

## Voicing the Socio-Cultural Disciplinary Roles of Umụada in Ofomata's *Ihe Ojọọ Gbaa Afo*

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### **Abstract**

This study focuses on the roles of the association of indigenous daughters who are married in Igbo community. These daughters are known as Umụada in their respective ancestral homes. This group is described as a union of daughters born in a particular community or town and married within or outside their community of origin. They are known for their various socio-cultural roles in the community. Whenever there are disputes in the community and all efforts by other groups to settle the dispute fail, Umụada are invited as the last resort to resolve the dispute. This study was carried out through interpretation and analysis while the result is collated from a close reading of the text. Consequently, this study aims at analyzing the socio-cultural disciplinary roles of Umụada as x-rayed in Chinedum Ofomata's *Ihe Ojọọ Gbaa Afo* by studying their roles as agents of disciplinary measures in Igbo communities. The paper adopted Raph Linton in Sociology and George Herbert Mead in Psychology role theory as the theoretical framework for the research. The Study finally concluded that the disciplinary roles of Umụada is still relevant in a contemporary Igbo society. They came to Ikenna's aid as portrayed by the author to save him from untimely death, since he has exchanged happiness for sorrow after his marriage to Nkemdilim. Also when there is resistance from a defaulter in the course of implementing positive changes, they expand their punishments in the form of fine and ostracization.

**Keywords:** Umụada, Socio-cultural, Disciplinary Roles, Igbo Community, *Ihe Ojọọ Gbaa Afo*

## Introduction

The Umuada group is known in parts of Anambra, as Umuokpu and in some parts of Imo, they are called Ndingboto. Umuada membership is by birth and is compulsory for the daughters of kindred, although one may decide not to associate with them, but the consequences of such action is usually imminent when she dies. Meetings are held and important issues pertaining to members' welfare as well as the betterment of their families of origin and other issues are discussed. It is important that Nwada identifies with the group. (Ene, 20) says that any Nwada who does not belong to the group is either an outsider or she has been ostracized by the group or her community over some abominable acts.

The different names notwithstanding, Igbo people hold Umuada in very high esteem because of the unique and diverse roles they play in their various communities, but they are mainly known for their advocacy and diplomacy in times of family dispute and crisis. They are very hardworking, disciplined and always stand for truth in their dealings especially in their ancestral home. These women groups in traditional Igbo society play vital roles in enshrining and sustaining peace and order in the family and community at large. This study focuses on the contributions of Umuada in Chinedum Ofomata's *Ihe Ojoo Gbaa Afo*. Igbo people celebrate, respect and honour this women group. In Awka a man must postulate in the form of kneeling down to greet an Ada who is married and has joined Umuada group.

Hence they say '*ikpele*' meaning I'm on my knees, while she replies '*zoo otu* or *niri*' meaning rise. They are known for peace making, but abhor infringement of their rights. This is usually seen during funerals. In this kind of situation, Umuada would deal with the defaulting family member and proceed with the burial rites. It is mostly at such events that family matters and grievances are brought to them because they are always complete, and when a defaulter proves stubborn they fine the person or better still dismiss and boycott the funeral which would cost more problems

for the defaulter and family members. Such was the case of Nkemdilim and her in-laws in *Ihe Ojoo Gbaa Afo*.

Ofomata's *Ihe Ojoo Gbaa Afo* is one of the very few Igbo prose works with cotemporary setting and issues. The writer has an excellent mastery of the Igbo language usage and figurative expressions which make the novel fascinating. The characterization was apt and imbued with accurate and realistic descriptions. The Enugu setting was well described for the reader to have a thought provoking imagery of the city, while the antagonist, Nkemdilim was at her best in showcasing her characteristics as a jobless, nagging and oppressive wife. This study proves that the researcher has shown interest in analyzing the socio-cultural disciplinary roles of Umuada as exemplified in the novel.

## Review of related Literature

In Igbo communities, women are held in high esteem, especially the married ones among them. This group of married women in Igbo communities is called Umuada or Umuokpu. (Agbasiere, 6), states that every adult Igbo woman represents a comprehensive nature of Igbo womanhood as viewed by tradition. Being a group for female daughters, every female child in a family is automatically an Ada but in most cases when it comes to child naming, the first female child in a family could be named Ada while other female children in that particular household go by other female given names. Ada is the name of every first born female of a woman. It is often restricted to a man's first born female child if he has more than one wife and distinction may be made by referring to each wife's daughter as Ada-nne or adanna to the eldest of all daughters (Ubesie, 82) says that Umuada are women born in any town or community, both married and those left at home, while (Ezeuko, 25) explains Umuada as the traditional women organization which includes all the women born in the same kindred or town who married in or outside their town. Umuada are consulted in the affairs of state and can impose

sanctions which may include heavy fines and other measures. Certainly, male elders will go to a great length to avoid confrontations with Umuada and in this way, the women indirectly exert a strong influence on the affairs of the state.

(Onyeanu, 72) in examining the role of Umuada in Mbaitolu in Imo State explains that this group is referred to as Umuagboto institution. She asserts that:

Mgboto is a broad name for every female offspring or daughter in Owerri zone (Mbaitolu inclusive). Umuagboto is its pluralized form, though in Igboland generally, they are known as Umuada and Umuagboto signifies a group of Ada (daughters). The Umuagboto traditional institution is an association of mature daughters of the different families/kindreds/villages who are either married within or outside their fatherland (Onyeanu, 72).

(Isichei, 74) describes Umuada as a pressure group that reacted to any misdeed that occurred in the village. They also “disciplined offending women” through seizure of property and through ostracizing. They also supported the “wise” decision of the menfolk and acted as peace envoys during wars. (Agbasiere, 39) affirms that “apart from their general role as advisers, women have their council of female elders, parallel to the council of male elders. Umuada in most cases serve as a consultant body in their families. Their opinion is sought after in many delicate and complicated cases. They proffer solutions on various issues. They take actions against women who oppress their husbands and vice versa. A wife who feels her husband is not treating her well or has some unresolved issues with her husband may seek the advice or involvement of Umuada from that particular family. If it becomes tough, the general Umuada of that kindred would wade in. the role of Umuada in conflict resolution is usually ignored as their obnoxious practices are always emphasized. Family conflict resolution remains a priority in every Umuada gathering. It comes above their personal welfare as a group. Since conflict could arise

in a family as a result of various factors such as poor socialization, misunderstanding, poor relationships between the husband and wife, wrong associations, disrespect, irreconcilable differences among spouses and with relatives, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall (2016) noted that family conflict resolution involves identifying and resolving the deep-rooted causes of family conflict in order to kill any violent or hostile attitude among the family members. In the case where this conflict is not properly managed, it could reach the point of serious violence which could lead to divorce or threaten the peaceful co-existence of the family and the community at large.

(Chukwu, 99) states the importance of otu Umuada when he says:

Otu Umuada is a vital force in their natal lineage. They not only serve as a police force over lineage wives but they are also peace mediatory within their natal and marital lineages. They serve as the supreme court of appeal on female matters as well as the watch dog of males' political arm of the government (Chukwu, 99).

(Uchem, 113) affirms that Igbo women at this period were not marginalized in the traditional Igbo society because of their relatively high socio-economic status. These women are known to be fearless and they expose evils in their society which people hid or are afraid to reveal. (Amadi, 76) notes that the Umuada understands their strength and weaknesses. Their great responsibilities in child birth and child rearing are very demanding, and they respect the rights and power of men. (Okodo, 43) explains the role of Umuada during burial ceremonies:

They are so vital that if they did not end their function very well, the funeral is said not to have taken place. It is when they divide food stuff and ingredients given to them that the soul of the dead member of their kindred is said to rest in peace. The Igbo man will then say that the dead man has reached the land of the spirits (Okodo, 43).

During funeral ceremonies, *Um̄ada* also ensured that the wife of the deceased act in accordance with customs and traditions of the community. It was is their duty to shave off the hair of the widow on the last day of funeral to commence her full mourning period. The shaving of hair is being carried out by only the widows among them, although there have been instances where *Um̄ada* have been accused of maltreating their fellow women in this period of bereavement. If it happens that the widow of the dead man had maltreated the husband when he was still alive or has been accused of killing her husbands, *Um̄ada* engage in obnoxious custom of forcing them to drink the water used in bathing the corpse to establish their innocence, although this practice is no more in vogue, but punishments still awaits any woman in their family accused of any of the above mentioned atrocities.

Although *Um̄ada* play significant socio-cultural roles in conflict resolution in their families, abuses of such authority are reported to be on the increase. Sometimes these women out of jealousy or hatred subject a widow to inhuman treatment in order to frustrate her. This is what (Uchem, 67), regarded as internalized oppression manifested in women who do sometimes oppress fellow women who are in weaker positions. In extreme cases, *Um̄ada* can ostracize and even place a curse on a member of the clan who had committed the forbidden before them, and the funeral of such a person would be boycotted, which would require appeasement, since the services of the *Um̄ada* in the funeral of a relative are indispensable, because absence of *Um̄ada* at a funeral means there is crisis in that clan (Agbasiere, 41). In describing the role of *Um̄ada* at funeral, (Ibemesi 215) says:

It is found that the occasions of burials and funerals constitute, among other things, sources of entertainment. The performances they engage in do indeed help the chief mourners and the bereaved to bear the loss as they participate in, and enjoy a variety of activities and entertainments...The performances are in form of

dancing, singing, theatrical performances and traditional lyrical oral presentations (Ibemesi 215).

It must be noted here that *Um̄ada* make peace between widows (their wives) and the in-laws (their kinsmen) to avoid degenerated crisis in the family and any party that does not agree to peaceful management of the conflict will face the wrath of *Um̄ada*.

In light of the above, this study is anchored on the role theory of social behaviour. In the context of role theory, a role refers to the set of rights, obligations, and expectations associated with a particular position in society. Roles are neither fixed nor inherent; rather, they are social structures that vary across cultures, societies, and even groups within a society. Scholars explain that role theory is a perspective that considers society's behaviour to be the acting out of socially defined categories. Role theory is a sociological perspective that holds that individuals in society have clear expectations and obligations attached to the roles they play. According to this theory, individuals play different roles in different social situations and their behavior is influenced by the expectations and norms associated with these roles. Sociology and Psychology suggest that these roles can vary depending on factors such as gender, age, occupation and social status.

Role theory which was propounded by Raph Linton in Sociology and George Herbert Mead in Psychology posits that roles are occupied by members of a group known as actors, who can approve of some social roles considered legitimate and constructive with punishment for violators of such norms. Additionally, role theory emphasizes the importance of socialization in the development and understanding of roles. Through socialization, individuals learn the expectations and

norms associated with different roles as well as how to perform these roles effectively. Socialization can occur through many agents, such as family, friends, educational institutions, and the media. Role theory emphasizes the role of Umuada in Igbo society. Umuada, as daughters of the community, are expected to fulfill certain roles and responsibilities by supporting and preserving the cultural and traditional practices of their ancestral homes. This can be seen in their involvement in ceremonies, festivals, rituals, economic activities and the financial well-being of their families and the community at large. Role theory also gives an in depth understanding on how Umuada navigate and negotiate their roles in traditional Igbo society as exemplified in Chinedum Ofomata's *The Ojoo Gbaa Afo*. It recognizes that roles are not defined but are constantly negotiated and influenced by various social factors. Umuada may face challenges in fulfilling these roles, however, they continue to play a significant role in the Igbo society, adapting to new challenges and still being important in the social fabric of their ancestral homes.

#### **Synopsis of *The Ojoo Gbaa Afo* (1999)**

The story is about Ikenna a handsome young man was seen living a reckless life after he has gotten a job in the city of Enugu. He womanizes, drinks. He lives an extravagant life. In one of his philandering, he carried a ghost to his house in the form of a woman he saw on the road. This ugly experience makes him to be cautious and plan his life. Although his womanizing lifestyle makes two women-Ego and Ngozị to fight over him in his house, he later marries Nkemdịlīm because of her beauty despite the warning from his family members and friends. Nkemdịlīm after her marriage to Ikenna turns into a viper and oppressor. She was jobless and nags practically about everything. She deals mercilessly with everybody who comes her way. She frustrates her husband and his friends, and family members. She creates enmity between her husband and his friends and family members.

Nkemdịlīm was so wicked that she does not welcome anybody into their house especially her husband's relatives. When she gives birth she hardly takes care of her child properly and most of the times refuses to breastfeed her child breast milk. Since she complains a lot about house chores being too much for her, Ikenna gave in to her demands and brings his younger brother Ejindū to assist the wife in the house. Nkemdịlīm maltreats Ejindū to the extent that the young boy runs away. When her Mother-in-law (Ikenna's Mother) stays with them in Enugu after receiving treatment, Nkemdịlīm maltreats and makes life unbearable for the poor woman to the extent that she insists that if her son does not take her home before Nkemdịlīm kills her that she will never forgive her son. Nkemdịlīm also insists that Ikenna must bring her a house-help since Ejindū is gone. She made Ikenna so uncomfortable that he was forced to bring Ogenna as their house-help.

Since Ikenna married Nkemdịlīm he has never had peace, his life also changed drastically. His wife made life miserable for him and refuses to go to the village with him. She was forced to go to the village when the father-in-law died. It was during this visit to the village that the Umuada after interrogating her about her relationship with her husband's family beat her when she proved stubborn and fights Afūlūenu, the leader of Umuada. They humiliate and compel her to crawl around on her knees pleading for forgiveness. They fine her one big goat, five healthy fowls, twelve tubers of yam and one thousand naira before they would allow her to remain in their village as a wife. She later runs away to an unknown destination leaving everything. Ikenna later marries Ogenna the house-help and peace was restored in his life.

#### **Socio-Cultural Disciplinary Roles of Umuada in Ofomata's *The Ojoo Gbaa Afo***

In the novel, the first incident and mention of the massive power of Umuada was in chapter eight, after Ikenna's parents and

kindred invited him home over the excesses and atrocities of his wife, Nkemdilim. Apart from Ikenna's mother, Afūlūenu (Ikenna's paternal Aunt) was the only female member of that particular gathering. It was obvious to them that Nkemdilim has subdued Ikenna, and they must retrieve him from her stronghold, hence:

Onye ọzọ tinyere onụ n'okwu, bụ Afūlūenu. Ọ sịrị Ikenna, “ihe m na-atụkwasa n'ihe ndị ahụ ndị bu m ụzọ kwuo okwu kwuru bụ na ọ bụrụ na nwoke emeghi ihe o jiri bụrụ nwoke, nwaanyị ememinaa ya. Nwa m, nwoke nwaanyị na-afuru oja na-eji ọkpa awula be ndị mmụọ. Ikenna ọ bụrụ na nwunye gi ahụ anyịla gi, i kpọtara ya Umụada ka anyị nye ya oche ọ ga-anọ. Ọ bụrụ na umụ nwaanyị ibe ya mechaa ya ihe o kweta n'ezie na mmiri ọkụ na-egbu mbe. Kpọtara anyị ya ka anyị gosi ya ihe ọkụ ji ntị oke eme n'ihina ọ bụ amara ụma na-adara ọchị, ọ dī ka ọchị a na-akwatụ mmadụ. Ihe a nwatakiri nwaanyị a i nūtara na-eme n'ezinaulo a atoghizi ọchị chaa. Ọ bụrụ na i maghi ihe i ga-eme ya, anyi maara. Anyi achoghị ka ihe a na-ebe bere na-aga. Were ugbua chi ka dī were chọwa ewu ojii maka na i hapụ ikwọ ya bụ mmiri ugbua ọ dī n'obo ọkpa akpachaghị anya, o rie mmadụ. I hapukwanụ ya ka o too rie mmadụ.”(IOGA 185).

Another person who spoke was Afūlūenu, she said to Ikenna, “what I am adding to what those who spoke before me have said is that if a man does not do what he is supposed to do to as a man, a woman would abuse and render him useless. My son, a man who is being controlled by a woman meets his waterloo so soon. If your wife has grown stubborn that you cannot handle her, please bring her down to Umuada so that we can give her a suitable punishment for her offences. If his fellow women deal with her she would affirm that hot water kills turtles. Bring her to us so that we can show her what fire does to a

rat's ear. What a lady we married as wife is doing in this family is no longer funny. She is causing disunity and havoc. If you don't know what to do about her, we know. We don't want this thing to go on. Make hay while the sun shines.” (Gloss from the researcher)

From the above statement, it shows that Umụada through various means enforce compliance to community norms thereby obtain obedience and submission, and also punish defaulters. Umụada Punish Suspects mercilessly especially any woman suspected to be disobedient to her husband who is their brother. Not just about being disobedient, Umụada punish women married into their ancestral homes who are found wanting in good character. If a woman is found responsible for the death of her husband or any of her husband's relatives, she would be verbally abused, cursed, at times beaten. In rare cases to prove that she is innocent, she is compelled to drink the water used to bath the corpse. In *Ihe Ojoo Gbaa Afo*, when Umụada summoned Nkemdilim, they wanted to advise, caution and discipline her so that she will desist from her bad behaviours and atrocities in their family. They serve loads of advice in enshrining and maintaining peace.

Afūlūenu si ebe ọ nọ kulie were tuo Umụada ibe ya aha, ha wee kwe ya. O wee sị Nkemdilim, nne, anyi nuru ike di egwu i na-akpa n'Enugwu. ọ bụ ya kpatara Umụada jiri si ka ha kpọọ gi were kelee gi nke oma. Ha sịkwaziji ka ha were ohere a kelee gi etu i si were na-achọ ka i gbuoro anyi nwanne anyi nwoke bụ Ikenna. Kemgbe Ikenna lụchara gi ka o jiri were si na mmadụ puo. Onye ọ bula huru ya anaghizi ama na ọ bụ Ikenna ka ọ huru...I mekataala Ikenna ihe, ọ naghị azọsi ọkpa ike n'ala. Kemgbe ọ lụchara gi, o nweghikwa ihe ndi ogbo ya na-eme o meputara.(IOGA 229)

Afūlūenu got up from where she was and hailed her fellow Umụada; they answered. She then said to Nkemdilim, “we heard

of the awesome power you wield in Enugu. That is why Umuada requested your presence here so that we can appreciate you very well. They are also using this opportunity to thank you for wanting to kill our brother, Ikenna. Ever since Ikenna married you, he has been denied freedom and interactions with people. Anyone who sees Ikenna hardly recognizes him anymore... You have dealt mercilessly with Ikenna and made life miserable for him that he could hardly stand on his feet. Since he married you, he has not achieved anything like his peers.” **(Gloss from the researcher).**

Umuada also intervene in matters concerning their colleagues. They ensure that the widows among them are not maltreated by the kinsmen of their late husbands. They do not stomach insolence and neither do they keep mute while a member is being humiliated in their presence, especially in their bid to resolve conflicts among couples or prevent an ugly situation from rearing its head. In such situations, they take drastic measures. This was clearly seen in the novel when Nkemdilim wanted to humiliate Umuada during the funeral of her father-in-law. She had ignored their questions, and when she decided to reply them at her own will, she gave a harsh and unacceptable response. This greatly provoked Afulenu, the leader of the women.

Oge ha na-agwa Nkemdilim ihe ndi a ma na-ajukwa ajuju ndi a. Nkemdilim no na-ele ya anya nleli...Ka Umuada na-eche ka Nkemdilim zaa ha ajuju ikpeazu ha juru ya tupu ha wee mara ihe ha na ya ga-eje. Nkemdilim lechaa ha anya were juo ha ma o bu ihe ndi ahụ ka ha kpoforo ya ka o nwere ihe ozọ. Onwee ihe ozọ ha nwere ha ga-ekwu ka ha kwuo ka o puwa n'ihu na o choghizi inu ihe ndi ahụ ha na-akọ. Umuada ahula ihe ha na-achọ. Okwu ahụ Nkemdilim gwara ha ruru ha n'ahụ, Afulenu were iwe si ebe ahụ o no gakwuru Nkemdilim ebe ahụ o kwu were ura chara oku machie Nkemdilim nti abuo iji wee kowaara ya na ebe ahụ

onọ ugbu a abughị Enugwu, o bughikwa ya na Ikenna no, na o bu ya na Umuada no. Mgbe Umuada jiri mara na ihe Nkemdilim ga-eme ka di n'ihu bu oge oghodoro Afulenu n'ogodu were juo ihe o mere ya o jiri tie ya ihe...Ihe ahụ o mere kuru Umuada gem n'isi. Ara puru ha niile ozigbo. Ha niile were si ebe ha no were makwasị Nkemdilim ka Agu agu na-agu were choo ka ha rie ya na ndu. Mgbe Nkemdilim huru na odighi onye na-azo ya azo, kama o bu ogbugbu ka onye o bua choro ka e gbuo ya, o malitere tiwe mkpu akwa na-ariọ Umuada ka ha hapuzie ya **(IOGA 232-233).**

When they narrated to Nkemdilim all her evil deeds, they also questioned her, but Nkemdilim looked at them with disdain...While the women were waiting for Nkemdilim to answer their last question, before they would recommend a suitable punishment for her, Nkemdilim gave them a scornful gaze and asked them if they just summoned her for those questions. She asked them if they had exhausted their questions or there are still more. If they still have more questions, they should be fast about that because she does not want to listen to their pathetic tales anymore. Umuada have found what they were looking for; the signal has been relayed. Nkemdilim's harsh response was a deep blow to them. Afulenu stood up angrily from where she was sitting, went straight to Nkemdilim and slapped her mercilessly to explain to her that she was before Umuada in Odunta and not Ikenna her husband Enugwu. When Umuada knew that Nkemdilim was out to face them violently was when she quickly held Afulenu by her wrapper asking her what she has done to deserve the slap... What she did made them furious. All of them went haywire. They all came out and pounced on Nkemdilim so hard like a hungry tiger. When Nkemdilim discovered that she was at the mercy of

Ụmụada, she started crying, begging them to let her go. **(Gloss from the researcher)**

In the novel, Ụmụada exhibited how they wield enormous authority in major events in their ancestral homes, especially during funerals. This was greatly seen in the novel during the funeral of Ikenna's father when Afụlụenu (Ikenna's Paternal Aunty) and other Ụmụada took the stage in given their 'brother' a befitting burial while exercising their authority. Patricia Okoye explains that in Awka in the late 90s, Ụmụada were not given foods, drinks and items like of today during funeral. Those days, Ụmụada will spend seven days in the deceased household during funeral, although they could be served local delicacies from the household. It was an era when foods and drinks were not served during funeral. She added that it was not all the Ụmụada in a community but just the ones who are directly related to the deceased. Other members of the Ụmụada will come and go back to their respective homes at the end of the day. Whenever there was a death in the family, Ụmụada played vital role during the funeral ceremony. They sleep in the deceased compound for a number of days starting with wake. Those days till early year 2000 when corpses spend a night in their own compounds before interment the next day, Ụmụada would keep vigil all through the night with the corpse while the men folk went to bed. This women group show solidarity at death (Personal Communication 24/6/2023).

Ifeyinwa Nwosu from Nibo explained that traditionally, Ụmụada believe in solidarity that a loss to one is a loss to many and that the Igbo world view is circumscribed by solidarity from birth through adulthood and death. Although in Igbo society, it is believed that death is a personal experience for the dead but it is a communal issue not just the immediate family, but the extended family-Nwada (Ụmụada). (Personal Communication 28/6/2023).

(Ikwuemesi, 26) emphasized the Igbo philosophy of solidarity at death:

At death, it re-occurs as the sharing and thus alleviation - of pain and sorrow but also cleverly ensures that the deceased is sent forth as solemnly as s/he was welcomed at birth through a celebration of his/her absence and an inscription of death (through rites of passage) as the threshold of a new life or immortality depending on one's beliefs. It must be noted here that solidarity remains an important factor in African sociology. The individual belongs to history, tradition and society and not vice versa (Ikwuemesi, 26).

When an elderly person dies, Ụmụada gather in the compound of the dead person to keep them company during mourning and funeral. They sing songs and dance in order to keep the place lively. After the burial of the dead person, the family of the deceased person will entertain them with food and drinks. If they are not satisfied with what was given to them, they may reject them and go ahead to fine the bereaved, especially in the burial of a fellow Nwaada. In *Ihe Ojoo Gbaa Afo*, after Nkemdịlīm's ruffle with Ụmụada, she was made to apologize for her erratic behaviour that day. They also advised her extensively with stern warnings to desist from her evil and wicked characters. They reminded her that being a good wife who honours her husband builds a peaceful family. They proceeded to fine her heavily. Ụmụada also fined Ikenna for not taken care of his father whom they believed died of hunger and Nkemdịlīm's maltreatment.

Ụmụada sịrị m gwa gị na ị ga-ahaara nha ma ọ bụrụ na ị gakwa anọ na be ha. Ha sịrị na ị ga-enya ha otu nne ewu gbara agba, ọkụkọ ise chara acha, mba ji iri na abụọ tinyekwara otu puku naịra ị ga-atụkwasa n'ihe ndị ahụ ị ga-ewetara ha. Ọ bụzị mgbe i wetara ihe ndị a ka anyị ga-ejizi gwa gị etu ị ga-esi were biri be anyị...Naanị echi ka anyị nyedebere gị maka nha a ị ga-ahara anyị...ka Nkemdịlīm pụchara...Afụlụenu were gwa “Ikenna, Ụmụada sịrị na ị chọọ ka ha nọrọ, soro gị kwaa nna gị lara mmụọ, na ị ga-

ahaara ha nha. Ihe kpatra ha jiri si na i ga-ahaara ha nha bu maka na i hapuru nna gi aguu gbuo ya. Oge onwu nna gi erubeghi, o bu aguu na ahuhu gburu ya. Mgbe o no ndu inaghi ele ya anya, i naghi ajụ ase ya...n'ih i nke a, i ga-aga ugbo a wetere anyi otu puku naiira na nari naiira ise zuru oke tupu anyi emetu ihe o bu la onu. O buru na anyi chee gi nwantakiri oge anyi ahughi gi, anyi niile alasaa i noduzie be nna gi kwawa ya (IOGA 238-239).

Umuada said you must pay the following fines if must continue to stay in this family as our wife. They said that you will give them one big goat, five healthy fowls, twelve tubers of yam and one thousand naira. It is when you bring these things that we will then tell you how you can live with us as our wife...You have only tomorrow to provide those things...after Nkemdilim left... Afulenu said to Ikenna, "Umuada said that if you want them to stay, and participated in your father's funeral you must pay a fine." The reason they said you must pay a fine is because you left your father to starve to death. Your father's death would not have occurred, it was hunger and suffering that killed him. When he was alive you did not take care of him... because of this, you must go now and bring us one thousand, five hundred naira, and if we wait for you longer than required, we would boycott this funeral, leaving you to bury your father alone. (Gloss from the researcher).

### Conclusion

This study explains Umuada as an association that binds together all the women who are born in the same clan or village. They seek the welfare of their family, kinsmen and the entire clan. In the entire Igbo land they are highly respected and are held in very high esteem. They help in the development of heir town and see that peace reigns supreme in their town. Generally in Igbo land, the power of Umuada is felt heavily in conflict management, reconciliation and disciplinary measures in their ancestral homes.

In the novel which was set in a modern society, the writer, Chinedum Ofomata shows that development and trends do not deter Umuada from playing their socio-cultural roles. When Nkemdilim discovered that she has been overpowered by Umuada, she packed her things and fled Odunta the next day, even though the funeral has not ended, Umuada sent some delegates to Enugwu to make sure she has not returned to her husband's apartment. This shows that they are united and determined in doing things with one accord. Despite the challenges they may face, Umuada continue to play a crucial role in preserving the culture, traditions, and economic well-being of the Igbo society.

In the novel, Umuada acted as a "court, by asking Nkemdilim to pay fine, and bring some items to them for reconciliation. Issues relating to Umuada are delicate to handle. They are held in high esteem because of their power and position in customs and traditions, especially the men folk. In the course of instilling discipline, they do not tolerate interference until the defaulter pleads guilty and shows remorse, hence:

*Ndi niile biara mgbaru onye garuo nso ebe ahụ Nkemdilim na Umuada na-akpotu, ha agwa ya ka o si ebe ahụ nye ohere n'ih i na okwu ahụ bu okwu Umuada. Onye o bu la tinyere aka na ya, o buru okwu ha na ya. (IOGA 233).*

*All the people who came to the funeral saw Umuada dealing with Nkemdilim and when they went close, they were warned to stay away that it is strictly Umuada case. Anyone who dares to interfere would face the heavy wrath of Umuada. (Gloss from the researcher)*

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