

Female Characters in Obidiebube's Selected Igbo Plays: The Trauma of Cultural Subjectivity

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Abstract

*This study portrayed the female characters in Obidiebube's Igbo plays. Many women in toxic marriages suffer in silence because the culture has already conditioned them to remain so. Researches have been made pertaining this topic but no one had selected this research playwright's drama texts, hence the relevance of this research. A descriptive survey research design was employed for this study. The study was anchored on Social Power. This is because the study is not concerned with females alone. The study population was the playwright's two selected plays namely; *Onọdụ Ugo* and *Nwaanyị Bụ Ihe Ukwu*. The study found that females are addressed as weaker vessels not only to men but to the society at large. Hence, existing culture has its own way of leaving these women with a long lasting trauma. These women are vulnerable and as such, are subjected to cultural trauma which is no doubt, the reason why they tend to employ the principles of feminism in their quest to fight for equal rights. Based on these findings, the study therefore concludes that diversity of rights in terms of gender and educational background will not only really improve or reduce effect of ill treatments from culture, but aid the*

mental state of women in the society. Thus, it is recommended that greater measures need to be taken by all and sundry to listen to women plea in order to largely reduce the trauma which they undergo and also checkmate to a reasonable extent, the negative effect of culture on women, since the culture is subject to amendment.

Keywords: *Igbo drama, Igbo Culture, Character, Trauma, Cultural Subjectivity, Social Power Theory*

Introduction

Every writer is a god to his or her literary work. Like a clay in the hands of a potter so are characters in the hands of a creative writer. For instance, a playwright like Onyekaaonwu who wrote drama texts like, *Nwata Rie Awo*, *Erii Mara Ngwugwu*, e.t.c is able to create the protagonist in the Igbo Literary work under study to have outstanding personality. One of the ways to appreciate the study in line with its style and character building is from the point of view of karma. It is from this background that the characters interplay in the work played major role in the whole dramatic piece of his.

Literature, mostly prose and drama are stories that revolve around style, character and environment. The study explores the use of female characters to drive home the message in the Igbo Literary Works as the character created by the playwright in the work of art goes a long way to determine the beauty of such work. In the Igbo Literary work under study, Obidiebube is able to combine culture and character to achieve her aim.

The objective of the study is to draw our attention to the playwright's command in the use style and character in the work, which gives the work its prominent position amongst Igbo Literary Works. Character when passionately waived by creative artist, has a way of creating lasting impression in the mind of the readers. The researchers are embarking on this study to bring the Igbo drama text to limelight, from the use of character.

The literary theory adopted for analysis of the study is Social Power, which goes a long way to unearth the inner feelings of the author. It is the inner feelings that determine the reason for character's actions. The main sources of data for the study are the selected Igbo drama texts, which collectively formed the population of the study. At the end of the study, the researchers found out that the harness of some Igbo cultures are the foundation of the trauma that women go through which are in line with the story line. The playwright has achieved success in her use of character from where the work sees the light of the day amongst Igbo Literary Works.

The study would be of great value to the public, amongst the people to benefit from the study are: teachers, students, as well as would-be researchers in literature, mostly in character and culture as this would aid subsequent researches on literature for empirical studies and so on. Hence the study would bridge the knowledge gap in this area of study, by adding to the wealth of literature in the study of this nature.

Review of Related Literature

No article is without a foundation. Some works in literature have been made to capture one thing or the other which helped to bridge

some gaps in research areas. This backdrop will form the review of related literature for this research topic.

Onuorah (2012) in her research titled “Ọnọdụ Ụmụnwaaanyi n’Agumagụ Igbo” reflects the place of women in Igbo Literature. The research used three Igbo literary texts namely: *Obidiya* (Akoma), *Ugomma* (Echebima) and *Onye Ọma Emeka* (Okafọ). The research was aimed at finding the situation of women in the selected texts, finding the exemplary roles of the women in the texts, x-raying their weak points and exposing the places of the women in the said texts and how their roles affect the society. Both researches (the former and the present) are focused on women and literary texts but differ in the terms of their titles, theory used and purpose of study.

Emelone (2023) in her research titled “Violence and Memory in War Literature: A Study of Some Selected African Novels” used Psychoanalytic and Postcolonial theories of literary criticisms to analyze the ways violence creates memory in war victims as represented by her selected writers. The research explored the effects of violence emanating from war experiences on the memory of victims and the various forms which the wars manifest as well as the post-war conditions of the surviving victims, stressing the possible measures proffered by war literature and manifestations of violence as represented by the writers of the selected works. The study in addition examined some protest and post-independence issues in the novels. The said study relates with the present one because both are aimed at exposing the trauma certain set of people pass through as a result of circumstances. Whereas the first one was about the entire being the latter is

focused on women in the selected drama texts of a particular playwright.

Drama as a Keyword

Drama is a form of literature, an act of imitation of life on the stage where actors perform the story before the audience. It is deeply rooted on imitation, and re-enactment of event using dialogue for easy understanding of the story. Many scholars have contributed in the definition of drama; one of them is Obadiegwu (2019:5) who opines:

Drama as visual imagery and the means of understanding for school children has reflected in clarifying other area of human development necessary for individual growth. For instance, drama technique can make history come alive. It can communicate feeling, both to audience, through the medium of players, and to the players themselves, through identification with their roles. For example, a historical play can convey to an audience, not merely what people did but what they felt. To these players involvement with the role and with the particular historical situation can give insight into the feelings and motivations of characters of the past. In essence, communication through drama adds to the passing on of factual information, the dimensions of feeling and motives associated with the facts. It is therefore used as clear observable representation of action of events, something the children can actually see and which in turn enhances their understanding of a particular situation in context.

The above statement shows how drama can be used to expose a children to ideas and opinion other than those they normally encountered. Such exposure could take a form of giving them roles to play in a drama in order to be fully involved in the act of solving their problem and that of the society. The author further stresses that dramatization physicalizes what they hear and representing it in more practically, clarifying scene-by scene situations in the course of the story. The children are enthralled by the visual element because they are able to see the actions as they unfold before them, thus becoming more attentive and following the story with greater understanding. The above thought is of the view that role identification, interpretation and overall understanding of story line is made in the altar of drama.

Obadiegwu (2019:5) in line with this says, that drama is an ideal in fostering the growth of individual and in harmonizing that individual with the organic unity of society. The function of drama in the above thought revolves around a holistic approach to mental and physical development of the individual child to overall integration into his environment. On the other hand, Okebalama (2003:12) in Ikeokwu and Onyejekwe (2004:11) says:

Traditional Igbo drama deals with the Igbo philosophy which involved their life, way of life, creation, visible and invisible things e.t.c. It is a form of admonition against immoral acts; whereby good behaviours are commended while bad behaviour is totally condemned. Traditional dramas ascribe worship to gods; sometimes it is used to praise heroes, heroines for their great deeds. For example,

‘the Uto Nsude’ in Udi and Onoja Nwoboli in Ogurugu Nsukka.

In the above statement, Igbo traditional drama is recommended along with its moral function in the society as well as the place of honour it gives the heroes and heroines. These authors further say that traditional drama imitates place or setting like land of human beings, spirits and animals. There is no particular location for these performances since one does not stay at a place to watch masquerades. The above statement brings the idea that traditional drama could take any form and could be performed at any location. The author further sheds light on masquerade as a form of drama, as well as a moving performance that calls for active audience, because of its ever moving nature. In the same direction, Mbah (2007:318) states that in a typical Igbo folk festival, the whole village turns out to be a theatre where actors and audience move from one end to the other gyrating in the harmony of spectacle, sound and sense. The above statement captures the active participation of both actors and audience which is one of the primary features of drama.

Literature

Literature is the act of using language to achieve aesthetics. It goes beyond using every day language in its quest to engage the audience to think as well as to please them as it takes the cultural material of the society that creates it. It is a form of art-work that mirrors the society with the intention to entertain, as well as to correct some ills. Literature is a form of art where authors express with sense of pride what the society holds at high esteem, at the

same time wishing to acquire those they do not have. Scholars in both space and time have contributed in the definition of literature, one of them is Oruchalu, (1999:33), who argues on the function of literature to the society thus; “literature plays a very important and strong role in the awareness of civilization.” This means that literature grows along with the society and can point at the level of development in the society. This has ways of bringing social reform, as a result of the static nature of the society. Echeruo, (2001:16) states that literary artist mirrors the society by trying to present the societal facts of life to the people through literature. The author is of the view that literature is a reflection of the society, hence it has the capacity of presenting some facts in the society. Nwadike, (1992:27) is of the view that literature is a window for expression to individual author. This thought about literature goes a long way to show how literature enhances freedom of expression alongside with its politics, for supporting one idea, as well as condemning the other. Literature explores the cultural materials such as politics and economic inclinations of the society. It is a kind of art usually written for entertainment of the audience and to teach some moral lessons.

The Igbo Society and Igbo Culture

Igbo is one of the three major Nigerian ethnic groups; the other two are Hausa and Yoruba. The speakers of the language are also referred to as Igbo people. Igbo is the dominant tribe in Eastern Nigeria and the only ethnic group in the present South-East geopolitical zone of the country. Igbo people are also found in the South South region in States such as Rivers, Delta and Akwa Ibom. The core Igbo States are: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu

and Imo. The Igbo society is an egalitarian and republican society. The Igbo society is highly segmented into small towns and villages; each being close-knit, independent and exclusive – a situation that might be responsible for the high number of dialects in the language. The Igbo people had a republican administrative pattern where every kin had freedom to express himself in matters of the community. The society was governed along the axis of clan, with the *umunna* “kinsmen” constituting the general assembly or congress, while the *ndiichie* “council of elders” constituted the apex of the leadership. In the contemporary world, the Igbo people are found in all continents of the world and in fairly large numbers.

The Igbo society is filled with diverse cultures that have since been into existence among which are not favorable to women; whether married or unmarried. This has contributed to the trauma that women face, hence, the slavery condition of most married women in African traditional societies is orchestrated by the antiwomen cultural practices enshrined by their laws. Regrettably, many women in toxic marriages suffer in silence because the culture has already conditioned them to remain so. Their consciousness has been battered by existing cultural practices such that it almost becomes a norm for the oppressed women to suffer in absolute silence so that the man is protected from public criticism.

Therefore, ideologically and traditionally, most women in the Igbo society have been conditioned to do little or remain silent even in matters that concern their well-being. It is not surprising that they bow to the inconsiderate expectations of culture such that their lives are defined by such cultural demands. This has been the

thematic concern of most nineteenth and twentieth century writers of Africa.

Theoretical Framework

The approach adopted as a guide in this study is the theory of Social Power, propounded by Max Weber (1922). The theory states that power is a resource that is evident in inter-personal relationship in a given society. According to Wolfe and McGinn (2005), social power is derived from one's relationships to others, meaning that one cannot have social power in the absence of other people. In this view, power is a truly relational construct. It is an outcome of relationship involving people of different classes, or same class, where people influence others either because they are higher in the social order, or, even if they are in the same social class, they are higher in other social indices. In the literature, social power is differentiated from personal power. Personal power is the degree to which holders of power are capable of acting with agency or of exerting influence in the environment (Overbeck & Park, 2001; Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006) in addition to "power over oneself and freedom from the influence of others" (Lammers, Stoker, & Stapel, 2009: 1544). This is a suggestion that social power operates, particularly in a system where personal power is weak or where personal power is subdued by circumstances.

In social psychology, social power is perceived as the (potential) ability to influence others' behavior (Andersen & Berdahl, 2002). However, Fiske and Dépret (1996) questioned the system of equating power with (potential) influence. In this power-as influence perspective, power is an outcome of social

interactions rather than a structural feature and thus cannot be manipulated as an independent variable. The second issue with this view is that it confounds the power of the agent with the weakness of the target (Fiske & Berdahl, 2007). Consequently, it is presently more common to define social power in terms of control over the outcomes for someone else (e.g., Andersen & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky et al., 2003; Keltner et al., 2003).

In the study of social power, several related concepts are encountered such as status, authority, dominance, and leadership, which require clarification. According to Sonja (2019), status, in a broad sense produces differences in respect and prominence (Keltner et al., 2003); but more narrowly defined, status can result from the power an individual possesses as a result of social group membership (Schmid, 2010). Consequently, it is possible to have status without power (example, Mother Teresa) and power without status (example, a corrupt politician). Authority can be defined as power derived from institutionalized roles (example, director, foreman, manager), which is also termed position power or structural power. Dominance includes personality dominance and dominant behavior. Personality dominance can be understood as an individual difference variable describing the extent to which an individual has the desire to influence or control others (Schmid, 2010); dominant behavior is any behavior used with the intention to gain or maintain power over other people (Keltner et al., 2003).

The social distance theory (Magee & Smith, 2013) posits an interpersonal and cognitive account to explain the effects of social power. It is based on the assumption that differences in control over valued resources cause differences in dependence and is factored on two basic propositions. The first is that unequal

dependence between two individuals (high-power and lowpower) produces unequal experiences of social distance, i.e., the experience of distance from others, with the high-power individual feeling more subjective distance than the low-power individual. Magee and Smith contend that unequal social distance results from a combination of an individual's motives for affiliation and their expectations of affiliation from the other party. Because of their outcome dependency, low-power individuals are motivated to affiliate while expecting only little affiliation within the relationship, whereas high-power individuals, who are less dependent on their low-power counterparts, have less motivation to affiliate with their lowpower counterparts while expecting high affiliation within the relationship, (Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2012).

There is a conflict perspective to social power. As against the functionalist perspective that views society as composed of different parts working together, the conflict perspective views society as composed of different groups and interests competing for power and resources. The conflict perspective explains various aspects of our social world by identifying which groups have power and benefit from a particular social arrangement. For instance, feminist theory argues that society is patriarchal and controlled by men for the interest of men. In this study, the theory of Social Power will serve as a mirror in the analysis and discussion of wealth and power in the Igbo world.

Purpose of the Study

The study sets out to: Explore the various forms and manifestations of cultural subjectivity imposed on women as

represented by the Playwright; investigate the diverse ways cultural subjectivity creates memory on women as victims as represented by the Playwright; and assess the therapeutic measures for victims of cultural subjectivity as represented by the Playwright;

Methodology

Two drama texts written in the Igbo language were purposively sampled from an Igbo Playwright. Out of numerous Igbo drama texts that are based on variegated topics, social, cultural and political, *Ọnọdu Ugo* and *Nwaanyi Bụ Ihe Ukwu* written by J.I Obidiebube were selected. The texts were selected due to the fact that they provide a full account of the cultural subjectivity and the exercise of power by culture on women in Igbo society. A second reason for the choice of these texts is that their subject matters are still relevant in the contemporary period.

Synopsis of *Nwaanyi Bụ Ihe Ukwu*

Nwaanyi Bụ Ihe Ukwu is an Igbo drama text by Joyce Obidiebube. Chiadikaobi is married to Nkechinyere and they could not give birth to any male child. This became a topic of discussion for Chiadi's brother and his wife, his kinsmen and Nkechinyere's mother. While Chiadi's brother, (Idigo), his wife and kinsmen scornfully mock him and try to persuade him to marry another wife as his wife is unfit to bear a male child, his mother –in-law tries to persuade her daughter to understand that without a male child in the Igbo society that a married woman is still not settled.

They kept reminding Nkechinyere that she has no place in her husband's house as all her daughters are properties of another.

This did not stop this family from training their daughters as their daughters especially Nwaanyibuihe eventually became their source of consolation.

In *Nwaanyi Bu Ihe Ukwu*, the Playwright Obidiebube projected Nkechinyere as the female who was subjected to cultural trauma in the text. In the Igbo society, when a woman gives birth to female children alone, she is regarded as 'hanging' in her husband's house. The Igbo culture holds male children to high esteem. That is why one will hear the Igbo man say "nwa nwoke na-ebunye nwaanyi oche be di ya". This is to say that a male child automatically gives a married woman a relaxed place or position in her marriage.

This is captioned in the text as thus;

Uduaku: (N'olu nwayo) Ewu Chi m o o! Kedụ mgbe m ga-eso na ndị a ga-ebunye oche? Chineke bikonu lenu

Nkechi nwa m. Bikonu, o burugodu naani otu ka ukwu sie ya ike be di ya ka umunwaanyi ibe ya. (Pg. 23)

Translated as: Uduaku: (In a subtle tone) Oh my God o o! When will I be among those that you will give chair? Please God, see my daughter Nkechi. Please, even if it is one, give her so that her legs will be strong in her husband's house just like her fellow women.

Those were the thinking of Nkechinyere's mother during the child naming ceremony of her granddaughter. She really feels for her daughter because as an Igbo woman, she understands the

trauma her daughter passes through as a result of not having a male child for her husband. No right thinking mother will behave as if everything is ok with her daughter in such a situation.

In this text also, Nkechinyere, wife of Chiadikaobi gave birth to five daughters; Chioma, Nwabuonu, Ifechukwu, Ijeanuli and Nwaanyibuihe. These daughters are not regarded as ‘tangible’ enough when compared to one male child in the Igbo land. They are seen as another man’s property who will be given out for marriage to the said man. When a situation like this arises in the family, the woman or wife involved is mostly helpless since she is not the molder of male children. In this case, she is left to her fate as the Igbo culture would mandate her husband to get another wife that will bear him male children.

Even when the husband due to one reason or the other is not willing to take a second wife, *umunna* will try to convince him because it is not an abomination in the Igbo society to marry another wife when the first one is not capable of giving birth to a male child.

In this text, one would perceive Nkechinyere’s mother’s fears when she said: *‘Nwa m matakwa na o bu gi ka o di mkpa. Di gi nwere ike puta echi gaa luo nwaanyi ozo ga-amutara ya nwa nwoke...’* (pg. 28). Translated as: ...my daughter, this is of more importance to you. Your husband may decide tomorrow to marry another wife that will give him male child. One could imagine what the woman who is in this situation may pass through. She will be having a co-wife, not because her husband wants but because she could not do what other women did. The most traumatic of it all is, if eventually the second wife comes and gives birth to a male child, the first one will suffer traumatization

because culture has subjected her to such. Here, social power theory plays a vital role since its primary aim is dominance. However, the dominance in this text is as a result of human factor. This implies that culture is obeyed when it is agreed to be practiced by group of people of a community. For a woman to be made to undergo a traumatic ordeal as a result of not having a male child could lead to an unending trauma.

The pressure to get another wife was seen in the text as thus: ‘Nzeakọ: Gaa luru nwaanyi ozo ka o munye gi nwa nwoke. (41). Translated as: Nzeakọ: Go and marry another woman to bear a male child for you. This statement was made by one of Chiadi’s kinsmen in a meeting where this should not be a subject matter. One can simply imagine what will be working in the mind of Chiadi as a result of pressure from kinsmen. This condition that a woman goes through exposes her to humiliation; both physical and psychological, often in the name of culture, usually by those who should console her and support her.

Women in Igbo land had made efforts to demand their rights in the past. The Aba women’s riot of 1929 is a typical example of such efforts when Igbo women confronted the British Colonial government in protest against the rumored plan of per capita taxation. One, therefore, wonders why the Igbo women of modern society would not learn from this but instead allow themselves to be traumatized, marginalized and violated all in the name of culture.

In the Igbo culture, names are not just given to children. The names signify something spectacular. Meanings are always derived from the Igbo names that Igbo people answer. In other words, in the case of some names, the issue of having male

children to continue a lineage is not left out of this. This signifies how important it is for a woman to bear a male child for her husband in order to bring honor to him. As captured in the text, a reminder of this cultural implication was stated as: ‘Nzeakọ: Chetakwa na ndị Igbo na-agụ ụmụ ha “Obiefuna” maọbụ “Ahamefuna”. I hapụ ngwuru gị otu a, obi gị ga-echi, aha gị gaefukwaa.’ (41)

Nzeakọ: Remember that the Igbo people give their children names like ‘Obiefuna’ or ‘Ahamefuna’. If you leave your lineage this way, your family homestead will be lost.

The Igbo wives are not the only people subjected to cultural trauma; the daughters are, too. When a girl child knows that the Igbo culture ranks a male higher in the society, she is subjected to trauma. She sees herself as not being a part of her father’s family. She also sees herself as a part of another family (where she would be married into), because the Igbo culture classifies her as such. No sex should be superior to the other because everyone is special in one way or the other. In a question asked by Idigo in the selected text when Izuakamma said that Chiadi has five children, this was portrayed as this: ‘Idigo: N’ime ụmụ ise ahụ, ole kwụ ọtọ anyụ mamiri? Ọ bụ na ha niile abughị uru onye ọzọ?’

Idigo: From those five children, how many stand up to urinate? Are they not the benefits of another? Here, Idigo is referring to males as the only gender that stands up to urinate. Instead of mentioning male, the Playwright uses idiomatic expression to refer to a male child.

It was discovered that though women are the victims of cultural subjectivity, they are surprisingly also perpetrators and astute enforcers of the practices, as well as those who vehemently

oppose any form of change. What a paradox! This was portrayed in this text using the Ọnụkwube, Idigo's wife as the character to depict this. She is a female character who always puts Nkechinyere in a traumatic situation by continuously reminding her that she has no place in her husband's house and that her five daughters are considered irrelevant.

Synopsis of *Ọnọdu Ugo*

Joyce Obidiebube is also the Playwright of this Igbo drama text. In this drama text, it took a particular couple (Okonkwo and Amaka) some years to conceive and when they finally did, they brought forth, Ngozi and Obiora. This couple died, leaving their children behind. Ngozi as the eldest and a female child, took it upon herself to fend for herself and her younger brother, Obiora. She trained herself in school, got a job and yet remains unmarried. Being unmarried did not stop her from becoming successful. She went as far as building a house for her brother, sponsored his marriage ceremonies, and in fact, made sure his brother and family did not lack anything. Problem began when she wanted to adopt a child who would take care of her at old age. This was what his brother perceived as a means of trying to inherit or take part in their father's properties and hence, swore to prevent it from happening. He constantly reminds her that she should be in her husband's house and bear his name. This conflict made Ngozi to develop hypertension and later died, leaving her adopted daughter, Nkechinyere behind.

In *Ọnọdu Ugo*, Obidiebube as the Playwright, portrayed the issue or Igbo culture of a woman who has attained the age of marriage but still single in her father's house as what subjects a

lady to trauma. She uses a female character, Ngozi who went through trauma as a result of cultural subjectivity. In the text, Ngozi as a spinster was not doing badly for herself. Her only 'crime' is that she did not marry despite being nice and helpful to people especially her own blood brother who sees her as a threat in her father's house. He made her go through trauma, as if being single is a disease.

In Igbo culture, it is believed that every girl child who attains a certain age in life should get married and be called a married woman. When she remains single even after attaining the womanhood stage, questions would be raised, like: Are you sure she is not being selective of a man? Are you sure her character does not scare men away from her? e.t.c. The Igbo people do not view an unmarried lady as being 'normal', to them, something is wrong somewhere.

This view of culture subjects such ladies to trauma, as no woman gives herself a husband. A man is supposed to find a wife for himself. The Igbo society finds fault in a lady who is unmarried as though she caused it. Some see her as being cursed. What a misinterpretation!

In *Onọdu Ugo*, Ngozi as the female protagonist, was the victim of trauma as a result of cultural subjectivity. She remained unmarried till her death and was made to see herself as unimportant in her father's family because her brother took it upon himself to exercise his authority as an Igbo first son who understands his role in the Igbo society.

As an unmarried lady who is doing well for herself, Ngozi opted for adoption to at least have a child that would take care of her. This was when the problem began. Obiora her brother was

never in support of her idea because the child of her sister should not bear their father's name in order not to inherit properties. His negation to her idea of adoption was captioned as thus:

Ngozi: Ana m atughari uche n'okwu ahụ mgbe niile. Ihe m kpebiri ugbua bụ ka m mee '*adoption*'. Mana ọ gbara m gharị ka m siri gwazie Obi nwanne m nwoke ebumnuche m ọ si na nke ahụ agaghị eme eme na ndụ. (70)

Ngozi: I have been pondering on that word all the time. What I have concluded at is to go for an adoption. But it surprises me how I told my brother Obi of my intention and he said that it can never happen in this life.

This is a reminder to her (Ngozi) by her brother that her presence in the family as an unmarried lady is insignificant. Ngozi was reminded that she has no right to her father's properties and that she is not a part of the father's lineage. 'Obiora: Nwaanyị anaghị ebichi obi n'ala Igbo mana ị chọrọ ibichi obi ugbua. Ahụ ga-adịkwa gị ka onye na-ebichi obi.'

Obiora: A woman does not live in family homestead in Igbo land but you want to live now. Your body will be as one who wants to live in the homestead. The last sentence is more or less a threat. This statement categorically tells us that the Igbo daughter has no right to the family's *obi*. She is just living her life just to be married by another and become another's property.

However, Obidiebube holds that culture influences how women are treated in a traditional society like Nigeria; therefore, she proves how all discriminations against women tend to seek justification in cultural norms, beliefs and practices. It is this cultural justification which has held

many single women in captive which Ngozi dismantles, as she reconstructs herself as a rational human being who is not led by emotions or traditions. This informs her decision to demystify the cultural imperatives which question or restrict the freedom of an unmarried woman. Consequently, Ngozi tells her brother and her kinsmen that she seeks to adopt a daughter who would take care of her and not fight over properties. More so, she explains: ‘Ngozi: Nwa m kpọtara bụ nwa nwaanyi iji gosi gi n’ezie na enweghi m ebumnobi ozo karia ka m nwee onye ga-ele m anya ugbua m na-aka nka.’ (74)

Ngozi: The child that I brought is a female to show you sincerely that I do not have any other intention other than to have someone who would look after me now that I am getting old.

Through Ngozi, the Playwright demonstrates that the Igbo woman has evolved and risen above patriarchal prejudices and myths. At least the adoption as a means of having a child is a subtle way of cushioning the problem and jinx of barrenness and singlehood, thereby demystifying such cultural imperatives. Ironically, in this selected text, the female character, Ngozi who was subjected to trauma due to problem emanating from cultural practice, died as a result of heartbreak.

Assessing the Therapeutic Measures for Victims of Cultural Subjectivity as Represented by the Playwright

There is no doubt that the selected drama texts portrayed Igbo culture and the trauma it brings upon the female protagonists, the Playwright through her texts, was able to achieve something by bringing up interventions, treatments or procedure used to cushion

the effect of the trauma. It is believed that the only thing that has no remedy is death.

In *Nwaanyi Bu Ihe Ukwu*, Obidiebube uses Nkechinyere's husband, Chiadikaobi to help her cushion the trauma she went through as a result of not having a male child for him. Ordinarily, with the way the Igbo culture is structured when it comes to having sons, the husband would not think twice to marry a second wife that would give him sons. Having observed what women are subjected to as a result of this, the playwright brought a lasting therapy which is agape love that was made manifest through the husband of the female protagonist. He stood by her, despite the pressure from his kinsmen to marry another women whose womb is 'filled with male children'.

In *Onodu Ugo*, child adoption as a therapeutic measure was employed by Obidiebube to cushion the effect of the trauma of culture which an unmarried and childless Igbo female passes through. Ngozi was the female that was subjected to trauma by her brother, Obiora because she is unmarried and may come up to acquire or inherit their father's properties. He reminds her that she has no place in her father's house as she is meant to be somebody's wife. This is in line with the Igbo adage; *nwaanyi gafe onye muru, a juwa onye na-alu*. This did not stop Ngozi. The playwright did not portray her as helpless despite what she was subjected to. She adopted a girl child who was a source of consolation to her till her death.

From these, it is believed that everything in the world has solution except death. The playwright is certain that gone are the days when Igbo women are culturally oppressed. She brought up

these measures to help damp the effects of some worrisome situations that may arise and subject women to trauma and unrest.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has demonstrated the traumas as depicted by the Playwright in which females in Igbo land are subjected to, as a result of culture. This study has examined Igbo drama texts based on the question of trauma and cultural subjectivity in the Igbo society. Females are the gender that are always at the receiving end, since cultural expectations of women are myths and patriarchal fallacies.

A critical literary analysis of the *Onodu Ugo* text reveals that Obidiebube portrays the Igbo womanist temper. When her brother Obiora threatens Ngozi and tried everything possible to stop her from adopting a child, she did not relent. This is contrary to the cultural norm which demands an unmarried woman to remain silent and endure whatever happens in her life since she is not under the watch of a man called her husband. It is also evident that the modern woman is strong and courageous in handling her emotional challenges as seen in the characterization of Ngozi. The myth of silence has been broken and the walls of oppression shaken to the foundation as Ngozi emerges out of a dying singlehood.

Also, in *Nwaanyi Bu Ihe Ukwu*, the Playwright portrayed agape love in marriage despite cultural demands from a wife to give her husband male children. This has been the practice and indeed women who do not have male children go through a lot of trauma. Some do all kinds of regrettable things to have a male child or male children as the case may be. This paper is simply a

call for Igbo writers, playwrights and poets to portray other cultural imperatives that subject women to trauma with the need to finding lasting solutions and possible ways to curb them to reduce the harshness on them.

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