuel A. Adedun and Onuora Benedict Nweke. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, pp. 315-335.
- Okodo, Ikechukwu. "Impact of War on the Marriage Institution: A study of *Isi Akwu Dara n'ala*, an Igbo literature" *Gender Discourse in African Theatre, Literature and Visual Arts*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Ewweierhoma. Eds Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma Ibadan, Kraft Books Ltd, 2015, p. 507.
- Okoh, Julie. *Edewede (The Dawn of a New Day)*. Owerri, Totan Publishers Ltd., 2000.
- Okoye, Ifeoma. *Behind the Clouds*. London, Longman, 1982.
- . . . *The Trial and Other Stories*. Lagos, African Heritage Press, 2005.

- Okoye, Justina. *The Woman Today: Viewing Her in African Literature in French*. Onitsha, Noben Press Ltd, 2017, pp. 6-35.
- . . . “Gender Violence: A Comparative Study of Mariama Ba’s *Un Chante carlate* and Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *The Last of the Strong Ones. The Kpim of Feminism: Issues and Women in Changing World*. Eds Ukagbo George Uzoma Obioma Des Obi, Iks J. Nwankwo. Victoria, Trafford Publishers, 2010, pp. 356-368
- Olawale, Albert. *Women and Urban Violence in Kano, Nigeria*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd, 1996, p. 8.
- Olutola, Falooore Omiyinka. “Wife Mother-in-Law Relationship and Violence among Yoruba Women of Southern Nigeria” *American Journal of Sociological Research* 2012, pp 11-18.
- Omede, A.T. “Strategies for Empowering Women”. A Paper Presenetd at a Workshop on Women Empowerment at Ilorin, Kwara State, 31 Oct. 1995, p. 2.
- Omonubi-McDonnell Morolake. *Gender Inequality in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 2003, p. 101.
- Onukaogu, Allwell A. and Onyerionwu Ezechi. *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Aesthetics of Commitment and Narrative*. Ibadan, Kraft Books Ltd, 2010, p. 193.
- Onwueme Tess. *The Reign of Wazobia*. Ibadan, Heinemann, 1988.
- Onyekuru, B.U. “Obnoxious Cultural Practices Associated with Bereavement Among People of South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria”. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*. 2011, p.355-360.
- Opara, Chioma. *Her Mother’s Daughter: The African Writer as Woman*. Port Harcourt, University of Port Harcourt, Press, 2004, pp. 11-150.
- Opara Ijeoma. “Iwuchukwu: Women Empowerment is Key to Self-Actualization Through Focu” *The Guardian Newspaper*. Sunday, April 24, 2016, p. 15.
- Orabueze, Florence O. “The Feminist Crusade Against Violations of Women’s Fundamental Human Rights: Mariama Ba’s *So Long A Letter* and Buchi Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen*”. *Women in the Academy Festschrift for Professor Helen Chukwuma*. Eds Seiyifa Karoye, Noel C. Anyadike. Port Harcourt, Pearl Publishers, 2004, pp. 113-114.
- . . . *Society, Women & Literature in Africa*. Port Harcourt, M & J Orbit Communications Ltd, 2010, p. 147.

- . . . “The Prison of Nigerian Woman: Female Complexity in Sefi Atta’s *Everything Good will Come*” *New Novels in African Literature Today* 27. Eds Ernest Emenyonu, Nana Wilson – Tagoe and Patricia T. Emenyonu. Ibadan, GLT Press, 2010, pp. 85 – 102.
- . . . “Womanhood as a Metaphor for Sexual Slavery” *Society, Women & Literature in Africa*. Port Harcourt, M & J Orbit Communications Ltd, 2010, pp. 29-72.
- Orie, Prince Chibueze. *Who is a Woman Being? 21st Century Nigerian Female Debut Novels*. Enugu, Samdrew Productions Nig. Ltd. 2011, pp. 27-116.
- Orlando, Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. London, Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 1.
- Portar, Abioseh Michael. “They Too Were There: Women and the Civil War(s) in *Destination Biafra*”. *A Harvest From Tragedy*. Critical Perspective on Nigerian Civil War Literature. Owerri, Springfield Publishers Ltd. 2011, pp.207 – 224.
- Saadawi, Nawal El. *Woman At Point of Zero*. London, Zed Books, 1983.
- Salami-Agunloye, Irene. “All the Rulers are Men: Patriarchy and Resistance in Nawal El Saadawi’s *Woman at Point Zero*” *Emerging Perspectives on Nawal El Saadawi*. Eds. Ernest N Emenyonu and Maureen N. Eke. Trenton, Africa World Press, 2010, pp. 175-201.
- Shodipe, Mojisola. “Language, Gender and the Negotiation of Meaning in Akachi Adimira-Ezeigbo *The Last of the Strong Ones*”. *New Perspective on a Literary Enigma*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, pp. 173 – 193
- Sofola, Zulu. *Wedlock of Gods*. Ibadan, Evans Brothers Ltd, 1981.
- Spock, B. *Baby and Children*. London, Routledge, 1992, p. 39.
- Steady, Filomina Chioma. *The Black Women Cross Culturally*. Cambridge, Mass Schenkman, 1981, p. 243.
- Stone, Elena. *Rising from Deep Places: Women’s Lives and the Ecology of Voice and Silence*. New York, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 20.
- Taubia, N. *Female Genital Mutilation: A Call For Global Action*. New York, United Nations Plaza, 1993, P. 37.
- Tavris, Carol. *The Mismeasure of Women*. New York, Touchstone, 1993, p. 271.
- Thiam, A. “Women’s Fight for the Abolition of Sexual Mutilation”, *In International Science Journal*, 98. 1980, p.752.

- Thornbery, Cedric. *A Nation is Born: The Inside Story of Namibia's Independence*. Gamsbery, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2004, pp. 9-11.
- Tieticheu, Bertrand. "Being Women and Men in Africa Today: Approaching Gender Roles in Changing African Societies". *Studies World* 249, 30 August, 2017 <http://www.koed.hu/sw249/bertrand.pdf>.
- Udumukwu, Onyemaechi. "War's Other Voices: Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the Biafran War". *A Harvest from Tragedy. Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Civil War Literature*. Owerri, Springfield Publishers Ltd, 2011, pp. 226-229.
- Uko, Iniobong I. "Transcending the Margins: New Directions in Women Writing" *ALT* 25. Trenton, African World Press, 2006, pp. 82-93.
- Umeh, Marie. "Ifeoma Okoye" *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature*, Guardian Books Nigerian Limited, Vol. 11, Lagos, 1988, p. 265.
- Umez, Uche P. "Great Poets Blend Simplicity and Profundity". An Interview with Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo. *New Perspectives on Literary Enigma. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo*. Eds. Emmanuel A. Adedun and Omora Benedict Nweke. Ibadan, University Press. 2014, pp. 370 – 379.
- Utoh-Ezeajugh, Tracie. "Nigeria Female Playwrights and the Evolution of a Literary Style: Gendered Discourse in the Plays of Tess Onwueme, Irene Salami-Agunloye and Tracie Uto-Ezeajugh", *Gender Discourse in African Theatre, Literature and Visual Arts*. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Evwierhoma. Eds. Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma. Ibadan, Kraft Books Ltd, 2015, pp. 133-154.
- . . . *Out of the Mask. In Contemporary African Plays, 1*. Eds. Utoh Ezeajugh, Tracie & Alex Asigbo. Awka, Valid Publishing Company, 2005.
- Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens. Womanist Prose by Alice Walker*. New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, pp. 241 -251.
- Weiss, Bettina. "Shades of Uttering Silences in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu, Maru and Under the Tongue*". *Tongible Voice-Throwing: Empowering Corporeal Discourse in African Women's Writing of Southern Africa*. New York, Peter Lang, 2004, pp. 13-31.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. London, Hogarth Press, 1929.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. London, J. Johnsok, 1792.

- Worguji, Gloria Eme, "Male Child Syndrome in Selected Fictions of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo" *New Perspectives on a Literary Enigma: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo*. Eds Emmanuel A Adedun and Onuora Benedict Nweke. Ibadan, University Press, 2010, pp. 136-146.
- Yakubu, Anthonia Makwemoisa. "A Historical Analysis of Selected Nigerian Civil War Experiences in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets*". *New Perspectives on a Literary Enigma. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo*. Ibadan, University Press, 2014, pp. 298 – 314.