

**THE SUBJECTIVITY OF WOMEN IN MARRIAGE: A CASE  
STUDY OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S PURPLE  
HIBISCUS**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this research project titled **THE SUBJECTIVITY OF WOMEN IN MARRIAGE: A CASE STUDY OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S PURPLE HIBISCUS** was independently carried out by **ADEGBEYE ADESEWA OLAMIDE** with matriculation number **18032303035**, **English / Social Studies** Department under the supervision of Mrs. A. O. Omotayo of the school of Languages, English Department, Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu Ijebu Ogun State and approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary appreciation.

.....

**Supervisor's Name**

**Mrs. A. O. Omotayo**

.....

**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty and to my parents.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

My first and foremost appreciation goes to my creator, my benefactor and my maker, who is all sufficient in all areas for me, the author and the finisher of my life. Indeed, God is great.

Always remember your motivation, determination and hardwork will lead to your success in work and in life.

In express my profound gratitude to God almighty for upholding me by seeing me though this academic rigors, may his name be glorified forever.

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## **ABSTRACTS**

Women are often the victims of domestic violence which male writers, in their thematic preoccupation with socio-political issues of the moment, often down play. This is the issue examine in this project from the standpoint of Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and It argues that wife battering continues courtesy of the silence of the women themselves in marriage due to the oppressive yoke of patriarchy which has come to define their existence. Until they learn to stand up to the bullying antics of their partner, women are likely to continue in their oppression. Clearly, the domination of women is the most fundamental form of female subjugation in the African society. Domestic violence is therefore a regular feature in many African homes, a situation which is portrayed by Adichie's Purple Hibiscus as she advocates change in the attitude of society to this anomaly. The success of their advocacy is the focus of this project.

**Keywords:** Domestic. Feminism, Marriage, Marital subjectivity, Violence, Women.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The struggle to improve the condition of women in an unhappy marriage, across the globe, has continued to receive significant attention over the decades. As part of global concern, one of the key issues addressed at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (FWFW) in Beijing was the elimination of violence against women who suffer untold violence in their marriage. In Nigeria, Women in Nigeria (WIN) a Non – Governmental Organization (NGO) in conjunction with Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) have continued to champion the struggle for the total liberation of women from domestic violence in marriage. The success of the struggle is, however a different matter which does not form the discussion of this study.

Violence in marriage affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, irrespective of their socio-economic status. It cut across ethnic, “cultural and religious barriers, impeding the rights of women to participate fully in society”. The urgency of addressing this global problem is tragically illustrated by the treatment of women in conflict or crisis situations, where various form of harassment, intimidation were experienced by women in their marriages. Women worldwide remain vulnerable to life threatening condition and abuse of physical and psychological integrity.

It is interesting to know that in African, marriage is view as a sacred institution. It is the most celebrated ceremony in all African cultures. African marriages are spiritual and social family affairs involve the combining of two lives, two families, and even two communities. There is no great civilization that has ever existed that abstained from marriage as one of its core fundamentals of nation building.

Many scholars have given different definition on marriage as an institution and social organization. Marriage is an institution to satisfy physical, psychological, social, cultural

and economic needs of men and women. It allows men and women to establish a stable relationship with each other in order to form a family. An essential characteristic of marriage is the biological fact that a man and a woman can be joined together as male and female in a union that is orientated to the generation of new life. "The union of marriage provides for the continuation of the human race and the development of human society" (Irish catholic Bishops conference).

Marriage historically has been used in political unions between nations, between different ethnic groups to secure peace, trade and development. According to Michael, "Marriage is one thing that unites African culture, although two marriages will never be similar". Marriage is dignity and a true sign of commitment. It defines our humanity and contributes in making us more human.

There are factors that can cause marital subjectivity in the society ranging from lack of understanding, lack of communication, pride, family and societal pressure, inadequate fund, these lead to domestic violence in families. In addition to this, men have generally been regarded as dominant, masculine and independent, whereas women are often portrayed as weak sensitive and dependent. With this perception, women have become objects in the hands of men, an object to be used in one way or the other for satisfactions of others.

In accordance with Simon de Beauvoir's concept of the 'other', "women are seen as an object, a tool or an instrument, a man actualizes pleasure". Married couples begin to discuss marital separation and divorce after frequent arguing, disconnecting emotionally, and when satisfaction declines (Amato and Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Since marital conflict is present in all relationships, it is imperative that married couples, that want to stay together, find solutions to their conflict.

Often time, women are victim of marital subjectivity, most women lament on their broken homes. In spite of diverse technology, globalization that the world is experiencing, marriage is still influenced by family today. Women divorce their husband to escape from

such abusive and unhealthy relationship; most women stay because of their children and the religious women sees it as something which one cannot leave because of the vow made at the altar.

Marriage is the oldest institution on earth; however, there are factors that affect marriage as an institution. These include lack of understanding, low income, lack of communication, inequality, pride. Moreover, inequality among couples affects marriages, in most cases the man usually has the upper hand and will want to prove superiority over the woman. In such family, the husband objectifies the wife; he sees the wife as his property and not as help mate. “The first marital role ideology is a traditional role ideology where the wife’s primary importance is at home even though she also works, while the husband’s is strictly at work” (Hochschild, Machung 1989).

Previous research has indicated that despite the increasing numbers of women in the workforce and financially independent married women, “men still tend to believe in the more traditional gender role ideologies” (Roehling, Bultman 2002). Specifically, men tend to believe that the breadwinner role should be male dominated while the homemaker/caretaker role should be female dominated.

Marital subjectivity result to marital instability, marital strain, or at the minimum, would result in coping strategies to continue to maintain the traditional gender ideologies present in comparatively normative couples (Eirich, Robinson). According to Tolorunleke, “Marriage should be an exciting and beautiful adventure and the relationship between husband and wife is intended to get better with every passing day or year”. However, little things can slip into the relationship and as Okafor puts it, “when these little things are not properly handled, they can cause friction and eventual separation between the marriage partners that may widen over the years” (Okafor 2002).

Information from electronic media, magazines, newspapers, court proceedings and environmental observations revealed that marital instability abounds in our society today

and this is largely due to marital conflicts that couples experience in the process of trying to perform their marital roles as demanded by their society.

In our society today women are mostly the victim of an abusive marriage. It is pertinent to state that marriage and the family are under great pressure today. Upon marriage a married woman surrenders to her husband exclusive sexual rights and obedience. “This equally gives her husband the liberty to violate and batter her if he feels that she has not adequately fulfilled her obligations, or for any other reason”.

In solving these problems a basic tenet here is that couples need to redefine their reality. Couples need to develop financial plans for their future and work towards it. Such plans must be reviewed from time to time as new challenges emerge. For couples to overcome a financial problem; they should have a saving culture and they should think about a business that will generate funds for the family which will generate a daily income for the family. Meanwhile, attention would be focused on marital subjectivity and domestic violence, how it affects married women emotionally and psychologically.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS**

Marriage is a broad institute in every society. Marital subjectivity has always been a long term problems which affect families. There are scholarly researches on marriage; however, several issues still remain unexplored. Previous research mostly focused on negative aspect of marriage, which is psychological unlike the causes and effect of marital subjectivity.

Scholars like Prof Jamila (2010) have carried out research on marriage as a concept. In their study they proposed that “problematic marriage take an emotional toll”. In their research they focused on the psychological functioning especially depressive symptoms of marital problems. They pointed out the fundamental rights of marriage system and expressed their opinions according to the concepts of certain perspectives.

Previous studies on Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* concentrates on the roles of patriarchy in the society and how marriage influence female character. Moreover, marital problems are generated from desired expectations which are not met by spouse. A persistent question in marriage research is whether men and women experience similar levels of marital satisfaction and whether similar component of marital interactions contribute to their global satisfaction (Jackson et al. 2006).

However, this study will focus on the pattern of redressing the critical imbalance that has undervalued Africa women in marriage by considering Chimamanda's *Purple Hibiscus* (2006), analyzing from a feministic and psychological perspective, what marital subjectivity means in the novel. It is worthy of note that, Adichie is an African that focus on issues and travails peculiar in marriage, in a typical African society. She distinctively explored the calamities that befall women in marriage, ranging from domestic violence, subjugation to male dominance, religious influence in marriage. She depicts the women's desire for change, choice and acceptance within a society that gives little room for married women. The women seek love, respect and identity, for themselves, in a world that encourages women to endure an abusive marriage.

### **1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

This research is aimed at examining instances of marital subjectivity in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. It will give accounts of marital subjectivity and domestic violence from the the novel, citing instances from the text. Lastly, the author approach to marital subjectivity and the issues that are raised such as domestic violence and it implication on women.

The objectives of the research are as follows;

1. To examine how marital subjectivity affect marriages.
2. To discuss extensively on marital subjectivity and how it usually result to domestic violence.

3. To also examine the psychological and emotional result of abusive marriage on women.
4. To give instances of marital subjectivity in the novel.

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research will provide a significant way of addressing marital subjectivity in families and eradicate domestic violence in families. It will point out the flaws in each partner so that adequate correction will be implemented. It will also enlighten women how they can solve the issues of inferiority in marriage. Thus, the outcome of this work will portray a vivid idea of peoples' perceptions and impressions on marriage.

Lastly, the findings and recommendations of this research work will help tremendously to restore adequate dignity, rights and values of women in the society.

#### **1.5 METHODOLOGY**

This section entails the description of the procedure employed in carrying out this research work which includes the use of a text based analysis, online articles, journal, observation and the writer views to marital subjectivity in reference to the text.

Marital subjectivity research is a means of capturing the dynamic and conflicting experiences of the women as a subject to men in marriage. Importantly, marital subjectivity also capture the way couples 'move through' life, revealing how women experience marital vices. Thus, marital subjectivity research situates the experiences of the subject within a marital and cultural framework.

#### **1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study is limited to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus, though the author have written several other novels of relevance. The study will portray how women in the novel struggle in their marriage despite their religion and family influence. It will also depict domestic violence in marriage. Within the scope of this text, it will also examine

the various effects this marginalizing act, carried out on them affects or put them in a life unending trauma.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

A status being married means that a person is legally joined together with another person which is recognized by the jurisdiction, a person's specified civil status might also be married if they are in a civil union or common-law marriage, the civil status of a person who is legally separated is divorced" (Oxford dictionary 9th edition). Marital status according to Wikipedia can be defined as "any several distinct options that describes a person's relationship with a significant references to status such as married, single, divorced and widowed are example of civil status . "Civil status and marital status are terms used in forms, vital records, and other document to ask or indicate whether a person is married or single(Wikipedia 2005)

Globally, marriage is recognized as a type of marital status which can be physical as well as a moral union is recognized by society as the basis of a family (Djaden 2007).

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, "marriage is defined as a state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognised by law". Marriage is defined differently and by different entities, based on cultural, religious and personal factors. However, the contractual marriage agreement usually implies that the couple has legal obligations to each other throughout their lives or until they decide to divorce.

Subjectivity is a central philosophical concept, related to consciousness, agency, personhood, reality, and truth, which has been variously defined by sources (Wikipedia 2010). Merriam Webster (2012) defined subjectivity as an explanation for that which influences, informs about truth or reality; it is the collection of the perception, experiences, expectation personal or cultural understanding, and beliefs specific to a

person. Generally, subjectivity means something being a subject, broadly meaning an entity that has agency, meaning that it acts upon or wields power over some other entity.

Marital subjectivity as a broad term can be defined as an individual who possesses conscious experience, such as perspectives, feelings, and belief who wields power over some other entity especially in marriage. In marriage one partner will have control over the other which is mostly common among the men. There are diverse ways, in which a partner can be subjective to the other in marriage they include through cheating, verbal abuse, familial pressure, incessant need to blame, domestic violence.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses various existing literatures from which this study emanates. From time immemorial, marriage has always been recognized in all societies because it solidifies relationships that enrich communities and nations by bringing forth new life and new hope. In ancient time, marriages have served as a way to hinder war and promote peace between two communities.

Ayotunde (2000) asserts that “marriage historically has been used in political unions between nations, between different ethnic groups to secure peace, trade and development.

Linda (2003) also attests to this by stating that “marriage is a journey through life which enhances and enriching entire communities, lack of marriage is the death of a nation and people”. Mc Eldowney opines that “communities that failed to recognised marriage become decadent and self destructive with range of social, economic and health issues”.

The institution of marriage occupies a unique place in the realm of institutions and it is this institution which is instrumental in perpetuating human society through regulations of conjugal and filial ties. Marriage has been the oldest institute on earth; marriage is a union between a man and a woman to become husband and wife. As a social institution, it has taken different forms in different societies from time immemorial. In modern times, the most important aspects of marriage are social, religious as well as legal.

Bertrand Russel (1999) asserts that “marriage differs, of course, from other sex relations by the fact that it is a legal institution. It is also in most communities a religious institution, but it is the legal aspect which is essential”.

(Russell, 1999). Marriage as an institute, however, in most cases can serve as an avenue which creates subjectivity in forms of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is a global problem. Domestic violence is defined as rape, physical assault and stalking perpetuated by current and former dates, spouses 'and cohabiting partners (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). It undermines the value of woman as an individual and denies her the dignity of a human being. Therefore it is a serious human rights violation. Domestic violence is a series of repeated abusive behaviour which affects women's participation in public and private spheres. It also harms a woman's physical, mental, psychological and sexual well being.

## **2.1 MARITAL SUBJECTIVITY IN AFRICAN LITERATURE**

African writers have devoted themselves to research on marital subjectivity in their works, even African literary titles refers to marital subjectivity, *I Will Marry When I Want* by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *The Marriage of Anansewa* by Edefa Sutherland, *Wedlock of the Gods* by Zulu Sofola and *This is our Chance* by Ene Henshaw. While other devote themselves in examining marital subjectivity among families in their literary text for instance *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Second Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta , *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Adichie, *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* by Neshani Andreas and *So Long a Letter* by Mariam Ba. The thematic preoccupation of these text revolves around marital subjectivity. Novelists like Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta construct a new female identity that confronts the traditional conceptions of wifehood and motherhood as a sole and inescapable fate of African womanhood (Oloruntoba- Oju 2013).

## **2.2 AFRICAN WOMEN WRITER**

It is important to briefly look at the background of the emergence of African women writers on the literary scene which was predominantly occupied by men. African women's literatures have the motives of resistance, triumph, quests for a better life, and emancipation from racism, poverty and sexism. In this context women find liberation from the subjugation of their gender by the male in society through writing. The aims of these women writers are to correct the representation of women in the society especially

in the patriarchal sphere. Namibian and Nigerian women writers are no exception from the same oppression from patriarchy, colonial racism and poverty. African women's literature depicts women who are finding a new identity and fulfillment outside the institution of marriage and motherhood.

Female writers have created a "new model of an increasingly autonomous, sexually empowered, and assertive female figure which has also posed as a threat to contemporary conceptions of masculinity" (Schoch, 2013).

Babamiri, Dashtpeyma and Jamali (2014) affirm that the writing of women is taking a different dimension in their approach towards the presentation of the images of manhood. These critics assert that the negative experiences of women at the hands of men has set off a certain flair in the writing, leading to a representation of an egalitarian structure in which both male and females achieve the same right, enjoy it and live happily besides each other.

Musekiwa (2012) has also pointed out that women's contribution to literature is offering an alternative perspective on issues affecting their society. This 'alternative perspective' is not limited to certain issues but is extended to the literary writing in terms of the male characters and images crafted by women authors.

Thus, black African women writers are advocating and formulating ideologies that synthesizes an African theory to locate the oddity of women of the African Diaspora – narrating their own experiences. In other words, African female writers seem to have a desire to define themselves without being limited of what they are, being a black African woman (Zhuwarara 2016).

In furtherance of the argument on the importance of women writing about the female experience in literary texts.

Aidoo (1996) submits that, Women writers write about women because when we wake up in the morning and look in the mirror we see women.

Many female writers try to bring into focus their femaleness/femininity and personal experiences in their narratives and in doing so highlight power differences between men and women. As a result women scholars and activists have pioneered a literary canon built on sexual politic aimed at stamping gender and feminism into both criticism and theory.

This is with the aim of replacing a tradition that is viewed as masculine and domineering by female critics like Showalter (1985). She maintains that gender has become an analytic category whether the concerns are representation of sexual difference, (re)shaping masculinity, building feminine values or exclusion of female voice from the literary canon.

Many African female writers like Nwapa (1966), Emecheta (1981), Dangaremba (1988), Mugo (1988) and Aidoo (1977) among others in their narratives attempt to recast women in more positive roles away from their marginal position(s). As a result, their texts are described by Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) as spaces of strength within and between which they fluctuate”.

D’Almeida (1994) considers writing by women as a weapon to destroy the ideas that perpetuate subjugation and inequality”. Many literary scholars on African literature such as Stratton (1994), Steady (1998), Ogundipe- Leslie (1987), Emenyonu (2004), Oyeronke (2009) agree that works by African women writers are rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in canon formation thus making much of the African literature appear male-centred. This makes Leek (1999) argue that African women have been indoctrinated to envision the world from a patriarchal perspective.

It is not surprising therefore, that African scholars have now begun to include the concepts of sex, gender and violence in gender studies in order to understand how they play out in gender relations (Lindsay & Miescher 2003). Consequently, in the analyses of women authored work, amongst other themes, there is the need to explore domestic violence and its portraiture in literary texts.

### **2.3 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS FORM OF MARITAL SUBJECTIVITY**

Domestic violence refers to violence between two people involved in an intimate relationship, and it exists in all countries, cultures and societies (Ellsberg et al., 2014).

The World Health Organization (2010) defines domestic violence as “behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviors” .

The WHO (2002) classifies domestic Violence into physical, sexual and psychological abuse. This classification is frequently used and reported in studies individually as physical violence, psychological violence and sexual violence or in combination (Devries et al., 2013; World Health Organization, 2013).

In 2001, domestic violence made up twenty percent of all fatal violence against adult women around 600,000 crimes. In 2000, about 1200 women were killed by an intimate partner. This number made up about 33 percent of female murder victims. (Matthews, 2004).

In the beginning phase of the abusive relationship, some type of abuse occurs. This can be physical, sexual, or emotional, however, most often it is subtle and in the form of verbal insults or accusations (Walker, 1979; Weiss, 2000). Sometimes, though, the initial incident is physical.

After the first episode of physical abuse, an abuser may not have to beat his partner to gain or maintain control. The threat of violence may be enough, because his partner knows he is capable of following through on his threats, (Salber and Taliaferro, 2001).

### **2.4 FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Domestic violence gets manifested in following four ways: Physical violence, Sexual violence, Psychology violence and Economic violence.

#### **2.4.1 PHYSICAL VIOLENCE**

Physical violence refers to the use of physical force to inflict pain, injury or physical suffering to the victim. Slapping, beating, kicking, pinching, biting, pushing, shoving, dragging, stabbing, spanking, scratching, hitting with a fist or something else that could hurt, burning, choking, threatening or using a gun, knife or any other weapon are some examples of physical violence (García et.al 2005).

#### **2.4.2 SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

Sexual violence refers to “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” ( Jewkes et. Al 2002).

In the context of domestic violence sexual abuse refers to physically forcing a partner, to have sexual intercourse, who did not want it, forcing a partner to do something that she found degrading or humiliating (García-Moreno et al., 2005), harming her during sex or forcing her to have sex without protection (World Health Organization, 2014).

#### **2.4.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE**

Psychological violence refers to the use of various behaviors intended to humiliate and control another individual in public or private. Examples of psychological violence include, verbal abuse, name calling, constantly criticizing, blackmailing, saying something or doing something to make the other person feel embarrassed, threats to beat women or children, monitoring and restricting movements, restricting access to friends and family, restricting economic independence and access to information, assistance or other resources and services such as education or health services (Follingstad & DeHart, 2000; WHO, 2002).

#### **2.4.4 ECONOMIC VIOLENCE**

It broadly means denying the available economic opportunities and facilities to women. Olufunmilayo I. Fawole (2009) in her paper titled 'Economic Violence To Women and Girls : Is It Receiving the Necessary Attention?' mentions that economic violence has gross impact on women's health and it leads to gross poverty and other forms of violence. She also explains that economic violence includes exclusion from financial decision making, unequal pay pattern, prohibition on working and denial of property rights.

Domestic violence is generally inflicted by close relatives of the victim. Domestic Violence Act 2005 considers husband, father-in-law, mother-in-law and siblings of the husband as 'respondents' and questions them directly in case of domestic violence complaint. Most domestic violence advocates prefers to use the term family violence in reference to situation in which children or elders are being abused instead of or in addition to romantic partners (Repucci et. al 2006) Domestic violence, therefore, occurs when a partner purposely causes either physical or mental harm to the other, or other members of the family.

The Beijing Declaration asserts violence against women as an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace [which] violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

LBhatti (2007) while taking in to account various forms of violence concluded that 88 per cent of women in lower class were the victims of physical and verbal violence in contrast to 43 per cent from the middle class. With regard to emotional and intellectual violence, he found that representation of the upper and middle class was more as compared to the lower class.

Lilian (2010) asserts that Battering is more prevalent in younger couples between 18-35 years of age. It could be presumed that women beyond a particular point either resign to it as a way of life or break away from this torturous life or have sought other resources. It also highlights the fact that the phenomena see in even at an early period of marital life.

## **2.5 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A MARITAL CRIME**

In the republic of Kosovo, domestic violence is defined as each act or non-act on purpose that results in mistreatment, which is executed from an individual who is or was related to the victim including here the physical maltreatment ( physical violation, physical pain of fear, psychic mistreatment, invasion of dignity, insult, humility) sexual abuse ( sexual relation and abuse) economical mistreatment ( damage, invasion of property, fear for the economical position of the victim. Violence against women is perceived as the most pervasive 13–61% reported ever having experienced physical violence by a partner; 4–49% reported having experienced severe physical violence by a partner; 6–59% reported sexual violence by a partner at some point in their lives; and 20–75% reported experiencing one emotionally abusive act, or more, from a partner in their lifetime, Violation of human rights (United Nation Secretary General, 2009; Heise et al., 2002).

According to law, state institution aims are obligated to prevent domestic violence to secure and protect victims, to prosecute perpetrators and offer supports treatment and reintegration for domestic violence victims. “Criminal behavior of domestic violence are usually some form of violence manifested by violence in marriage, therefore violence among spouses, husband and wife, children violence and parents’ violence”. “Violence Against Women Act” (VAWA). This violence can be manifested as a physical and sexual violence.

In 1998 The Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), raised concerns about the prevalence of violence against women and girls —including domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace. It is also important to state that domestic violence is practiced against everyone, but it affects mainly women and girls (Jekayinfa, 2011; USAID, 2008). The prevention of domestic violence can be achieved through measures with a social character and repressive measures when there are criminal offences in the field of domestic violence and marital crimes.

## **2.6 CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S BIOGRAPHY**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. She went on to study Medicine and Pharmacy at the University of Nigeria for a year and a half. During this period, she edited *The Compass*, a magazine run by the University's Catholic medical students. She later studied at Drexel University in Philadelphia for two years, and went on to pursue a degree in Communication and Political Science at Eastern Connecticut State University. (Collins 2001)

She gained a Master of Arts Degree in Creative Writing from John Hopkins University, Baltimore (Fasakin 2015). Collins (2001) wrote that "After initially writing poetry and one play, *For Love of Biafra* (1998), she had several short stories published in literary journals, winning various competition prizes". Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, was published in 2003 and is set in the political turmoil of 1990s Nigeria. This book won the 2005 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Overall Winner, Best Book), and was shortlisted for the 2004 Orange Prize for Fiction (Fasakin 2015). Her second novel is *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), Linda (2008) writes that "Half of a Yellow Sun is set before and during the Biafran War. It won the 2007 Orange Broad band Prize for Fiction". She also has a collection of short stories: *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009), shortlisted for the 2009 John Llewellyn-Rhys Memorial Prize and the 2010 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa Region, Best Book). Her third novel title *Americanah* was published in 2013.

## **2.7 RELATED REVIEWS ON PURPLE HIBISCUS**

Adichie's writings cover the three genres of Literature; drama, prose and poetry. Like many African writers, Linda (2009) asserts "she shows great commitment to the happenings in her society. She represents fictional reality through her character characterization and graphic use of language". Osofisan describes her thus on the back cover of her novel *Purple Hibiscus*; she beautifully manipulates syntax and trope, as well as controls irony and suspense to achieve great aesthetics and heighten effects. "Her

ability to manipulate language and apt analysis of her environment calls scholarly attention to her work”.

Fasakin (2015) opines that “Nigerian-born Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie made her entrance into the global literary scene with the publication of her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), which won the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize for Best First Book in 2005”.

Adichie in her novels, create positive female characters that are not submissive to exploitation but active in an effort to revolutionize their situation .In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie analyses the concept of power in the hands of a figure of authority, Eugene. She illustrates how he enforces dominance by using violence on his wife and children to bend them to his will (Olawejaju 2012).

In her writings, Chimamanda Adichie portrays a new and positive image of women that is different from the pictures presented in male authored novels that are modelled along cultural ideals which define women as marriage-oriented and dependent on men for their survival and protection (Selden, 1989; Birkett & Harvey, 2007).

Fasakin (2015) writes that “Feminist writers like Chimamanda Adichie in their works depict that some of the cultural values which oppress women are clearly visible in marital institutions. As Oriaku (2008) notes, married life, and both in real life and in fiction, is perhaps the most circumscribing factor in the life of an African woman. Fasakin(2015) concludes by saying that “The most common forms of these abuse are ,wife battering, rape and other forms of sexual violence during wars and conflict situations, female genital mutilation, trafficking in women, and inhuman widowhood practices and these various acts are identified indices mitigating against the growth of the female in the society”.

Critics have highlighted the connections that Adichie establishes between the violent atmosphere that pervades the home of the novel’s fifteen-year- old narrator, Kambili Achike, and the climate of fear maintained by the ruthless Nigerian military regimes of

the late twentieth century, when the events of *Purple Hibiscus* unfold ( Beilke 2006, Hewett 2004, Okuyade 2005). Some articles have also focused on the metaphor of food, which is linked with abuse and emancipation in Adichie's story (Highfield 2006).

*Purple Hibiscus* is a novel that examines the issue of violence both at the domestic and societal levels as a problem prevails in the Nigerian society. Chimamanda Adichie looks at how violence leads to all sorts of psychological and physiological trauma (Collin 2001). Her narrator, Kambili; in *Purple Hibiscus* takes the reader into the world of her family. She describes a world which revolves around her tyrant father Eugene who controls his family with iron fists. His control of the family breaks down all sorts of personal freedom of the individual members of the family. Mrs Beatrice Achike is described as not having any opinion of her own and speaks in little amounts as birds eat'. Kambili does not know how to talk in public because she has been brought up not to speak at all unless spoken to.

Lilan (2009) asserts that *Purple Hibiscus* looks at a facet of violence that is more psychological than physical with power domiciled in the hands of a rich tyrant Eugene Achike .

Ibeku Ann Ijeoma in her paper “ The issues of Feminism in African Novel in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*” explains that Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is a feminist work that challenges the dehumanizing tendencies of the men folk. This was evident in the character of Mama (Beatrice) who undergoes series of humiliation, dehumanization, and denial from her husband. She felt that her marriage to Eugene is a favour considering the fact that he refused to listen to his kinsmen on the need to take another wife when she couldn't give birth after two children. One can ask whose fault because it is because it's obvious that she lost two pregnancies as a result of her husband's violent action and should be blamed for her inability to give birth to more children. Adichie focuses her attention on women and what they go through in life, their love for the family, respect for their husbands even when they treat them shabbily, and

how some of them were able to say no to all forms of violence or subjugation by the men folk.

Magaret O. Chukwudi in her paper “The effects of Sexism, Patriarchy and Violence on the Abused and the Abuser on Chimamanda Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus” explain that in Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus, gender-based violence manifests in the form of domestic violence, projected through the Eugene Achike family around whom the story, set in the eastern part of Nigeria revolves.

In Purple Hibiscus, Eugene Achike, revered as a model citizen and family man, turns out to be extremely abusive in his home - he dominates, subjugates, batters and inflicts injury on his wife, children, sister and father, physically and psychologically.

Fasakin F. Yemisi (2014) in her thesis “Gender based violence in Chimamanda Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun”, explain that as a philanthropist, Eugene disperses his largesse to both church and community, which earns him the title “The One Who Does for the Community”. As a human rights activist, Eugene uses his newspaper, “The Standard”, as a tool of his crusade to expose, challenge and criticize the ills of the government. This earns him an award from Amnesty World. In contrast, the Eugene Achike we meet at the home is a violent, abusive husband, father, brother and son, who hold his family hostage to his vicious attacks.

According to Awake (2012) “many women live with a constant fear of attack in the one place they should feel the safest - their own home. Yet, sympathy is all too often shown the perpetrator instead of the victims”.

The above situation lends credence to the following observation by Jules Henry in the International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH) Ethiopia, the article, women’s motherhood and mothering in African literatures on Purple Hibiscus, that “...in one’s own house, shielded from critical eyes, one can be as irrational as one pleases with one’s [family] as long as severe damage does not attract... attention. ( Skolnick and Skolnick

2014). Eugene's irrational bouts of violence which manifest in the beating of his pregnant wife until she miscarried; the scalding of his daughter's feet; and the deformity of his son's finger are, therefore, written off as "accidents" to protect him from being exposed for the monster that he is. However, it is not by accident that Adichie highlights Eugene's inherent violence and the resultant symbolic destruction at the opening of the novel: "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the *étagère*".

Ogaga Okuyade (2012) reiterates in the articles "Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as a Character in *Purple Hibiscus*" believes that African women are products of multiple forms of subjugation: Patriarchy, tradition, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and Gender imperialism, all combine to act against the African woman's self assertion". In this study therefore, we argue that Adichie is involved in the creation of discourse meant to push women from the margins to the centre.

Mabura (2008) opines that in *Purple Hibiscus* we can argue that Eugene fits the descriptions of a Gothic patriarch and Beatrice, Kambili and Jaja the suffering subjects of his authority. These victims of paternal patriarchal authority do everything possible to claim their free space in the oppressive circumstances occasioned by Eugene authority.

Akani Julius in the paper "Women, Culture and Society in *Purple Hibiscus*" explain that Adichie surveys the identity of women as wives and highlights different forms of gender oppression linked to such identity. Women become wives through marriage whether monogamous or polygamous.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) identifies oppression at the matrimonial level as one of the mountains that keep the African women in subordination. *Purple Hibiscus* is a case of women asserting their positions in their societies and challenging patriarchy with its several manifestations.

Udumukwu (2011), however, analyses *Purple Hibiscus* with consideration for issues of ideology, adopting element of voice as a strategy for the constitution of the interplay of subject and interpellation. Many women in our contemporary society live like Beatrice. Some have exited their domestic prisons while some are suffering in silence. According to Salami-Agunloye (qtd in Cooper, 2017 ) “In many African societies, being a wife is nearly as bad as being a slave or a bond woman as has been illustrated by many writers”.

The sudden death of a patriarchy brought freedom and liberation to the household of Eugene Achike. Many women, like Assatou of Ba’s *So Long a Letter* and Firdaus of El-Sadaawi’s *Woman at Point Zero*, find ways to break free from years of subservience, subjugation, hegemony and ultimately; Patriarchal.

Diala-Ogamba(2000) opines that “Dehumanization, patriarchal and biased religious laws lead to debasement of humanity and the enslavement of the mind”. In support of this assertion Dawes’ article uses *Purple Hibiscus* and *Things Fall Apart* to point to the brutalities and violence that have characterized African nations and families as a result of patriarchy. *Purple Hibiscus* has a fresh and compelling voice that mirrors, including other things, the theme of patriarchy just as *Things Fall Apart* does.

All these writers have critiqued the text from different perspectives and focused on particular issues ranging from the feminist nature of Adichie as depicts in the fictional narrative, although many scholars have discussed on the issue of domestic violence in *Purple Hibiscus*. Yet, few critics have looked at the presentation of marital subjectivity in the text.

## **2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research will make use of some aspect of feminist and comparative theories. Jaggar entails that “Feminism broadly means both thought & action towards ending the hierarchy of sexes thereby to achieve gender equality”. In present times, the roots of such hierarchy need to be eradicated. This theory view marriage and family as context of inequality and

oppression. Correcting such inequality and increasing the power of women in their relationship.

Jaggar further opines that “Feminism as an ideology and practice addresses the issue of women’s oppression and subjugation in its own specific manner and subsequently attempts to provide a possible solution of the same”. In doing so, various feminists have outlined varying outlooks either locating patriarchy at the centre of the oppression or some have viewed the industrial-capitalistic society as women’s prime opponent and ‘enemy’.

Susan asserts that “Feminist perspective means to understand and deconstruct the ‘normal appearing’ social order to unravel the hidden transcripts of patriarchy and female/women subordination and subjugation”. It ‘discovers’ the hidden reality of male domination which is made to appear ‘normal’.

Highlighting the nuanced nature of feminist perspective, Menon (2012) states that “A feminist perspective recognizes that the hierarchical organizing of the world around gender is keys to maintaining social order; that to live lives marked ‘male’ and ‘female’ is to live different realities”. Thus the feminist perspective brings out the complex nature of reality; it goes beyond the natural and attempts to debunk the reality from the vantage position of the oppressed and marginal, in this case, women. Though in the recent past, there have emerged a variety of feminist perspectives like cultural feminism, Marxist & Socialist, Radical, eco-feminism among others, yet “what has united it since the beginning, across its disparate strands, is its focus on power, on the asymmetry of the gender dichotomy and of gendered relationships” (Dirks et. al. 1994). It provides a fresh & new look into the social order which appears to be functioning ‘smoothly’ everyday devoid of any contestations and power hierarchy.

Feminism is a theory which posits that men and women should have equal political, economic and social rights. This is the core of all feminist theories. Sometimes this definition is also referred to as “core feminism or “core feminist theory”. A feminist is on

believes or is of the view that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially as defined above. Over the years, different waves of feminism have cropped up as a result of the imbalance between male and female in the society. There are types of feminism, some of which will be briefly discussed below.

### **2.8.1 Liberal feminism**

Liberal feminism originates from the liberal political theory and thus focuses on equality. It can be seen as the application of liberal principles & practices of individual freedom and rights into the lives of women.

According to Schwartzman (2006), “The ideals and concepts of liberalism have been used in feminist struggles for liberation throughout recent history. From the time of the women’s suffrage movement to the more recent battles over abortion, women have formulated their demands in terms of equality, autonomy, and individual rights.”

Thus we see that the central themes in liberal feminism like independence, equality of opportunity and individualism are derived from the political philosophy of liberalism. In a way, liberal feminists argued that women should have similar rights as men. They challenged their systematic and historical exclusion from the public space. It is in this writing that empathy towards women’s inequality and commitment towards resolving the same appears very strongly.

Mill (2000) argued that “Women should have the similar rights related to property & citizenship as their male counterpart”. The late 19th and beginning of the 20th century witnessed the suffrage movement so as to achieve equal voting rights similar to that of men. Thus the notion of rights is central in liberal feminism. The historicity of liberal feminism has been succinctly outlined by Jaggar (1983) wherein she states that “In the 18th century, they argued that women as well as men had natural rights; in the 19th century, they employed utilitarian arguments in favor of arguments in favor of equal rights for women under the law; and in the 20th century, with the development of the

liberal theory of the welfare state, liberal feminists demand that the state should actively pursue a variety of social reforms in order to ensure equal opportunities for women.”

In the broad rubric of liberal feminism, women demanded equal rights to education and entering into occupational domains earlier considered as masculine or male-centric; equal political and civil rights manifested in citizenship which subsequently will lead to the right to vote. Liberal feminist suffrage campaign is a potent symbol of such demands. It is important to note that the dynamism of the state is paramount for liberal feminism. The latter strongly puts forth its demands and argues for its acceptance and implementation by the former.

### **2.8.2 Marxist feminism**

Marxist feminism is based on the tenets of Marxist literature. In this regard, Tong (1997) contends that “Just as the liberal concept of human nature is present in liberal feminist thought, the Marxist concept of human nature is present in Marxist feminist thought”. Marx critiqued capitalism as the most exploitative system based on class relations. The creation of private property and surplus value at the cost of workers’ needs is the prime goal of the capitalist industrialist.

Jaggar (1983) highlights that “The distinguishing feature of the Marxist analysis is the causal link that it seeks to establish between women’s oppression and class society. Under capitalism, Marxists claim, women are oppressed primarily because their oppression benefits capital.” Needless to say, the notion of class and class consciousness in terms of women being a ‘class’ that is ‘sexclass’ is at the core of Marxist feminist thought. Marxist feminists like Kate Millett (*Sexual politics*, 1969), Emma Goldman (*The Traffic in Women*, 1970), Lillian Robinson (*Sex, class and culture*, 1978), Michele Barrett (*Women’s oppression today*, 1980) among others argue that it is the exploitative character of the class system that can be seen as equal to patriarchal oppression; thus viewing capitalist patriarchy as a cause of women’s oppression.

### **2.8.3 Socialist feminism**

Charlotte (2000) as cited in Ebunoluwa (2009) stated that socialist feminism is an answer to the question posed by Lydia Sargent which was “... how can women understand their particular oppression in a way that can confront the narrowness of Marxist terminology which focuses on work and economic relations as the primary (sometimes only) area of importance; and how can they develop a new theory which understands the importance of reproduction, family, and sexuality as central to current analyses and future visions?”

Socialist feminism highlights “contemporary male dominance as part of the economic foundation of the society, understanding ‘economic’ to include childbearing and sexual activity therefore, the abolition of male dominance requires a transformation of the economic foundation of society as a whole” (Jaggar, 1983).

Hartmann (2003) outlines that “As feminist socialists, we must organize a practice which addresses both the struggle against patriarchy and the struggle against capitalism.” Thus it established a crucial inter-linkage between capitalism and patriarchy that is, capitalist patriarchy in some sense wherein economic class aspects of women’s oppression is located.

More conclusively, elaborating upon the tenet of socialist feminism, Rowbotham (2013) states that “In order to act effectively we have to try to work out the precise relationship between the patriarchal dominance of men over women, and the property relations which come from this, to class exploitation and racism.”

### **2.8.4 Radical feminism**

Radical feminism emerged in the late 1960s as the offshoot of the women’s liberation movement. Though it was more visible in America it later spread to other European countries.

According to Buchanan (1989) “The era of the radical feminist is generally identified as the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s”. Outlining its basic contours; Echols states that “Radical feminism rejected both the politico position that a socialist revolution would bring about women’s liberation and the liberal feminist solution of integrating women into the public sphere.

Radical feminism is the breeding ground for many of the ideas arising from feminism. Radical feminism was the cutting edge of feminist theory from approximately 1967-1975. It is no longer as universally accepted as it was then, and no longer serves to solely define the term, "feminism." This group views the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of oppression, one that cuts across boundaries of race, culture, and economic class. This is a movement intent on social change, change of rather revolutionary proportions.

Radical feminism questions why women must adopt certain roles based on their biology, just as it questions why men adopt certain other roles based on gender.

C.H. Cooley (2001) pointed out that “Radical feminism attempts to draw lines between biologically-determined behavior and culturally-determined behavior in order to free both men and women as much as possible from their previous narrow gender roles”..

Radical feminists argued that women constituted a sex-class, that relations between women and men needed to be recast in political terms, and that gender rather than class was the primary contradiction.” The 1960s slogan of “The personal is political” fairly resonated with the ideas of radical feminism. Feminist and writer Carol Hanisch’s essay titled ‘The Personal is Political’ appeared in then anthology *Notes From the Second Year: Women's Liberation in 1970*.

According to Jaggar (1983), “It reveals how male power is exercised and reinforced through such ‘personal’ institutions as childrearing, housework, love, marriage and all

kinds of sexual practices” and thus “bringing sexual, childbearing and childrearing practices into the domain of politics”.

Rowland and Klein (1996) have outlined the general principles of radical feminism shared by its various strands. According to them, “The first and fundamental theme is that women as a social group are oppressed by men as a social group and that this oppression is the primary oppression for women”. Patriarchy is the oppressing structure of male domination.

Rowland (1996) outline that radical feminists argue that such patriarchal oppression is universal in its nature and extent that is, it as a universal value system. Additionally, it took up the issues of control over one’s own body and the pursuit of equal opportunity. Radical feminism was radical in a sense as it touched upon the issue of body (sexuality, reproduction and abortion) in times when these were considered as taboo and it was the destiny of the women to suffer the negative consequences of these in silence. Tongs explain that radical feminism opened up new spaces from where women spoke out.

Radical feminism claims that most men have the potential to use physical violence against women, including rape and murder. They point to the commonness of date rape and wife beating, of murders of ex- wives and former girlfriends. The commercial side of this systemic misogyny, or women-hating is the way women are depicted as sex objects in the mass media and pieces of meat in pornography, and the global exploitation is the common downside of romantic heterosexual love, which itself is oppressive to women.

This concentration on universal gender oppression has led to accusation that radical feminism neglects ethnic and social class differences among men and among women, and that it downplays other sources of oppression. By pitying women against men, radical feminism alienates women of color and working – class women, who feel torn between their feminist and their ethnic and class loyalties. (Gilligan,1982)

### **2.8.5 Amazon Feminism**

Amazon feminism focuses on physical equality and is opposed to gender role stereotypes and discrimination against women based on assumptions that women are supposed to be, look, or behave as if they are passive, weak and physically helpless.

Amazon feminism rejects the idea that certain characteristics or interests are inherently masculine (or feminine), and upholds and explores a vision of heroic womanhood. Amazon feminists tend to view that all women are as physically capable as all men. (examining branches of feminism 2004)

### **2.8.6 Cultural Feminism**

This theory deals with the fundamental personality differences between men and women, and that women's differences are special and should be celebrated. This theory of feminism supports the notion that there are biological differences between men and women. For example, "women are kinder and more gentle than men," leading to the mentality that if women ruled the world there would be no wars.

Evans affirms that, "Cultural feminism is the theory that wants to overcome sexism by celebrating women's special qualities, women's ways, women's experiences, and often believing that the "woman way" is the better way".

### **2.8.7 Eco-feminism**

Eco-feminism is a theory that rests on the basic principal that patriarchal philosophies are harmful to women, children, and other living things. Parallels are drawn between society's treatment of the environment, animals, or resources and its treatment of women. In resisting patriarchal culture, eco-feminists believe they are also resisting plundering and destroying of the Earth. They feel that the patriarchal philosophy emphasizes the need to dominate and control unruly females and the unruly wilderness.

Henry, Torl affirms that, Ecofeminism views patriarchal society to be a structure which has developed over the last 5,000 years, while considering matriarchal societies (a society in which females are centre of the societal roles and structures, to be the original hierarchy)

### **2.8.8 Material Feminism**

A movement that began in the late 19th century focused on liberating by improving their material condition. This movement revolved around taking the "burden" off women in regards to housework, cooking, and other traditional female domestic jobs. Tong, propose that women should be given the right to accumulate wealth and not sidetrack to home chores.

### **2.8.9 Moderate Feminism**

This branch of feminism tends to be populated mostly by younger women or women who perceive that they have not directly experienced discrimination. They often believe that the ideals of the feminist movement are no longer viable, and therefore question the need for further efforts. They often view feminism as overbearing and too overt. Often this group espouses feminists ideas while not accepting or wanting the label of 'feminist'. (Tong, 2019).

### **2.8.10 Separatists feminism**

Separatists are often wrongly depicted as lesbians. These are the feminists who advocate separation from men; sometimes total, sometimes partial. The core idea is that "separating" (by various means) from men enables women to see themselves in a different context. Many feminists, whether or not separatist, think this is a necessary "first step," for personal growth. However, they do not necessarily endorse permanent separation. (Tong 1989).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PURPLE HIBISCUS: MARITAL SUBJECTIVITY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CHARACTERIZATION, SETTINGS, NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AND THEMATIC PREOCCUPATION**

This chapter discusses marital subjectivity in Purple Hibiscus. The chapter will focus on the various ways in which Adichie extends the issues of marital subjectivity beyond sexism, to include domestic violence, patriarchy, and religion, in Purple Hibiscus. This many-sided goal of marital subjectivity is aimed at arriving at the issues faced by women in their marriages and their idea of survival in their families.

According to Wikipedia, “Marriage is defined differently and by different entities, based on cultural, religious and personal factors. However, the contractual marriage agreement usually implies that the couple has legal obligations to each other throughout their lives or until they decide to divorce. To some people, marriage changes to meet social and economic needs, to others it remains firmly fixed.

Margaret(2017) opines that Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus identifies the suffering, psychological trauma, marital incompatibility and extremely harsh patriarchal laws and conditions which can leave women totally devastated and even debilitated for life in marriage. Marriage, unarguably one of the oldest institutions in the universe, is the legal joining of two consensual adults (usually male and female) who love each other and have agreed to spend the rest of their lives together as a couple. Generally, marriage is the union between a man and a woman to become husband and wife.

Marriage as an institution that primarily promotes procreation and companionship has now paves way for subjugation and inequality among genders. This subjugation often result to violence and abuse in marriage which comes in different forms of sexual assault, extreme starvation, senseless brutality and ceaseless threats to their lives which comes in form of beating. (Wisalena 2012).

According to Wikipedia “Subjectivity means something being a subject, broadly meaning an entity that has agency, meaning that it acts upon or wields power over some other entity”. In marriage, men in most cases wields power over their partner, men tend to show their masculinity prowess. To this, Loum (2005) suggests that “Masculinity covers a farrago of attributes, including physical power, sexual and functional roles, social status, emotional traits and intellectual qualities”.

The narrator in the novel *Kambili* who narrates the story from the first person point of view revealed the subjectivity, oppression, abuse, and the vulnerability of the women in *Purple Hibiscus*. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili gives a vivid description of her mother after she loses her pregnancy, the pitiable condition of her mother and her traumatic condition. “Her eyes were vacant, like the eyes of those mad people who wandered around the roadside garbage dumps in town pulling grimy, torn canvas bags with their life fragments inside. “there was an accident, the baby is gone” (Adichie 42-43).

Eugene’s characters in the novels show the visible power of patriarchal ideology that forces men to suppress women as a sign of their masculinity. Isam M. Shihada remarks that “women pay dearly with their freedom and dignity to obey the laws of the patriarchal system that dominates society”. These women, though their cultural and geographical backgrounds are quite different, all have one thing in common. They suffer severely and in a moment of utmost distress they fall into utter silence.

Beatrice is depicted as women who silently accept mistreatment from their husbands because they believe that they need protection in order to live respectfully as a woman. Eugene’s character in the novel show the visible power of patriarchal ideology that forces men to suppress women as a sign of their masculinity.

Ogbeide (2015) remarks that all forms of spousal abuse have one purpose which is often to gain and maintain control over the victim. Abusers use many tactics to exercise power over their spouse or partner. On account of their weak constitution which often conspires

with many oppressive patriarchal cultures in many parts of the world, women are often the hapless victims of spousal abuse.

The woman's position as a full time house wife with no educational background or money of her own makes it easy for her husband to perpetuate violence against her and her children, without her making any effort to stop the violence or report it for fear of losing her marriage and her source of dependence. Beatrice can be regarded as a full house wives, she depends on her husband for her daily income. Despite the suffering and oppression from her husbands, she could not leave her marriage.

*Beatrice laments: "Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me, where would I go?" she did not wait for Aunty ifeoma to respond. "Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even, and not to bother paying a bride price"( Adichie 253).*

From the beginning of her marriage to Eugene, Beatrice learnt to suffer in silence as defense mechanism against further violence from her husband. For Beatrice, much of the happiness she derives from life (and almost all of her miseries) emanates from her marriage to their husbands. She suffers humiliation; she's beaten and turned into punching bag in the presence of their children.

In Adichie's Purple Hibiscus the subjectivity is not only limited to the wife but it extends to the children. This affirms to the claim of Margaret in her article on Purple Hibiscus "Eugene subjects his children to extreme physical violence in the guise of discipline". He summons his daughter Kamibili to his room and asked her to get into the bathroom. With a kettle filled with hot water, he invites kambili to step into the bath-tub in the bathroom;

*"You should not see sin and walk right into it'. He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it toward my feet, slowly as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen. He was crying now, tears streaming down his face. I saw the moist steam before I saw the water. I watched the water leave the kettle flowing almost in slow motion*

*in an arc to my feet. The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding; I felt nothing for a second, and then I screamed" (Adichie 194).*

Marriage is an avenue where couples raise their children and live in harmony and understanding each other every day, however, Beatrice undergoes some traumatic experiences in her marriage. Azuike wrote that "His wife, Beatrice, leads a life of servitude. His children, Kambili and Jaja, live in perpetual fear of him. Eugene is so power drunk that he sickens every member of his household". His children, Kambili and Jaja, live in perpetual fear of him.

Azuike state that "Eugene is so power drunk that he sickens every member of his household". He is, in addition, a father that control and rules his family with 'clenched fists.'

For instance, how he unleashes his anger on Kambili, his only daughter, for daring to visit Papa Nnukwu without his consent: He started to kick me. The metals buckles on his slippers strung like bites from giant mosquitoes. He talked nonstop, out of control, in a mix Igbo and English like soft meat and thorny bones, Godlessness. Heathen worship. Hell fire. The kicking increased in tempo, the stinging was raw now, even more like bites, because the metal landed on open skin on my side, my back, My legs, Kicking. Kicking. Kicking ( Adichie 216-217).

Beatrice has been beaten and controlled by Eugene for years; Beatrice has lost her own voice and is helplessly witnessing her children's suffering. In African culture women are expected to be submissive in marriage and respect their husband. Sadiya asserts that "Beatrice seems to be a very calm, reserved and of repressive nature". She comes out as a woman who is always quiet and silently accepting his torture which he inflicts in the guise of religious ideology".

Sadiya opines that "Women are naturally strong at heart but very little things that seem unimportant tend to break them down and hence, they become vulnerable to

psychological trauma”. Eugene beats Kambili their daughter mercilessly to the point of coma; it is only Mama who stayed with her in the hospital. She stood alone with the unconscious girl waiting for her recovery. Until Kambili recovers to consciousness, Mama has been waiting alone in the hospital room. At this crucial moment, Eugene’s physical presence is more than necessary.

The novel identifies the psychological trauma, marital incompatibility which women experience in marriage. In the marriage of Beatrice and Eugene. They are not compatible, Mama experience agony and pain whenever she loses her pregnancy but there is nothing she could do to stop her husband from abusing her.

On several occasion, Aunty Ifeoma has tried to intervene, but Beatrice did not give her room, she believed, she can manage her marriage problem without the third party. “I hung up, I told him I would not let you come to the phone.” Mama flew up from her stool. “Why? Why?”( Adichie254).

When children reach the adolescent stage, many changes occurs in them and exposure can also propel the changes in the attitude of children, this is evident in the character of Jaja. He is the first member of the family to challenge his father’s tyrant and authoritarian attitude. Azuike asserts that “Eugene is a tyrant who rules his home with draconian measures. Living under him is itself a big struggle fraught with the dangers of ‘losing vital body parts’”.

Psychoanalysts propose that spiritual damage is one of the most insidious effects of child abuse. This manifests in Jaja’s open defiance of his father through his refusal to receive communion in church. His irreverent reference to the ‘host’ as ‘wafer’ and the touch of the priest as ‘nauseating’ is a defilement to Eugene. However, this incident marks the beginning of Jaja’s rebellion against his father which propels Eugene’s violence, and offers him punishment after each confrontation. Jaja’s rejection of communion strips it of its importance and sacred significance, and shocks his father and sister, Kambili, who reminds him of its supposed significance: “It is the body of our Lord...you cannot stop

receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that... (Adichie 6). Jaja fears the consequence of his action, death is evidently preferable to his father's brutality and hypocrisy, and so, he responds: "... Then I will die, Papa" (Adichie 7). This response marks the genesis of Jaja's resolve to protect his mother and sister from the atrocities of his father in spite of consequences.

In marriage, society contributes to women subjectivity, Eugene is the reason behind Mama's miscarriages but the society never say anything as regards to it, all they could do is to gossip about her inability to produce more children. Instead of questioning his cruel and violent behaviour, the society blames Mama for not being able to give him as many children as he deserves. Mama recount her experience and states thus: "You know after you came and I had the miscarriages, the member of our umunna even sent people to your father to urge him to have children with some else. So many people had willing daughters and many of them were university graduates, too" (Adichie 28). This is the extent to which society goes in supporting male dominance in a society like Nigeria. Sadiya asserts that "The society remains silent and people did not shown countenance to the outrageous practices men are doing today in the society such as the beating and molesting of the women. Mama is thus subjugated not only due to direct attack from Eugene but also by the prominent role the society plays in her marital life.

Gloria (2017) opines that, The phallogocentric notion that a woman must have many male sons in order to be valued culturally makes Beatrice to feel insecure. The villagers believe that a man with Eugene's wealth and position in the society should not have just two children. This belief contributes to Beatrice's trauma after the second miscarriage ( 268).

In African society, widows are subjected to different forms of suffering for instance, incessant complains from in-laws, in worst cases the belongings of the family are confiscated by members of the dead husband's extended family and the bereaved family is dispossessed of their inheritance". Adichie aptly portrays the plight of such women in her novel *Purple Hibiscus*. Auntie Ifeoma, Chief Eugene sister is a courageous and

hardworking lady who lost her husband to a ghastly car accident but is blamed for his death by his relatives. Despite her husband's absence, she still works tirelessly to make ends meet for their three children. The society she finds herself in, didn't appreciate her for her efforts but rather, accuse her of hiding some of her husband's wealth. She affirms: "I don't have the strength for Ifediora's family right now. They eat more and more shit every year. The people in his Umunna said he left money somewhere and I have been hiding it" (Adichie 74). In the same way, she is not only dissented by her late Husband's family but she is also accused of killing him.

"Last Christmas one of the women from their compound even told me I had killed him" (Adichie74). "Aunty Ifeoma paints in our mind, a picture of an extremely intelligent, self-sacrificing widow who also, is a staunch defender of her honor and her family" (Azuike 44).

Aunty Ifeoma in the novel is another Character amongst the abused women. Eugene has severely enforced Aunty Ifeoma to join the missionary knight, she refuses and Eugene on the other refuse to assist her. Fasakin asserts that "Beatrice and her sister-in-law, Aunty Ifeoma, work together in the novel to create a dynamic and complex representation of the postcolonial Nigerian woman". Ifeoma is zealous, strong and vocal about her disapproval of the current gender relations in Nigeria. Ibeku writes that "Mama even when her life was endangered to the extent of losing her pregnancy endured her husband's maltreatment but Ifeoma is a kind of woman who is not afraid of anyone and will speak up when things are going wrong".

### **3.2 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN PURPLE HIBISCUS**

The United Nations defines violence against women as follows:

*any act... that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*

Domestic violence, therefore, occurs when a partner purposely causes either physical or mental harm to the other, or other members of the family.

Ogunmodede Pelumi (2016) defines “Domestic violence as the intentional and persistent abuse of anyone in the home in a way that causes pain, distress or injury”.

According to Wikipedia “domestic violence refers to any abusive treatment of one family member by another, thus violating the law of basic human rights. It includes battering of intimate partners and others, sexual abuse of children, marital rape and traditional practices that are harmful to women.”

The first three lines of the novel gives the reader an insight to the subject matter of the novel which is the case of domestic violence. This is revealed through the voice of Kambili “ Things started to fall apart at home when my brother Jaja, Did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal Across the across the room and broke the figurines on the etagere”( Adichie 1).

Namibia has as well ratified the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” (CEDAW) in 1992. The convention condemns any form of discrimination against women, and states that measures have to be taken to eradicate: 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 (Visser & Ruppel- Schlichting, 2008).

Domestic violence is therefore a regular feature in many African homes, a situation which is portrayed by Adichie in her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*. She reveals how the physical, psychological and mental abuse of women can have negative effects on their well-being. The liberation of women from all form of abuse against their peaceful co-existence alongside men deserves the support of all humanity, as she advocates change in the

attitude of the patriarchy in the society. Physical and psychological violence is experienced in Eugene's home as well as acts of resistance as found at the beginning of the novel.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene Achike, who is respected as a model citizen and family man, turns out to be extremely abusive in his home, he dominates, subjugates, batters and inflicts injury on his wife, children, sister and father, physically and psychologically. Kambili recounts to this as thus "Papa looked around the room quickly, as if searching for proof that something had fallen from the high ceiling, something he had never thought would fall. He picked up the missal and flung it across the room toward Jaja" (Adichie 15).

Amaka in *Purple Hibiscus* states that "The plight of this woman is not limited to those occasional damages he caused her but the frequent battering she undergoes from him which has seem to become a normal phenomenon among the members of the lovely family". Mama,

like other woman in Nigeria is traumatized as a result of physical and domestic violence which she experiences on various occasions from her loving husband. Sadiya asserts that "Eugene beats his wife severely to the point of miscarriage for trying to thwart the will of God by putting her desires first". As a result, she is not only a victim of physical assault but also of mental breakdown. "...I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand-carved bedroom door...I sat down, closed my eyes and started to count... I stepped out of my room just as Jaja came out of his. We stood at the landing and watched papa descend. Mama was slung over his shoulder... There's blood on the floor, Jaja said. I'll get the brush from the bathroom. We cleaned up the trickle of blood..." (Adichie 33).

Eugene reacts by acts of violence in which his wife is the principal recipient" (60). An instance in the novel is when his wife is reluctant to visit the priest after mass because she is pregnant, Eugene beats her up, unaware of her pregnancy. Kambili describes the scene thus:

*I was in my room after lunch, reading James chapter five, when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parent's hand-carved bedroom door I imagined the door had gotten stuck and Papa was trying to open it. If I imagined it hard enough, then it would be true. I sat down, closed my eyes, and started to count. Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Some times it was over before I even got to twenty (41).*

Afterwards Eugene asked the children to recite sixteen different novenas for Mama's forgiveness. Amaka opines that "Kambili's narration of the violence that goes on in their home is imbued with a sort of naivety consistent with a child her age and portrays her daily life which entails a constant witnessing and experience of psycho-physical violence". Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty.

"Eugene's house is a like a luxurious concentration camp where all the trappings of wealth couldn't mask the constant battery and various acts of violence that take place". His wife, Beatrice polishing of the étagère was her way of containing her emotional and psychological turmoil after each physical assault. Beatrice pregnancy did not hindered Eugene from executing his God's imagined justice on his hapless and long-suffering wife whose physical demands as a result of early pregnancy could not be tolerated". This is how Beatrice recounts her experiences to Auntie Ifeoma, her sister in-law, who lives in Nsukka: "I do not know if my head is correct" she said ...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 before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctors said there was nothing he could do to save it"(Adichie 253).

The violence of Papa makes the children promise to protect the unborn child when their mother told them that she is pregnant "We will take care of the baby; we will protect him" (Adichie 31), they say this, out of the fear of their father tyrant. Eugene is the source of Beatrice physical, emotional and spiritual anguish. In spite of this factors such as the stigma of divorce, the stability of the children, financial security, her religious beliefs and

communal expectations force her to hang onto him, stoically condoning and enduring his brutalities while her scarred and disfigured children become the silent witnesses and victims of his extreme violence as is evident in Kambili's revelations:

*We stood and watched Papa descend. Mama was slung over his shoulder... we cleaned up the trickle of blood, which trailed away as if someone carried a leaking jar of red water colour all the way downstairs. Jaja scrubbed while I wiped (41).*

In addition to physical violence, Eugene subjects his family to various forms of psychological trauma: a strict study regimen which denies his children many of the activities that children enjoy doing. Amaka wrote that "little joys of childhood (such as wearing play clothes, watching television or listening to music); lack of regular contact with their aunt and cousins; disallowing them from developing a close relationship with their grandfather".

Eugene does not only deny his family the joy of interacting with his father, he also denies his father the love, security and the financial assistance that should have been the duty of a wealthy and legitimate son of his position which in the African society, is accorded with great respect and reverence.

As a direct result of Eugene's psychological violence, Fasakin remarks that "Kambili is severely handicapped in her interaction with others, lacking the ability to communicate confidently and openly with those around her. As such, she "whispers"( Adichie 59). It takes Father Amadi's attentions to repair and reconstruct Kamibili self-esteem and worth. With him, she smiles, laughs, runs and dreams, because he instills in her self-confidence and hope through his encouragement. He assures her that: "You can do anything you want, Kambili" (Adichie 239). Kambili's belief in Father Amadi's encouragement and assurance leads to Duvall's assertion that "children require a strong sense of self-esteem to "find themselves as worthy persons. They need a sense of confidence to become what they are potentially capable of being..." (24). His sadist behaviour can easily find expression in the image of Eugene in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus who brutally beats his

wife, Beatrice, to the extent of her having two miscarriages, and he tortures the whole family in the name of religion”

Eugene shares the spirit which conforms to the image of a cultural man who regards a woman as a mere property of man. Bruises, broken bones, head injuries, lacerations and internal bleeding are some of the fall out of intimate partner abuse. In very many cases medical attention and hospitalization are called for. Victims who are pregnant run the risk of miscarriage, preterm labour and injury to or death of the foetus. Many of these victims become psychological or emotional wrecks as they battle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSA) which they experience for a long time. In addition to depression, victims also commonly experience long term anxiety and panic. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in the absence of a father’s love, care, friendship, encouragement and support, Kambili turns to Father Amadi, on whom she develops a crush and who in return shows her love, to fill the void created by Eugene, her father. Jaja, on the other hand, assumes the role of protector, taking the blame where possible, to protect his mother and sister from the wrath of his father; Jaja no longer regards his father as a model or mentor into fatherhood. Apart from refusing to praise his father ‘host’ at mass, he also fails to compliment his father on the production of a new cashew drink in his factory, saying: “...there are no words in my mouth”, before walking out on the family during a meal, a situation which prompts Kambili to remark: “This had never happened before in my entire life, never. The compound walls would crumble, I was sure, and squash the frangipani trees. The sky would cave in... something would happen...” .

The Beijing Declaration asserts that “Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace [which] violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms...” (Beijing and Beyond... 203-204). The last abuse on Beatrice also makes her to lose her pregnancy which makes her to use a violent means to stop the abuse. The psychological trauma that Beatrice experience makes her to say this at a point “I do not know if my head is correct”. Beatrice recounts how Eugene beats her until she is

unconscious “Your father broke it on my belly” “My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctors said there was nothing he could do to save it”. It is at this point that Aunty Ifeoma learns that Beatrice is pregnant with a child but lose it after the abuse.

Domestic violence is a common occurrence in African literature which Adichie examines in her literary texts. She portrays the oppression and the suppression of women by depicting the patriarchal power over the female in the novel. It is only Aunty Ifeoma that confronts Eugene on spouse abuse he inflict on his wife.

## **CHARACTERIZATION**

Kambili Achike is the central character in *Purple Hibiscus* and also the narrator of the story. Kambili is shy and inhibited because of the years of abuse from her father. That changes when she spends an extended amount of time away from her family home at the house of Aunty Ifeoma and her family. Kambili is the younger of Eugene and Beatrice Achike's two children. She does not like the living environment under her father after she gets used to the freedom of Nsukka. She is a very timid girl at the beginning of the novel, but after staying with her Aunty Ifeoma in Nsukka, she builds up her courage and opens up towards other people.

Chukwuka Achike, nicknamed "Jaja" by his family, is an intelligent young man about two years his sister's senior. For most of the novel, in the same way as the rest of his family, he is dominated by his father, although ultimately he displays more overt defiance than them, especially by not going to communion on Palm Sunday and causing a massive family scene as a consequence. He takes the blame for his mother's crime and spends almost three years in prison before obtaining an amnesty. Through this time, his personality has hardened but not been broken.

Eugene Achike is Kambili's father, whom she calls "Papa". He is a wealthy and ostentatious businessman who is also a very strict Catholic who dominates his family for

much of the novel by imposing a harsh religious regime in the family home. For much of the novel he controls almost every aspect of his family's life, including imposing a schedule upon the lives of Kambili and her brother Jaja so that every minute of the day is mapped out for them. While on the one hand Eugene is an important man in his society and donates considerable amounts of money to needy individuals and worthy causes, he is prone to outbreaks of violence within the family house, subjecting his wife Beatrice and the two children to severe physical punishment.

Beatrice Achike, mother and wife in the Achike family, often called "Mama", is a quiet, maternal figure for much of the novel, presenting a softer, more passive presence in the home in contrast to the often tyrannical presence of Eugene. During the course of the novel, Beatrice suffers two miscarriages after severe beatings from Eugene. She polishes the figurines on the *étagère* after every beating. It is insinuated that she stays with Eugene partially out of gratitude for his unwillingness to marry another woman after she could only have two children. Ultimately, however, Beatrice cannot cope with Eugene's behaviour and poisons him. Her son, Jaja, takes the blame for the crime and she continues to deteriorate mentally after this point. At the conclusion of the novel, however, with Jaja's impending release from prison, there are some indications that her condition will improve.

Aunty Ifeoma is Eugene's only sibling, a tall, striking, intelligent woman who works as a lecturer at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She is highly capable in many aspects of her life, displaying determination and resourcefulness in bringing up her children without a husband. Though financially struggling, she creates a much happier environment for her children than does her brother Eugene for his family. She was married to another professor, Ifediora, until his unfortunate death. She also is a proud supporter of the Nigerian Pro-Democracy movement, which gets her into trouble at her vocation.

Amaka is Ifeoma and Ifediora's only daughter. She is Kambili's age, around fifteen, and originally does not like Kambili, believing her to be a snob and jealous of her lavish

lifestyle. After a few weeks of getting to know each other, and after Kambili's most severe beating, Amaka begins to better understand Kambili's condition and they become close friends.

Obiora is the second child and the oldest son of Ifeoma and Ifediora, at around age fourteen. He wears glasses, and is very good at math. He is reserved, yet often speaks up when he feels someone is wrong, as is seen when he contradicts Chiaku. Obiora is also portrayed as the lead male figure in his mother's household.

Chima is the youngest of Ifeoma and Ifediora's three children. Not much is known about this character, apart from the fact that he looks up to Obiora.

Father Amadi is a young priest in the circle of Auntie Ifeoma and her family. Being youthful, indigenous and well-versed in contemporary life, he could be described as a "new generation" priest, as opposed to white European priests in the country such as Eugene's priest, Father Benedict. When Kambili falls in love with Father Amadi, he shows considerable thoughtfulness and honor in the sensitive way he makes it clear to her that, because he is devoted to the church, he will never be able to become her partner. He loves her, yet he dare not start a relationship with her because of his profession. He becomes socially and spiritually attached with some of the boys that he taught football. He is shown to be a little playful as he challenged Kambili to a sprint, which leads to his telling her that she had good legs for running. He also takes her to plait her hair, leading the hair dresser to tell Kambili that no man takes a young lady to plait her hair unless he likes her.

Papa-Nnukwu is both father and grandfather in the Achike family, being Eugene and Ifeoma's father. He is a kind, loving man rooted in the traditional non-Christian beliefs of his indigenous culture, presenting a marked contrast, in particular, to his son Eugene's adherence to European religion and lifestyle.

Ade Coker is the lead editor of Papa's newspaper, The Standard. He is also the author of rebellious works, which ultimately leads to his death. He speaks out commonly against the current Nigerian government. He is killed by a package bomb in his house.

Kevin is Papa Eugene's personal driver in Enugu. He was once a part of the military. Beatrice fires him after Papa's death.

## **SETTINGS**

Set in Nigeria, it is the coming-of-age story of Kambili, a 15-year-old whose family is wealthy and well respected but who is terrorized by her fanatically religious father. Purple Hibiscus garnered the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 2005 for Best First Book (Africa). The event in Purple Hibiscus takes place in Lagos and Nsukka. Adichie narrates and creates her story using a combination of rural and urban area.

## **NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE**

Adichie's Purple Hibiscus as a Narrative of Growth/Bildungsroman. Adichie uses the growing character technique to exhibit the trauma present in African society. In this novel, we will see the developmental process of the protagonist, Kambili, who is also the narrator from the beginning of the narrative to the end

The author narrates her story from the first person point of view. Adichie narrates the story from Kamibili views, who is Beatrice daughter.

## **THEMATIC PREOCCUPATION IN PURPLE HIBISCUS**

**Change:** The novel is set in a turbulent time in Nigeria's political history, where there is a vacuum of power and a dictator whose rise to power is present in references to oil shortages.

**Religion:** Again a call back to colonial times, the theme of religion is present in the interactions between characters. Kambili's father rejects her Grandfather because of his

animist beliefs. This is also present in Kambili's thoughts as she is always worried not to commit a sin and scared to anger her father.

**Domestic violence:** The novel uses a narrative point of view to explore the theme of domestic violence.

**Family relationships:** Family relationships are explored in this book such as the relationship between a parent and a child.

**Silence and Speech:** The themes of silence and speech appear in the novel. The titles of two of the novel's sections deal with this theme as well: "Speaking with our Spirits" and "A Different Silence".

**Nature:** The novel's title is a representation of freedom and hope. There are references to nature throughout the book.

**Freedom and Tyranny:** The theme of freedom vs tyranny appears in the novel, in the characters as well as the fight for freedom of expression.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RELIGION, PATRIARCHY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN PURPLE HIBISCUS

Over time, scholars like Ifechelobi and Collins in their research have concluded that religion and patriarchy are among the reasons couple divorce. Gwamna further observes that the African heritage of subordinating women has been implanted in Christian religion in Africa.

Mercy Oduyoye (a renowned feminist theologian from Ghana) also condemns the brutal experience of women, especially in Christian homes like Eugene's. She tells us that "The church's deafening silence in the face of indescribable cruelty to the girl-child is an indication that the whole church has yet to wake up to its calling. The global challenge of the church's solidarity with women is particularly acute in Africa, it is up to women to demonstrate why the status quo is contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ". It is rather sad because Eugene is not an ideal Christian husband neither is he a good example of what a father should be.

Azuike opines that "He is, instead, a sick, demented man who is caught between the archaic African culture which permits wife battery and the true Christian doctrine which does not permit violence".

Religious hypocrisy is again evident in the way Eugene absolutely refuses to have any contact with his father unless he converts to Christianity. Eugene makes more than adequate provision for his father's burial. Kivai observes that "Ifeoma and her family should have also benefited from Eugene's largesse, but this is not the case". As a widow and the single-parent of three, Ifeoma struggles to cater for her family while her rich brother often looks on passively. "His life of rosary and crossing makes him carry himself with a donnish air of superiority as his over-zealous attitude and clipped religious tones reduce members of his family to midgets" (23-24).

Eugene is a religion fanatic, he takes Christianity to the extreme, “Eugene is both a religious zealot and a violent figure in his household where he submits his wife, Beatrice and two children, to severe battering and psychological cruelty”. Mama also suffers unjust beating from her husband for allowing Kambili her daughter to eat on the day of Eucharistic fast. Likewise, she is again beaten when she refuse to come with Eugene to greet Father Benedict. This happens as a result of her early pregnancy symptoms “Let me stay in the car and wait, “I feel vomit in my throat”.

“Eugene, the violent father didn’t demand for any explanation but went straight ahead to deal with them all for breaking God’s rule and mama especially for supporting, disobedience of religious rule”. Eugene’s understanding of true religion revolves round his fanatical belief in the Catholic Church and sees other religions as a contravention of God’s purpose. This makes Eugene to beat Mama and afterward invite Father Benefit to sprinkle holy water on Kambili and Jaja, he also asked his children to recite novenas for Mama’s Forgiveness. This Kambili recount to as thus; “... Papa said we would recite sixteen different novenas. For Mama’s forgiveness...Father Benefit sprinkled us with holy water” (Adichie 43-44).

Ike (2003) asserts that “Religion is such a huge force, so easily corruptible and yet so of doing Incredible good. The streak of intolerance I see masquerading itself as faith and the way we create an image of God that suits us, are things I am interested in questioning.

For Christmas, the family usually goes to Abba, their ancestral town. Eugene allows his children to see their grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu only for fifteen minutes every time because he considers him to be a heathen, still practicing Igbo traditions. Papa-Nnukwu’s refusal to accept Eugene faith strains the relationship between father and son. Papa seriously beat Kambili for sleeping in the same house with Papa-Nnukwu. Eugene uses religion as a tool to inflict and punish his children most of the time, “You knew you would be sleeping in the same house as heathen... “so you saw the sin clearly and worked right into it?” after this confrontation by Papa, Kambili is severely punished which

follows her deformed feet “He poured the hot water on my feet...The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And I screamed”(Adichie 201).

According to Merriam Webster dictionary “Patriarchy is a system of social structures that institutionalize male physical, social and economic power over women or put differently it is the male control of culture, religion, language and knowledge which tend to devalue female experiences and knowledge. Patriarchal power structure works to benefit males by constraining female’s life chances and choices.

De Beauvoir (1989) modifies the Hegelian concept of “other” in her studies and in description of the male dominated culture. De Beauvoir calls the “other” the minority; the least favored one and often a woman once compared to man. It is the idea of “othering”, which brings about domination. Kivai in his opinion wrote that “Patriarchy compels women to believe that their inferior position is natural and irredeemable.

In support of this assertion Mabura (2008) argues that “In the Purple Hibiscus we can argue that Eugene fits the descriptions of a Gothic patriarch and Beatrice, Kambili and Jaja the suffering subjects of his authority. These victims of paternal patriarchal authority do everything possible to claim their free space in the oppressive circumstances occasioned by Eugene.

Eugene possessed two attributes in the novel he is a very prominent person who owns a newspaper that advocates for the freedom of people from the military government and generously donates to his parish, schools and also people in need. He is extremely popular with people, celebrated for his generosity and is regarded as an icon for justice in Nigeria despite the fact that he uses his masculine power to control his family members and often uses violence to achieve his goals. “The dinner table is where the order of ritual, including the invention of tradition is enacted through Papa Eugene symbolically presiding over prayers and novenas, some lasting for up to twenty minutes”. Kambili describes a normal activity at meal time by Papa. For twenty minutes he asked God to bless the food. Afterwards, he intoned the blessed Virgin in several different titles...’.

In the excerpt above, the two facets of Eugene's life - the pious Christian, on the one hand, and the violent abuser, on the other, are encapsulated, presenting us with a vivid image of Eugene's 'Jekyll and Hyde' personality. Psychoanalysts propose that spiritual damage is one of the most insidious effects of child abuse.

### **PATRIARCHY AS A FORM OF VIOLENCE**

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the author showcases how silence is used as a weapon of patriarchy. Patriarchy leads to silence which in turn leads to fear. They live in extreme veneration of Papa (Eugene) like he is a supreme being or deity. According to Leslie-Ogundipe, Women are shackled by their own negative self-image by centuries of the interiorization of the ideologies of patriarchy. Her own reactions to objective problems therefore are often self-defeating and self-crippling. She reacts with fear, dependency complexes and attitudes to please and cajole where more self-assertive actions are needed.

The above sentence signify what is obtainable in Eugene Achike's household as Beatrice and her children live in fear of Papa who is never pleased by their actions. "The narrator tells us that "Beatrice's voice grew too distant" (Adichie 24). Pauline Ada Uwakweh observes that "Silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women's social being, thinking and expressions that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure".

Collins argues that the assertions of Uwakweh are not entirely true, he remarks that "Silencing as a patriarchal weapon of control in the novel is not restricted to subverting females. Achike uses silence to subjugate his wife and children. The military, a national patriarchal weapon of control, also uses silence to keep the masses mute especially journalists such as Ade Coker and human right activist Nwanketi Ogechi "The newspaper read a small portion of the press release from the Canadian government, which referred to Nwanketi Ogechi as "a man of honour" (Adichie 205-206).

Kambili's near-death experience serves as the eventual catalyst that propels Beatrice to assert herself on behalf of her children, or risk losing them. The threat and reality of violence may result in women developing strategies for self-protection..." and, although poisoning Eugene is a radical strategy to break free from his stranglehold, she makes this choice, having been pushed to the wall. With Eugene's death, her dignity, freedom and security, and that of her children are restored.

For Beatrice, murder becomes what Fanon regards as the "absolute line of action". It is a choice made to secure her financial future and, most importantly, that of her children; the only choice through which she can assume the honour of widowhood rather than suffer the indignities of a divorcee. Isam M. Shihada remarks that "women pay dearly with their freedom and dignity to obey the laws of the patriarchal...system that dominates society, they also pay a heavy price in order to become free". Despite Kambili's submissiveness and intelligence, she still experiences physical abuse from her father which deprived her fatherly love with this. "She lives her life under the control of her father, who, despite being well-respected and perceived as generous in the community, is a repressive tyrant whose fanatical pursuit of Christianity results in the mental, spiritual and physical abuse of all members of the household".

For Beatrice, the only option left to eradicate their abuse and victimization, which almost destroys the life of her son when he steps in to take full responsibility for his actions. "Evidently, Jaja's psyche has been so thoroughly battered that had Beatrice not woken up from her slumber when she did, Jaja would have killed Eugene himself". "It is, therefore, easy for him to assume the blame because, to his young mind, had he acted fast and responsibly enough, his mother would not have had to do the job".

Significantly, Beatrice does not get any argument from her children when she calmly informs them that she has killed their father, her husband. Kambili's sole objection is against the method of execution: she wonders why her mother had chosen to poison his tea, remembering the love sips she and Jaja were constantly urged to take from Eugene's

cup. Their lives could have been endangered as well! in furtherance Amaka opinion is that “On Jaja’s incarceration, Beatrice degenerates into a state of clinical depression”. Kambili reveals:

She has been different ever since Jaja was locked up, since she went about telling people she killed Papa... But nobody listened to her; they still don’t. They think grief and denial that her husband is dead and that her son is in Prison have turned her into this vision of a painfully bony body, of skin speckled with blackheads the size of watermelon seeds. Most times, her answers are nods and shake of the head [and often] she simply sat and stared.

According to Julia T. Wood, men who resort to physical aggression do so “to gain or sustain self-esteem, to win the respect of others, to maintain control over people and situations” Unfortunately, the end result of this aggression, as is evident in Eugene’s case, is the direct opposite of what these men set out to achieve in the first place – loss of self-esteem, loss of respect and loss of control!

Ifeoma is a woman who refuses to compromise her standards to get favour from her brother. Though she is needy and seriously deserves external support. She chooses to remain herself rather than being subjected to the tone of her brother Eugene. In a discussion with her sister-in-law Beatrice, she reveals:

*Have you forgotten that Eugene offered to buy me a car? ... But first he wanted us to join the Knights of St. John. He wanted us to send Amaka to convent school. He even wanted me to stop wearing makeup! I want a new car, nwunye m, and I want to use my gas cooker again and I want a new freezer and I want money so that I will not have to unravel the seams of Chima's trousers when he outgrows them. But I will not ask my brother to bend over so that I can lick his buttocks to get these things. (Adichie 95).*

In the above, it is evident that Aunty Ifeoma does not subjects herself to the patriarchy control, she make herself independent unlike Beatrice and fend for her children. Beatrice

and her children struggle for freedom from Eugene tyrants. Mama throughout the novel experience domestic violence which often leads to miscarriages, yet the society blame her for inability to give birth to more children. Aunty Ifeoma on the other hand, has issues with her in-law, they accuse her of hiding her late husband property after killing him, and this depicts how women are subjugated in marriage.

Finally death was identified as mechanism to end the oppressive structures of domestic violence and patriarchy. Adichie Purple Hibiscus serves as a novel that depicts the plight of women in marriage and their struggle for freedom.

### **RELIGION AS A FORM OF VIOLENCE**

Adichie present a male protagonist who is deeply rooted in catholicism, Eugene mostly abused his wife and children under the guise of religion. Beatrice imbibe a radical action to silence and end the patriarchal power, often time she has try to conceal and endure her unhappy marriage but when she sense a change can never take place until she makes it happen. As Eugene beat her until she has two miscarriages, she gradually ends Eugene's life by putting poison in his tea. She affirms "I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor". Beatrice could have killed her husband for once but she wants him to feel the pains and the agony she goes through whenever he beats her. Eugene experience slow and painful death.

Father Benedict the Priest at Papa's beloved St. Agnes, Father Benedict is a white man from England who conducts his masses according to European custom. Papa adheres to Father Benedict's style, eradicating every trace of his own Nigerian heritage and culture. Papa uses his faith to justify abusing his children. Religion alone is not to blame; Papa represents the wave of fundamentalism in Nigeria that corrupts faith.

Father Amadi, on the other hand, is an African priest who combines Catholicism with Igbo traditions. He believes that faith is both simpler and more complex than what Father Benedict preaches. Father Amadi is a modern African man who is culturally-conscious

but influenced by the colonial history of his country. He is not a moral absolutist like Papa and his God. Religion, when wielded by someone gentle, can be a positive force, as it is in Kambili's life.

Papa-Nnukwu is a traditionalist. He follows the rituals of his ancestors and believes in a pantheistic model of religion, though both his son and daughter converted to Catholicism, Papa-Nnukwu held on to his roots. When Kambili witnesses his morning ritual, she realizes that their faiths are not as different as they appear. Kambili's faith extends beyond the boundaries of one religion. She celebrates the beauty in nature, her family, her prayer, and the Bible. When she witnesses the miracle at Aokpe, Kambili's devotion is confirmed.

Aunty Ifeoma agrees that God was present even though she did not see the apparition. God is all around Kambili and her family, and can take the form of a smile. Ademola connotes that "The individualistic nature of faith is explored in *Purple Hibiscus*. Kambili tempers her devotion with a reverence for her ancestors.

Both Kambili and the nation experience waves of dramatic changes. The political climate of Nigeria and the internal drama of the Achike family are intertwined. After Nigeria declared independence from Britain in 1960, a cycle of violent coups and military dictatorship led to civil war, which led to a new cycle of bloody unrest, even democracy is hindered by the wide-spread corruption in the government.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, there is a coup that culminates in military rule. Papa and his paper, *The Standard*, are critical of the corruption that is ushered in by a leader who is not elected by the people. Ironically, Papa is a self-righteous dictator in his own home. He is violent towards his children when they stray from his chosen path for them. In the wake of Ade Coker's death, Papa beats Kambili so severely she is hospitalized in critical condition. Both in Nigeria and in the home, violence begets violence.

Kambili and Jaja are kept away from the unrest at first. They witness protests, deadly roadblocks, and harassment from the safety of their car. But when they arrive in Nsukka, they are thrust into political debate. Obiora says the university is a microcosm for Nigeria – ruled by one man with all the power. Pay has been withheld from the professors and light and power are shut off frequently. Medical workers and technicians go on strike and food prices rise. There are rumors that the sole administrator is misdirecting funds intended for the university. This is a parallel to what is happening in the country at large. Kambili and Jaja now understand firsthand the struggle of their cousins. The personal becomes political, and vice versa.

### **SILENCE AS A FORM OF VIOLENCE**

Several characters are gripped with silence throughout the novel. “Kambili suffers the most, unable to speak more than rehearsed platitudes without stuttering or coughing, Her silence is a product of the abuse that she endures at the hands of her father”. Kambili does not allow herself to tell the truth about her situation at home. When her classmates taunt her for being a backyard snob, she does not explain that she does not socialize out of fear. She is not allowed to dally after school lest she be late and beaten. She finally learns how to speak her mind when she is taunted continuously by her cousin Amaka.

Aunty Ifeoma encourages her to defend herself and only then can Amaka and Kambili begin their friendship. Kambili begins to speak more confidently, laugh and even sing.

The titles of the second and fourth section are *Speaking With Our Spirits* and *A Different Silence*. Kambili and Jaja communicate through their eyes, not able to utter the ugly truth of their situation. Mama, like her daughter, cannot speak freely in her own home. Only with Aunty Ifeoma can she behave authentically. The silence that falls upon Enugu after Papa is murdered is, as the title suggests, different. There is hopelessness to this silence like the one that existed when Papa was alive. But it is an honest silence. Mama and Kambili know the truth and there is nothing more that can be said. Jaja’s silence betrays a hardness that has taken hold of him in prison. There is nothing he can say that will end

the torment he experiences. The tapes that Aunty Ifeoma sends with her children's voices are the only respite he has.

Silence is also used as punishment. When Kambili and Jaja arrive in Nsukka for Easter, Jaja refuses to speak to his father when he calls. After the years of silence that he has imposed upon his children, they use it as a weapon against him. The government also silences Ade Coker by murdering him after he prints a damning story in the Standard. When soldiers raid Aunty Ifeoma's flat, they are trying to silence her with the rioting students through intimidation. Silence is a type of violence.

The purple hibiscus is the personification of Jaja and is used as a symbol for freedom which Jaja won from his father. Kambili believe that such defiance that purple hibiscus build in Jaja can still be brought to Abba, she affirms "We'll plant new orange trees in Abba when we come back, and Jaja will plant purple hibiscus, too,..." Adichie represent purple hibiscus as a sign of freedom and in some other pages of the text, it is used to describe the bruises Beatrice sustained from Eugene beatings.

Adichie illustrates that it is through the possible transformation of character like Beatrice that the eventual transformation of women that experience domestic violence can be made possible. Adichie's Purple Hibiscus depicts that women can take a radical measure to end domestic violence just like Beatrice poison Eugene, in order to suppress the patriarchy power.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 SUMMARY

Marital subjectivity emerged from the analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. The study reveals that Adichie's female characters form the progressive voices calling for change in the way society treat and marginalized women. Adichie's writings is identified as a contemporary voice from the margins which requires serious consideration as the African society struggles with gender, class, ethnic and other social inequalities. It is thus a voice of the feminine that seeks to challenge the already established structures of the oppressive patriarchal order at both domestic and national levels.

Adichie writings are voice against oppression and exploitation of women. She criticises different forms of oppression and exploitation that women experience from customs, society and the patriarchal structures. In the *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie examines women's oppression and indignity suffered by women and African people in the postcolonial era. The study discusses how the author imagine the predicament of African woman throughout the nation. It therefore can be read as allegories of the national situation. We realised that the marital failings, romantic relationships, maternal miscarriages and death have a symbolic meaning in the two texts.

This study argues that African women in general are still oppressed, exploited and degraded by a mix of traditional cultures and the modern forms of patriarchy. The women suffer what Stratton "would call a patriarchal order, sexist as well as racist in its ideology and practice ". Violence against women and children, desire for sons, in-law problems, polygamy, traditions, illiteracy and religious intolerance are isolated as major challenges that still burden the African women. Adichie challenges women to

have a voice so as to confront their oppressors. Adichie encourages women to resist their oppressors so that their condition and personality can be redeemed. However, silence is used as a tool to challenge and rebel against the patriarchal society. Chapter three and four gives an analysis of the text by enumerating instances of marital subjectivity and domestic violence and believes that domestic violence is a common occurrence in marriage.

## **5.2 CONCLUSION**

This study titled *The subjectivity of women in marriage: A case study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus* examines the depiction of marital subjectivity and domestic violence in the novel. Adichie portrays various male figures in *Purple Hibiscus*. This presentation of patriarchy indicates that men are better known through their relationships with the female gender.

The study has looked at marital subjectivity through the analysis of the novel and the development of characters. At the same time, there is a common preoccupation that runs throughout the narrative: women oppression, subordination and vulnerability of the female characters. In the novel, there is a presentation of a dominant expression of patriarchy which makes life very unbearable for their counterparts, that is women. Through the male characterisation of Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus* there is a display of cultural patterns and practices which debase women.

Through Adichie writings, it is established that patriarchy is an ideology that seeks to show that a woman's main purpose in life is to be a mother and a wife and this categorization affects different women regardless of their educational status. In *Purple Hibiscus* through the character of Beatrice, Adichie paints a picture of an African woman that is burdened by the double yoke of patriarchal agent. Unable to redefine herself or stand up for her rights, she finally decides to kill her husband, Eugene, in order to liberate herself and her children.

The theme of violence which is central in the novel shows that women are often victims because of their gender. Adichie depicts the perpetuation of violence as a tool of female oppression and show of male power and dominance. Radical feminist theory posits that the oppression against women manifests itself in men's control of women in families, sexual oppression within and outside the family, violence against women and contempt for women. This oppression is further legitimized by traditional authority, where authority is invested in male and they could enact their authority on females as established by customs and traditions.

In reality, in many parts of Nigeria especially in the south, wife beating or domestic violence is not regarded as a serious crime. Rather, it is seen as just a dispute between two married couples with the man asserting his natural authority.

The study also shows that Adichie's female characters are progressive voices advocating for change in the way society treats and marginalized women. As a writer, Adichie is a contemporary voice from the women writers who require serious consideration as the African society wrestle with gender, violence, religious hypocrisy and other social inequalities. Her works challenge the already established structures of the patriarchal order at both domestic and national levels.

This study examines the depiction of gender violence in the novels. It has been established that since the post-colonial era in Nigeria, various voices of women expressing their concerns about the subjectivity of women and other issues affecting the growth of the Nigerian female have been heard. Nonetheless, issues like gender-based violence, religious extremism, domestic abuse and violence are seldomly introduced in postcolonial literature in the works of first generation female writers, unlike the writings of the new generation of women writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Through her writings, it is established that patriarchy is an ideology that

seeks to show that a woman's main purpose in life was to be a mother and a wife and this categorization affects different women regardless their educational status.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie presents a complex rather than simplistic view of her characters. She effectively works to dismantle the image of African women as a homogenous group of hard-working, powerless and self-sacrificing victims complacent in their subordinate positions. In *Purple Hibiscus* through the character of Beatrice, she paints a picture of an African woman that is burdened by the double yoke of patriarchy and illiteracy. Unable to redefine herself or stand up for her rights, she finally resorts to murdering her husband, Eugene, to liberate herself and her victimized children. Her inability to stand up for herself early enough in the novel leads to the tragedy of her husband's death, her son's incarceration and the onset of her insanity.

In her novel, she discusses violence against women in its different forms and how it gains expression when the victim is often encumbered by various cultural or religious obligations which are often unchallenged because of the victim's educational or social status like Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus*. She illustrates that the only difference is that the Western educated women are able to free themselves from this abuse quickly because of their ability to stand on their rights and economic power as seen in the characters of Ifeoma. Therefore, women's education and economic viability are emphasized as means of women's empowerment and growth.

This study further argues that Nigerian women are oppressed, exploited and degraded by a mix of traditional cultures and the modern forms of patriarchy. Violence against women in the novel is one of the primary forms of oppression, desire for sons, in-law problems; polygamy, traditions, illiteracy, complacency and religious intolerance are isolated as core challenges that still burden the Nigerian women. Adichie challenges women to have a voice so as to confront their oppressors.

Silence in *Purple Hibiscus*, for instance, is to blame for the suffering that Beatrice and her children go through. Adichie advocates that women should shun submissiveness in the face of oppression so that their condition may be redeemed.

The theme of violence which is central to the novel shows that women are often victims because of their femininity. At the home front in form of domestic violence and in conflict situations in form of rape which is a weapon of terror. Adichie depicts the perpetuation of violence as a tool of female oppression and show of male power and dominance.

Radical feminist theory posits that the oppression against women manifests itself in men's control of women in families, sexual oppression within and outside the family, violence against women and contempt for women. This oppression is further legitimized by traditional authority, where authority is invested in the belief of the 'rightness' of established customs and traditions. In this case, Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* believes that the typical African male has the right to physically 'correct' his spouse or child when they err. She does not question the appropriateness of her husband's behaviour towards her because in the typical Nigerian tradition a 'good wife' does not challenge her husband.

According to Weber (2003), power structures are created and maintained by myths and other cultural symbols. In reality, in many parts of Nigeria especially in the south, wife beating or domestic violence is not regarded as a serious crime. Rather, it is seen as just a dispute between two married couples with the man asserting his natural authority. The study also shows that Adichie and her female characters are progressive voices advocating for change in the way society treats women and the marginalized. As a writer, Adichie is a contemporary voice from a growing body of women writers who require serious consideration as the African society grapples with gender, violence, religious bigotry, tribalism and other social inequalities. Her works challenge the already established structures of the repressive male order at both domestic and national levels.

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