Critical Reflection on Values in Nigerian Literature: Pathways for Igbo Society

by

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Abstract

This study engages in a critical analysis of the Igbo values and how it is represented in Nigerian literature. The study makes references but not exclusively to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964) and *No Longer at Ease* (1960) by interrogating social reality and how representations of value systems in the selected novels contribute to the understanding of Igbo socio-cultural life. Using textual analysis as a methodological choice, the study critiques the representations as well as [mis]representations of value systems in the novels. The study also draws lessons from reader response theory to examine perceptions and receptions of aspects of Igbo culture like gender and how it is portrayed in the novels. The study ascertains that the views represented in the novels were influenced by several factors such as patriarchy, socialization, consciousness, religion, and education. The study recommends that future authors of African origin should consider emerging African issues that tell the story of African story, and how the stories affect them.

Introduction

The study focused on critical analysis of the Igbo value system and how it was represented or misrepresented in Chinua Achebe's '*Things Fall Apart', 'Arrow of God'* and *'No Longer at Ease'*. Igbo culture which is known as (Igbo: Ọmenala ndị Igbo) are a system of the customs, practices and traditions of the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. It comprises archaic practices as well as new concepts added into the Igbo values either by cultural evolution or by outside influence. These values form a system of customs and traditions including the Igbo people's visual art, music and dance forms, as well as their attire, cuisine and language dialects.

Because of their various subgroups, the variety of their culture is heightened further. Therefore, to understand the values of the Igbo of Nigeria, there is a need to interrogate the way it was represented in Chinua Achebe's work. With my personal knowledge and experience as an Igbo person accompanied with the early works of Chinua Achebe selected for this study, the concern of this paper will enjoy a deep scholarly reflection.

In the light of the above, before engaging with the nature of value systems in Chinua Achebe's works as this topic stipulates, it is imperative to further attempt a clarification of the concept of cultural values and put the way cultural values was portrayed in these selected Nigerian literature on trial. From a literal perspective, cultural values could be synonymous to inheritance, legacy, birth right or even custom and tradition. It is necessary to note that the presence of value systems as manifested in culture in the books has not eliminated some of the controversies and the contestations about cultural values.

Rationale and Motivation for the Study

The pertinent question this research is trying to answer is why are Igbo in Nigeria so interested in western values and not on Igbo or African values? How values systems represented in the works of Chinua Achebe became a necessary choice is because some of his writing has become like a bible to schools and curriculum in Nigeria. The findings of this research will help to understand in the words of Achebe "where the rain started beating us" as African people. Recent findings has shown that the over importation of foreign ideas and culture is eroding Igbo values in modern Nigeria. Nigerians in general and Igbo in particular have gone through enough trials and transformation in the nation's values that younger generation should know about through literature.

However, the opposite is the case, the more people read these literary stories which were based on traditional African stories, and the more they lean towards western values. Therefore, in the context it is necessary to understand how African literature has the potential to play a significant part in the paradigm shift in Igbo society. This makes these Achebe's work a critical element in this discourse because its depiction of Igbo values and cultural heritage greatly affects or enrich the views of readers in the African society.

Furthermore, I am also keen to look beyond the selected works of Achebe and extend my search to what extent to which these neo-colonial influences have had on authors of these selected novels in the representations of Igbo value system as topics in these particular literature which situates the purpose here as a parameter to gauge how Igbo values are represented in Chinua Achebe's work.

Significance of Study

Igbo values were never an intended outcome of the study of literature under colonial rule. It was only after 1960 that issues of Igbo values started to be part of the public debates in education and other circles but in a neo-colonial manner. Therefore, this led to criticisms of biased interpretation of values and geopolitics by various authors. Looking closely at the content of the Nigerian literature reveals how Igbo value were represented in a negative light within a western narrative which always dehumanise African culture. More interestingly, is the fact that most literary writings revolve around the idea of white domination. Therefore, there was little effort to mention of teaching of Igbo values to children. And a review of some literature on value systems in Nigerian education reveals to me that Igbo values were never given a high place in the post-colonial discourse. Its omission and negativity leaves me with some pertinent questions:

- Why was it not mentioned in many colonial historical accounts?
- What is it all about?
- What is the purpose of the omission?
- Does it mean there was no Igbo Kingdom in the past?
- How did they survive with a king without being enslaved?

Considering this, it is my intention to add voice to the debates around Igbo values and its cultural significance in Chinua Achebe's works.

This is all happening at a time when western values and ideology together with the forces of globalisation has taken root in schools in the former British colonies like Nigeria, it appears that Igbo values in Nigeria has been eroded entirely from the books that are written in the post-colonial era. It now becomes necessary to embark on this research in order to reveal how and why Igbo values are represented by authors in the way they did. Therefore, this exercise is likely to add or contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of value systems within the officially published literatures. In addition, this research is meant to create awareness to the policymakers, politicians and the community leaders to put Igbo values system as a priority in their decision making and in the choice of content in literatures for readership. This is hoped to assist in the saving of a once neglected segment of Igbo culture and also prepare children as proud African people.

Review of Literature

The purpose of the literature review is to critically evaluate, analyse and synthesise existing knowledge relevant to the research problem (Hart, 2005). This is important in order to clarify the theoretical bases for the research and to show how it fits within existing knowledge. In other words, the literature review will contextualise the research within the existing relevant knowledge while identifying the gaps in the literature where the study can make a contribution.

It is noted that the Igbo are known for searching for a better life. However, some complain that they are too quick to assimilate and adopt to the culture of a host country, while others argue that this traveler spirit is something to be proud of. Assimilation isn't always easy, so I give credit to immigrants who succeed in doing so. But distance from homeland takes a toll on the old culture. Storytelling and proverbs are very important to the traditional Igbo way of life, and have always helped to sustain the language. Away from the elders, and away from the village square where the stories are told, it's easy to start losing contact with it, and there are some books in Igbo, but unfortunately, no newspapers.

The Igbo people have also faced more than just the cultural battering which is the norm in a world where English predominates. Nigeria and Igbo people have been here before, and it didn't end well. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) in which the Igbo tried to form a separate state of Biafra which saw a million Igbo die, mostly through starvation. After the war ended, the Nigerian government declared "no victor, no vanquished" as a way to bury enmity.

But as a friend told me, the civil war was akin to a child being flogged, but told not to cry. Emotions are still raw as there's been no closure, no catharsis, and the Biafra war isn't taught in schools. This continued disaffection has given rise to secessionist groups such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). While many Igbo I speak to are not necessarily in support of secession, they see these groups as standing up for Igbo rights, as all these issues are interlinked: fear of marginalisation, identity crises, and an endangered language. After the war, the Igbo lost status as a lingua franca that non-Igbo people like my mother would learn.

According to Onuoha (2011), Igbo traditions of origin differ widely throughout the Igbo area and most times, they do not provide a reliable historical source of accessing the Igbo past. Even when evidence of historical reliability is present in these traditions (Miller 1980; Vansina 1985), the main objective is often geared towards explaining the current social and political context, which tends to provide a legitimacy leadership claim vis-à-vis a neighboring Igbo community. For the purpose of clarity and scholarly tidiness, this work adopts Falola's (2005) categorization of Igbo traditions of origin into three phases.

The first is the tradition of 'oriental' origins, which has two strands: one identifies the Igbo as one of the lost ten 'tribes' of Israel; while the other traces their origin to ancient Egypt. While the claim to Hebrew origin is linked to the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano (1794, p. 25-28), as cited in Falola 2005), a former enslaved Igbo who wrote in 1789; and the work of Basden (1925) early in the 20th century gave it some credence by pointing to close resemblances between Igbo culture and Jewish culture, without affirming that the former necessarily descended from the latter. With some level of academic respectability, other contributions to the study of Igbo origin can be traced to the Nile Valley in Egypt to their present location, linking Igbo culture to the culture of ancient Egypt (Jeffreys 1946; 1956, p. 120-124).

Traditions in the second group trace the origin of the Igbo to their neighbours, like the Edo Empire of Benin and the Igala Kingdom of Idah, pointing to the linguistic similarities of the Igbo with these groups (Onwuejeogwu 1977). The third tradition of origin is one that claims autochthony and origin in the present area of Igbo land, though not always in the exact location where the Igbo are now located (Afigbo 1981). While an exhaustive discussion of Igbo traditions of origin is beyond the scope of this paper, it would be more meaningful to treat the question of Igbo origin and traditions relating to it, not so much as dealing with 'origins', but as dealing with the intricate interrelationships and antecedents that helped to forge the phenomenon known as the Igbo identity.

Furthermore, traditions of origins are sometimes analysed and disseminated in a manner that position some groups as unrelated to their immediate neighbours. In the case of the Igbo, the nature and consequences of the multi-faceted relationships with their neighbours: The Benin (to the west); the Igala (to the north); the Efik (to the east); and Ijaw and Kalabari (to the south) had an enormous impact on the internal developments in pre-colonial Igbo land. Among other things, this led to inter-group migrations (Alagoa 1971, p. 337; Jones 1963, p. 29-30; Afigbo 1965, p. 269); and trade links (Alagoa 1970; Afigbo 1973, p.86). Most traditions of origin do this by laying claim to a 'divine' or 'sacred' root. The Igbo tend to advance the 'pure tribe theory' in the rendering of the Igbo as a 'pure race' (Isichei 2006, p. 92; Egharevba 2000, p. 13); with inter-cultural penetrations and borrowings (Nzimiro 1972, p. 255; Egharevba 2000, p. 41-83; Forde and Jones 2002, p. 52, 59). Since no society exists in isolation, the relevance of demonstrating these relations stems from the fact that the history of any group of people would be incomplete without an in-depth study of the inter-relationship between the group in question and their immediate neighbours. In the Nigerian context, such studies help to feature the underlying things that unite people that eventually make up the Nigerian state, and thus, interrogate the notion of Nigeria being an artificial creation of British colonialism. Apart from enhancing a national consciousness, this throws light on present relations, projects, and likely future trends (Onuoha (2011).

Early sources on Igbo traditional culture did not regard the Igbo as a monolithic group until the second decade of the 20th century (Buchanan and Pugh 1962; Green 1947; Forde and Jones 1950; Ottenberg 1965; Ottenberg 1959). Prior to this time, the boundaries of the Igbo areas were yet to be clearly defined, and the notion that all the groups in the area spoke the same language and shared certain cultural elements did nothing to persuade the inhabitants of the area to regard themselves as one group. They comprised more than 200-segmented groups which functioned as distinct societies and were organised and based on patrilineal clans or lineages consisting of 30 villages or local communities bounded together by a common language, customs and beliefs (Anber 1967, p. 169). The monolithic kingdoms, hierarchical administrative systems and centralised political structures that existed in the Hausa Emirates of Northern Nigeria and the Yoruba constitutional monarchies of Western Nigeria were not prevalent in most Igbo societies.

The bulk of the literature in history and social anthropology describe pre-colonial Igbo society as 'stateless', 'acephalous', 'segmentary' and 'individualistic, comprising autonomous villages and village groups ruled by dispersed authority void of formalized, permanent or hereditary leadership positions (Meek 1937; Green 1947; Uchendu 1965). As Lord Hailey (1951, p. 155, cited in Anber 1967) observed, hence, 'the large Igbo community presents perhaps the most outstanding structure in which it is difficult to find any definite seat of executive authority, a characteristic which it has retained up to this day'. It is pertinent to state that since existing Igbo traditions of origin remain contested until date, this exercise takes a description of pre-colonial Igbo communities existing at the advent of colonialism as a starting point in studying Igbo identity and value systems.

Another important incidence that happens in the Igbo history is the Biafra war. I did not witness the Nigerian Civil war (1968-1970), because I was not born by that time, but I have read a lot about it in addition to listening to eye witness accounts from those who were there and even fought on different sides. The Igbo people lost almost everything during the war. They abandoned their businesses and properties outside Igbo land and moved home for safety reasons, as they became easy targets for mischief-makers. These assets were mostly forfeited, confiscated or hijacked. This was the era when the term "Abandoned Property" became popular and real.

After the war, they were subjected to further financial and economic hardship, as their bank accounts were credited with a flat rate of 20 pounds irrespective of the volume of Biafra pounds in those accounts, effectively rendering them penniless. This happened almost fifty years ago, as today the Igbo people have moved on with their lives conquering the Nigerian business environment and building large business empires for themselves. Everywhere in Nigeria today, you will find very successful Igbo businesspersons making the country proud in their various entrepreneurial pursuits. The pertinent question to ask is how did they do it, despite all the setback and challenges?

Conceptual Clarification

Values are standards of conduct, efficiency or worth that society endorses maintains and transmits to future generation (Schaefer, 2005). The value systems are linked to the education systems, whether formal or informal. However, the failure of the Nigerian education subsector is to a large extent caused by the subjectivity and relativity in which indigenous values are treated in the country. No society can achieve its target if its values are left at the mercy of an individual's situation, circumstance and time. The education that was offered to African children was well crafted with the purpose of making them forever inferior to whites in all socio-economic and political aspects (Schaefer, 2005). This resulted in a scenario of different African value systems, dominated by European value systems.

Value systems are embedded in people's culture. A closer look indicates that cultural values are not given its place in most African literature and this is due to neo-colonial influences on the writers of these books (*Things fall apart, Arrow of god and No longer at Ease*). Henslin (2008, p.48) considers values as "the standards by which people define what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad, beautiful or ugly." He explains that values are the bases that guide people's preferences, choices and show what is considered important. Schaefer (2005, p.67) regards cultural values as "these collective conceptions of what is considered good, desirable, and proper – or bad, undesirable, and improper – in a culture." Values are culture-related and dependent. Schaefer (2005) recognizes the existence of values in the context of culture. Although it is a conception held generally, yet, it is not uniformly shared.

Values influence the behaviour of people within a particular social environment. It serves as a condition or yardstick for assessing human behaviour. In all aspects of human endeavor, value dictates the choices humankind make and choice of influences the behavior of every person. As an Igbo man and a Nigerian citizen who believes in a global education system, the need for interrogation and orientation is therefore important especially as values have much implication on human conduct and actions. It is therefore important to evaluate the value system of the Igbo society as represented in selected Nigerian literature.

Value Systems

Values have been conceptualised by many scholars as "socially shared ideas about what is right or wrong" (Nwauzor, 2014, p. 103). Research further points to the concept of cultural values as a very difficult and debatable issue (Copeland, 2004; Vecco, 2010; Morrow, 2002; Kros, 2003 & Van Wijk, no date). The values of a society come from their cultural heritage. The clues on the origin of the concept of cultural heritage was attempted by Copeland (2004, p.19) who suggests that the word cultural heritage appears to come from a Greek root that meant "to adhere to" or "to hang on to". His view is that, since to hang on to something predicts choice about what is kept therefore the process of heritage is about choice and power. In the same light, studying the semantic evolution of the concept in European states and in France in particular, Vecco (2010) reveals how the concept has changed in an inclusive manner from referring to historic monuments in the 19th century to a more generalised usage towards the last decades of the 20th century comprising artistic works, buildings and archaeological remains as well as objects and environments (Perez, Lopez, and Listan, 2010). This means that value systems as a concept are contested whereas value systems should be the values of the (Igbo) nation/people. If it is for the people, everybody will identify themselves with it. This conceptual deficiency together with the other factors explained above serves as motivation for this study. It became important to understand the way value system, the fabric of every society is presented in these selected Nigerian literature to know how and why the value systems are represented.

This could mean that values are not peculiar to culture alone. They exist in subcultures and countercultures (Schaefer, 2005) when a value is in a subculture, it means it exist as a segment of society that shares as distinctive pattern of mores, folkways, and values that differ from the pattern of the larger society. In addition, it is a culture within the larger culture. For instance, in African fashion among the youth, there is a subculture that developed regarding shared styles which distinguish them from the larger society. Thus, Haralambos & Holborn (2004, p.801) remark that "youth cultures create their own distinctive style: for example, by choosing a style of dress and listening to a particular type of music." The wearing of hipsters with half cut tops is now prevalent among Igbo youth, hence, the a result of a Western influence on their culture, for example, the fixing of hair attachment on females in Africa. Therefore, Henslin (2008, p.51) adds that subcultures are "the values and related behaviours of a group that distinguish its members from the larger culture; a world within a world." It could be said that subcultures provide a common identity to its members who share different values, different world views, and diverse interests.

However, there are other African cultural values which include the sacredness of life, good human relations, hospitality, honesty, friendliness, morality, time, the sacred and religion, respect for elders and authority and common language and proverbs. Relationship with one another was guided by these values. Rendering help to persons in need was encouraged without expecting any form of reward. Taking good care of visitors and strangers is a striking feature of African culture. It is expected that people should be hospitable to visitors and strangers alike, as no one knows the compound of his/her in-laws. It was alleged that in some African societies like the ancient Tiv culture (an ethnic group in North central part of Nigeria), they showed affection to their male visitors by asking their wives to keep them warm at night. This aspect of the culture has been jettisoned (Nwauzor, 2015). Thus, African society places premium on the mutual respect and regard for each other's life. It was also abominable to spill blood unless during the period of war.

There are certain things that are sacred to people in Igboland, for example, the land and certain deities were regarded as sacred. Libations and prayers were made to them for human protection and property, long life, favorable weather conditions, peace, prosperity and a bountiful harvest. Some of these values have been mediated by change in contemporary African societies. This is an acknowledgement that change is constant and sometime results in resistance and Nwauzor (2015) concurs and adds that every aspect of the Igbo value system has been virtually affected by change.

Theoretical Framework and Orientations

According to Omirin and Falola (2011), a theoretical framework in a research study is a structure that guides the research by relying on an existing formal theory. In other words, a theoretical framework is an attempt to develop a general explanation for some phenomenon using an existing pattern of belief. In theorizing this research, the representations of Igbo values are examined based on some chapters of the three-selected novels. Having shown in the literature review how in the pre-colonial era, Igbo values perpetuated patriarchy, biases, prejudice, stereotypes, exclusions, and marginalization in some texts, this attempt to counter and address the imbalances and hidden agendas could be created by the author knowingly or unknowingly, in respect to Igbo values.

The whole idea of interrogating the representation of the Igbo values system in these selected novels was born out of the curiosity to find out to what extend was a fair judgment and balance that existed in the selected Nigerian novels on Igbo values. These pertinent question of how Igbo values were represented resonate with a critical, cultural and post-colonial perspective when discussing the way the Igbo value system were portrayed in the novels.

Critical Theory: Background and Objectives Briefs

According to Edgar and Sedgwick (2008) a 'critical theory' is something of an umbrella term, and has come to be associated in the Anglo-American academic world with a brand of textual analysis which has taken root predominantly in university English literature departments. The term itself, however, was first linked to the work of the Frankfurt School (example, Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin and Marcuse). In the hands of these thinkers, critical theory was envisaged as a rigorous critical engagement with social and philosophical issues which aimed at the cross fertilisation of research methods derived from the social sciences with a Marxist theoretical framework for conceptualising social relations. It is glaring that Karl Marx's theory where he opined that the proletariat (working-class) will later revolt and overthrow the bourgeoisies is more of a theory than a practical. It is utopia, and it must continue to be, because there must always be some proletariats who are not ready to lose their lives, but instead, prefer to be managing the crumbs that fall from the table of the bourgeoisie.

Hence, since the 1980s, the term 'critical theory' has come to be associated with an approach to textual criticism which draws upon the writings of thinkers linked with structuralism, post-structuralism and postmodernism (for example, Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard). Critical theorists, supplemented by Karl Marx with Sigmund Freud and Jürgen Habermas (of the second generation) incorporated pragmatism and systems theory, wherein the emphasis has been on the dialectic of domination or oppression and emancipation or liberation, as critical theorists develop a praxis focused on emancipation.

Oliver (1995, p.107) and Walmsley (2003, p.188) purport that emancipatory theory is seen as taking the opposite view of the positivist paradigm which is accused of denying participants a voice to reveal their own situation. Moreover, critical thinkers believe that in order to attain the theoretical goals, satisfaction is not only drawn through emancipating oppressed individuals but it also consequently empowers and enables individuals to transform their lives and others' conditions. The emphasis is on people taking action to challenge any form of discrimination, inequality, domination, oppression, subordination or marginalisation.

Further noted is that critical theory has its roots in several traditions and influences, including Marx' analysis of socio-economic conditions and class structures (Parker, 1999, p.11); and Habermas's notions of technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge, and Freire's transformative and emancipatory education; critical race theory, critical gender studies, and critical management studies (Murphy & Fleming, 2009, p.37). Since critical theory is associated with the work of the Frankfurt school, drawing on the thoughts of Marx, this study is not an end in itself, but has the goal of interrogating or questioning existing claims (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2012, p.78, Merriam, 2009, p.36). For Merriam (2009, p.34), in critical social science, the goal is to critique and challenge, transform and empower minorities pushed to the margins of society. It can be said that critical research seeks not only to study and understand society (not what is going on), but also to critique (the way things are) and to bring about a more just society (a changed society). To elaborate further, examining critical theory also distinguishes between conventional approaches, justice and post-conventional justice, which focus on why problems initially exist.

These points posits that in critical qualitative research, power dynamics are at the centre of critical theory, with people sometimes accepting things the way they are, and thus, critical thinkers reject this behaviour and warn that in so doing, one might reinforce the current unequal distribution of power wherein power in combination with hegemonic social structures result in the marginalisation and oppression of those without power (Merriam, 2009), leading McLaren and Kincheloe (2007) to conclude that critical theory retains its ability to disrupt and challenge the status quo.

Therefore, in this study, the theory aims to interrogate the Igbo value system as represented in selected Nigerian literature, in recognition that individuals create their own reality, produce and reproduce their own existence in a communication-centred manner within varied contexts as critical theory allow individuals to act rationally to increase their autonomy. Hence, Finlayson (2005) states that a theory does not need to describe the world, but to change or transform it, being: practical, not just theoretical: that is, it should aim not just to bring about correct understanding, but to create social and political conditions more conducive to human flourishing than the present ones. The goal of the theory was not just to determine what was wrong with contemporary society at present, but, by identifying progressive aspects and tendencies within it, to help transform society.

The philosophical assumptions that form the basis of the critical theory which incorporate the concepts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Marx (Peca, 2000, p.10-11) specify that reality is both objective and subjective, based on the dichotomy between human consciousness and its created external reality; which means that reality is in a state of continuous change. Critical theorists believe that individuals are inseparable from what they know. This reality (concepts and how things are described) is interactively constructed and created by people through language, resulting in shared reality. In this sense, a critical theory acknowledges the existence of both objective and subjective knowledge (Giddens, 1977, p.140, as cited in Peca, 2000:4).

Critical theory assumes that value systems are created and shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender-based institutions that are taken to be natural or real. Hill (2010:8) explicates that critical theorists attempt to explain how culture is produced and reproduced, how individuals struggle with meanings which shape their socialization, and how power, or a lack of it, affects this production and reproduction of culture. Kant stressed the importance of space as a universal principle of human cognition, as highlighted in van Leeuwen (2008:88), and the link to social action to act out social practices. On the other hand, knowledge is attained through the interactive relationship between external reality and human consciousness, resulting in action which furthers the evolutionary process. Such viewpoints highlight and validate the employment of this culture of difference, the exception being solidarity among those who have been excluded. Critical theory articulates what we bring to literature, which presumably determines what we get out of it. This is not a chaos of subjectivity; instead, it (critical theory) tries to examine what types of questions we should pose about literary works.

These indeed were the standard and unarticulated assumptions about literature traditionally. Until well into the 20th century, much of literary study was based on the assumption that to understand a work you need to understand the author's social background, the author's life, ideas circulating during the time the author was writing, what other works influenced the creation of the one under examination, and so on. Most book introductions still offer this kind of material. Valuable literature, therefore, is that which tells us truths about the period which produced them. We are getting, according to this approach, a vision of human nature or the world in general as filtered through an author's individual insight and perceptions. One problem with this assumption is that it requires a crash course in matters falling outside the work itself. The reader presumably must rely on an expert's special knowledge before being able to "appreciate" the work, and this makes the study of literature rather elitist. Literature seen this way seems dismissed almost, or at least presented as simply a way of arriving at something anterior to itself: the convictions of the author or that author's experience as part of a specific society.

Therefore, Critical theorists' objectives are "to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices" (McLaren, 1999, p. 186). Furthermore, the use of the theories from a critical perspective will make it easier for me to interrogate and uncover the power relations at play in the Igbo society as portrayed in the literature which is in itself patriarchal and traditional.

The theories with critical foundation sees reality as fluid, multiple and non-essentialistic; it is also socially constructed by the political, social, cultural, economic and other dynamics/forces (Mahlomaholo, 2009 & Nieuwenhuis, 2007). For this reason, what can be known about this reality or the world is always subjective as it is dependent upon the social and positional influence of the advocates of that knowledge (Cohen *et al.,* 2007; Blanche and Durrham, 1999; Guba, 1990).

Foregrounding the Reader Response Theory

A text is written to be read and therefore the reader has a vital role in completing a text and giving it a new identity through the reading process he/she experiences. The reader has an active interaction with the written words which ultimately create the meaning. What is more, readers can be categorised depending on who defines them and the role they accept in the reading process which differs from one reader to another. At the same time, factors defining a reader vary regarding their exclusive role in completing a literary text. Abbey (2011) argues that, there are even some experts who wish to distinguish a literary critic from a reader; even though they are both readers, yet of different categories. Furthermore, each individual reader differs from any other reader regarding his background, knowledge, personality, insight; that is just to mention a few.

A reader plays a certainly exclusive part in giving a new meaning to a literary text and even from a totally new perspective; it has become clear that readers differ with each other in category and class. Unless a writer is writing in privacy; intending to keep a daily journal or just making rough drafts, he intends to attract readers to his piece of work which will gradually find an independent life of its own as it is read by diverse readers and besides each with a particular history, knowledge, manner, personality, mood, psyche, and even age as active players who will give a new turn and direction to the created text (Tyson, 2006). Such mentioned factors are somehow defined by time and easily change through time; so when a reader studies a literary work when he is very young, his perception and overall understanding of the same text definitely changes deeply if he reads it once again many years later. The reason for this is that years later, he has earned a new insight, bears a high experience, whether as an individual or as an expert reader now, and his background knowledge and even his present desires will affect his latest reading of the same work; a point of interest even for the reader once he discovers so many new and exciting codes within the unwritten lines of the story he is reading. Leitch (2001) argues that, this process seems to be quite complicated and intangible; as every individual experiences this process in a unique manner and in a very exclusive and certain atmosphere; considering his age, past experience, knowledge, style of reading, rate of his preciseness, his power for simultaneous analysis and interpretation, how he essentially communicates with the text, his ability or disability to read between the lines, his reading atmosphere, how he seeks his personal pleasure and satisfaction in the book he has and numerous other factors; including psychological aspects.

Jauss (2001) posits that, such a vague insight on the reader, the reading process and what actually happens as he reads, gives the next generation of theorists and critics a good opportunity to discuss their own views openly on one hand, while it makes it hard for us to realise how to analyse and study. However, this not well-known process on the other hand, constantly has serious questions about the readers and the reading process.

For evaluating a literary text, a text could be either acclaimed or disliked in a specific time period; Jauss apparently expresses that there is no fixed meaning for a text and there are a high variety of opinions available throughout time regarding a certain text (Jauss, 2001). Jauss further explains that, there is no such thing as a fixed meaning for a text; as readers attribute different opinions through time and actually the reader shows how his/her ideas bear a historical dimension; an issue which has led to a lot of debates and controversies among authors.

Therefore, it can precisely be said that, each reader differs from all other readers in many ways and no one can ever claim that even two readers with similar literary background, life experience, knowledge and psyche, for instance will experience identical reading processes. There will constantly be subtle, undeniable and complex differences in each individual reader. Although this is a fact; so far no literary figure, author, reader, writer, critic or even theorist has focused on it in order to distinguish readers at least into some categories with some detailed sets of definitions for paying respect to them.

Whatever the case, the reader too, as a human being, seeks his own likes, desires, dreams and satisfactions at least in the text he is reading, and actually he might resort to a literary text as his sole resource for personal satisfaction; a tool which no one can take away from him while he secretly fulfils his personal needs in private and mere silence (Tyson, 2006). Readers who have discovered this exclusive feature in literature and have gained this secret discovery always take shelter in books for avoiding many life facts which might be irritating and exhausting for them. So each individual reader has the power to read, decode, attribute meaning, interpret, internalise his own experiences and past knowledge, for instance, on the text he is dealing with and while his personal discoveries and explorations in any given text could be possibly amazing and interesting, another reader might find them quite odd and unusual and even accuse that reader of some psychiatric or mental problems.

Therefore, the choice of the reader response theory in recording and analysing my views was done conscientiously. The patriarchal orientation observable in the literary texts under study needed independent views from my observations. Below is a discussion of the different approaches to reader response theory.

This theory helped me to investigate how and why the Igbo values system and beliefs of are being represented in the Nigerian literatures and to understand how the values of a dominant group and a sub-ordinate group are represented. In addition, to determine whether "culture, language, traditions and right to self-determination" have or have not been replaced or mixed with the hegemony of the west.

Why Reader Response Theory

The reader response theory allows readers to interpret the text in various ways. The study aimed at interrogating the representations of the Igbo value system in the three-selected Nigerian literature. The patrilineal nature of this work gives a power to construct knowledge. Therefore, the transactional reader response theory allowed one to bring their personality traits, memories of the past and present experience to the text, as a result constructing their own meaning from the texts. Here there was no focus on the intended meanings by the authors but the theory allowed for a look past the words of the text and search for deeper meanings. This enabled a way to connect with the texts on a more personal level. As a result, it allowed for different perspectives of others while reading. Reader response criticism focuses on the importance of the reader and allows them their individual response to the text, hence the importance of the transactional reader response theory.

Despite its outstanding strengths, the reader response theory forces the readers to bring their personal interpretations to the text rather than examining the meaning that the other created. Therefore, the reader brings and creates a narrow connection to the text, rather than looking at different perspectives. However, its weaknesses do not render it useless, for this study focused on its strengths. The reader response theory analyses texts in a more critical gender perspective, hence its importance to this study.

The Critical/Emancipatory Paradigm

A paradigm in its generic sense could be defined as a basic set of beliefs that guides action in a disciplined inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Guba, 1990). Furthermore, Guba (1990, p.18) clarifies that paradigms are "starting 'points' or 'givens' that determine what inquiry is and how it is to be practiced. The critical researchers do not believe that it is possible to be an objective outsider. No research is neutral and it is not possible for the researcher to take an objective or neutral stance/position in the process of research because everyone has their own values which influence the way they understand the world. Therefore, as a researcher guided by the critical paradigm, indulged in the inquiry with a subjective stance having gender values who is also part of what is being researched in the books. Critical researchers aim at unpacking the structural, historical and political aspects of reality in order to lead change of an emancipatory nature. In other words, they set out to critique and transform.

Kincheloe and McLaren (1994, p. 140) describe the critical paradigm as a worldview which recognizes that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted and that facts can never be isolated from some form of ideological inscription and that certain groups in any society are privileged over others and research should lead to the emancipation of such individuals. And Cohen *et.al,* (2011) adds that the critical paradigm search for ways in which oppression constrains action, choice, and knowledge in the quest for emancipation of the disempowered and transformation of reality. It identifies what has brought the individual or group of individuals to the state of powerlessness or power and aims at uncovering the interest at work in particular situations and should lead to change. By implication to this study, my effort as a critical researcher will be to understand the value systems and cultural heritage outcome in these selected Nigerian literature and to expose in the process how factors such as ideology and power play a role in the kind of heritage that is represented in the selected Nigerian literatures. The critical paradigm therefore has given me a direction of how to carry out my study in terms of the methodology and methods, what type of knowledge I have produced and my role as a researcher.

Representing Achievement as an Igbo Value

Achievement stands tall as the important values among the Igbo people. Every Igbo person is measured by his achievement. In representing this fact about the Igbo people, Chinua Achebe used the character of Okonkwo to buttress the fact. According to Basu (2003, p.180), the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart* is not Okonkwo but Umuofia, and the same can be said of Ezeulu in *Arrow of God,* whose main character is Umuaro instead. They are like the lizard in Achebe's proverb; if it loses its tail, soon grows another. Okonkwo and Ezeulu are tails of the lizards, Umuaro and Umuofia. Ker (2000, p.125) believes that Society wins over an individual in the Igbo society. Achebe makes use of metaphors, 'as slippery as a fish', to enhance the description of Okonkwo's character who is a self-made man with pride, arrogant, head-strong and self-confident. It is true that Igbo sayings, folktales, proverbs and metaphors speak more than mere dialogues. Achebe brings out these 'palm-oil' in his narration. Okonkwo was judged according to his personal worth, not compared to his father. The Igbo proverb, 'if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings', proves true for Okonkwo. The yam feast symbolizes the harvest and prosperity of the Ibo people. People who harvest more yams were wealthier. So Okonkwo's prosperity as a titled man of fame is seen in his "stacks of yams," sheds for goats and hens he kept in his compound. Even the growth of the young lad Ikemefuna is described as "He grew rapidly like a yam tendril in the rainy season, and was full of the sap of life". Achebe (1958, p.37) Okonkwo's father, Unoka was a man who was incapable of thinking about 'tomorrow'. He spent whatever came his way. He uses proverbs to explain what people have wasted in their lifetime. He said that whenever he saw a dead man's mouth, he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one's lifetime. It was believed that if a man paid respect to the great man he paves his way.

Similarly, Okonkwo visited Nwakibio, who was a wealthy man in the village and said, "as our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness." (p. 14). Achebe uses proverbs to bring out the native's belief in superstition and the normal cycle of life, for example, on dark nights, the fear of darkness and of evil spirits are enhanced through stories like 'a snake was never called by its name at night, because it would hear. Therefore one could say that Okonkwo being a proud man will not like to take his own life because he knows that suicide is a taboo in Igboland. One would have thought that Achebe could have transformed Okonkwo into a rebel lead in order to fight for injustice and what he perceived as usurp of his traditional role in the society. It is not among the Igbo Values to take their own life or even the lives of their neighbor rather they seek other means of solving their problems. The right thing for Okonkwo to do at that time after coming out of prison is not to commit suicide but to form rebellion against the colonist because killing himself will compound the problem for Umuofia.

Historically, Igbo people have not recorded a leader who has committed suicide as a way ultimate salvation. I think Achebe telling the story is an infusion of Greek mythology into his imagined character. During the Biafra war which the Igbo fought with Nigeria, there leader Emeka Ojukwu also did not choose suicide because it is alien and not part of the value system. He rather went into exile in order to come and fight another day because there is an Igbo proverb that say he who fight and run has run to fight another day. One would have taught where Chinua Achebe an Igbo man himself got the idea of suicide if not from western culture which he was challenging. This is what an interrogative analysis could do to make sense of what Achebe wrote in these stories. The interpretation of this novels will be done using the Igbo laws and culture. Igbo laws and traditions were the beacon of hope for an African people in the global mix up, otherwise Black people will lose all they have.

In this section, I will look at the chapters from *Arrow of god* which is relevant to the research questions. I will use the themes of authority, tradition and customs, religion, integrity and honour, respect and reputation. This themes are also appeared in the literature reviews and in the theoretical framework. The book is made of 19 chapters and the major characters are Ezeulu, Nwaka, T.K Winterbottom, Obika, Oduche, Edogo, Tony Clarke and Moses Unachukwu.

Arrow of God published in 1964, explores the intersections of Igbo tradition and European Christianity. Set in the village of Umuaro at the start of the twentieth century, the novel tells the story of Ezeulu, a Chief Priest of Ulu. Shocked by the power of British intervention in the area, he orders his son to learn the foreigners' secret. Desire for excessive power is the main theme of the novel. It is this desire which is the major flaw in Ezeulu's character that leads to his downfall. His refusal to accept the pleadings of his clan, and the insistence on having his own decision implemented even when he knew it was not the right one made him lose even the god's favor.
Arrow of God, thus, displays the simple, traditional life of the Igbo right from their household chores to their religious rituals and their strong tradition-bound society which witnessed a slow disintegration under the grip of the colonial power.

Authority as Igbo Value

Arrow of God filled with examples of rituals and tradition, festivals like the 'Week of Peace' and the 'Feast of the New Yam'; the worshipping of ancestral elders sometimes personified by tribal elders called the 'Egwugwu' and usually by the 'Agbala.'. Besides the use of these tribal folk elements, Achebe also makes use of the art of storytelling to teach the people as well as to unravel the plot of the story.

Umuofia of *Things Fall Apart* and Umuaro of *Arrow of God* are both traditional societies, but they function in profoundly different ways. In Umuofia, there is no single individual with power to make decisions capable of affecting the whole community. Instead there is an invisible senate which makes the decisions, for instance, about war and peace. It is alluded to in the opening scenes where an outrage has been committed against a citizen of Umuaro by someone in Mbaino and the elders meet to discuss the matter. But instead of an open discussion by the elders, we read that 'Ogbuefi Ezeugo was a powerful orator and was always chosen to speak on such occasions' (*Things Fall Apart (3)*). We do not see who has chosen him to speak, since the narrator's passive form seems to connive at the implied rule of silence over the identity and constitution of this senate. But Ogbuefi Ezeugo's speech shows that the matter had been discussed elsewhere and a decision made as to what to do. His task is to guide the congress of elders to accept and take responsibility for this decision. A select senate of men of high title does make an appearance in *Arrow of God*, who have the privilege of being called 'Umuaro' (208), the rareness of this event suggesting that Umuaro has reached the very end of things. Here however they seem to carry no more than a moral authority which can be set aside as circumstances may demand. The forum of political decisions is the congress of elders which, however, is polarized and fractious. In this power vacuum, some of Ezeulu's choices and decisions on issues of public interest, though made for private and personal reasons, are having far-reaching consequences for the entire clan. The essential role of his deity in the founding and continuation of the town may have something to do with this.

In this novel I am also going to use the themes that emerge from it to analyses the way Igbo values were represented or misrepresented. There is themes or colonialism, Competition, identity, culture, corruption, hypocrisy, morality, and education.

The Ills of Colonialism

Colonialism is a theme that seems to appear in the three novel but it was more underlined and highlighted in this third novel because it treated the main character Obi Okonkwo who was directly involved with the western education as a student in London. He was also charged to court which was control by whites' judge who thinks that they are better than African people.

This place, Achebe try to use the same brush to paint all Igbo as lovers of money or corrupt. This does not represent the hardworking Igbo youths who toils day and night in the streets of London, New York and Beijing just to make a living. Many Igbo today are known to be prudent with their finance unlike the character of Obi Okonkwo.

'Why do you want a job in the Civil Service? So that you can take bribes?' he asked.

Obi hesitated. His first impulse was to say it was an idiotic question. He said instead: 'I don't know how you expect me to answer that question. Even if my reason is to take bribes, you don't expect me to admit it before this board. So I don't think it's a very useful question.'

'It's not for you to decide what questions are useful, Mr. Okonkwo,' said the Chairman, trying unsuccessfully to look severe. 'Anyhow, you'll be hearing from us in due course. Good morning.'

Joseph was not very happy when Obi told him the story of the interview. His opinion was that a man in need of a job could not afford to be angry.

'Nonsense!' said Obi. 'That's what I call colonial mentality.'

'Call it what you like,' said Joseph in Ibo. 'You know more book than I, but I am older and wiser. And I can tell you that a man does not challenge his chi to a wrestling match.'

Even though the subject of colonialism is not specifically dealt with in this novel, it is still pervasive and significant. The events of the novel take place in the last days of the British reign in Nigeria and reveal the tensions present between European and African society, politics, religion, and character. Achebe has very strong views on colonialism, quite obviously, and expresses them in the novel through his condemnation of whites as either grotesque, cruel, ignorant, or immoral, as well as his depiction of the negative impact white culture has on Nigerians (such as Obi). The Nigerians are clearly superior to their colonizers in their values and social mores and norms, but they still must navigate the waters of being second-class citizens in their own country. Every choice makes or has made for him is a product of colonialism.

But the tension between colonizer/colonized, European and African, and past/future is introduced by the conversation at Obi's reception. There is also a divide between the Christians, like Obi's father Isaac, and those who adhere to traditional African religion. The men discuss "greatness", with one of the older men comparing Obi to his grandfather (a comparison that does not stand, unfortunately), and commenting, "Today greatness has changed its tune…Greatness is now in the things of the white man. And so we too have changed our tune" (62). It is an ambivalent statement, as Odogwu clearly acknowledges the changes brought about by the white man and his acceptance that the younger generation of Nigerians will need to be a part of the white man's world, but that that does not mean they will be great like their ancestors. These are prescient words, as Obi turns out to not be "great" at all.

> Needless to say, this address was repeatedly interrupted by cheers and the clapping of hands. What a sharp young man their secretary was, all said. He deserved to go to England himself. He wrote the kind of English they admired if not understood: the kind that filled the mouth, like the proverbial dry meat. 27
>
> Obi's English, on the other hand, was most unimpressive. He spoke 'is' and 'was'. He told them about the value of education. 'Education for service, not for white-collar jobs and comfortable salaries. With our great country on the threshold of independence, we need men who are prepared to serve her well and truly.'
> When he sat down the audience clapped from politeness. Mistake Number Two.

Findings of Data in Three Selected Novels

A holistic appraisal of the findings from the three novels reveals the centrality of the stories in the Igbo culture and values. Given that majority of Nigerians writers of Achebe's time grow up under colonial rule. This has influenced their writing in such a way that it shaped their thoughts towards how to fight the effects of colonisation. The language of the writer shows the usage of more proverb in conversation because this is another way of fighting off colonial influence on writing and at that time further justifies the fact that the Nigerian cultures and languages are rich in profound meanings – which are sourced from deep thought and scientific observation. In simple terms, most proverbs are philosophical in nature because they engage our mental faculty to examine and appreciate what exists, but that we hardly take note of.

This study which are situated within the framework of critical and reader's response theories constitute the average as the story and the language used clearly show. It is thus basic in Nigerian cultures to make references to physical objects implicitly or explicitly as a way of further "affecting or effecting desirable action" (Lawal et al, 1997, p.650).

In Nigeria, not just "among the Igbo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (Achebe, 1975, p.5). As a result of this sheer fact, Nigerian authors like Achebe focused here, find it desirable and unavoidable to deploy the highly rated proverbs to the articulation of their thematic concerns. The richness of the Nigerian languages and the discourse erudition of elders (who use proverbs most) are not diminished by the fact that the authors write in English. The Nigerianness of the expressions cast in English makes their works appealing, culturally-oriented and traditionally invaluable. Various types of proverbs serve the function of clarification, explanation, instruction, persuasion, moral lesson and emphasis in their use as foregrounded above, with their intellectual, emotional and imaginative undertones.

Factors Influencing Author's Style

The study suggests that there was no single factor that solely influenced the writer to write in the particular manner. The attitudes of African writers in the time these novels were written were found to be influenced by several factors, though some factors were more prominent than others. Conscientisation was found to be the most influential factor that influenced the writer. However, other factors like patriarchy, education, socialisation, religion and generational cohorts were also found to be influencing their views. The gender of the writer was found to be influencing his writing in very isolated cases. However, most research done in Africa south of the Sahara, for example, studies by Morojele (2007) and Maphaha (1996) among many others found that, an individual's attitude towards the opposite sex was influenced by his/her own gender. On the contrary, this suggests that, the influence of gender on writers' style was insignificant.

Factors like socialisation and patriarchy which were found here to be influencing writer's way of representing Igbo values. These are similar to Morojele (2009), Maphaha (1996) Kambarami (2006) and Chitando's (2011) findings. Furthermore, Morojele's study also revealed that the representations of Igbo value were influenced by religion which also manifested in this study.

The study was viewed from a critical perspective; therefore, found that writer was much aware of the negative impact patriarchy has on both men and women, but, especially on women. The writer sometimes also advocated for equality of both men and women and also advocated.

Therefore, from the findings summarised above, the following conclusions were made from the study.

The decoded meanings from the literary texts by Achebe reflect that their gender has nothing to do with his attitudes towards feminist literature in general and feminist literary texts in particular. The views reflect that the representations of Igbo values were influenced by their conscientisation, patriarchy, socialisation, education, religion and generational cohorts. Lastly, consciousnesses of oppressive patriarchal systems are evident among the participants' interpretations of post-colonial writings. This became evident in the emancipatory gender shifts indicated in my views of the three texts.

Contribution to New Knowledge

This presentation aimed to undertake an interrogatory role to argue and establish the way and reason why Igbo value system was represented in the works of Chinua Achebe. This is with the aim of proposing for more inclusion of African stories in our curriculum. It was through this way that our children will reclaim their community as leaders. The research process will help African children to reshape their thoughts and value African voices in the curriculum. In this way, I hope I contributed to this awareness. Most of all, I have contributed to their professional growth as well because they were able to discuss cultural issues in a critical manner during the course of the research process.

Moreover, the study is unique in an interrogatory role of and establish the way and the reason why Igbo value system was represented in the literary texts. Most studies that dealt with African writers or Nigerian authors literary texts concentrated on analysing the content of the texts using the library as their source of information. This study has gone a step further to gather data from the books and novels by directly engaged with these texts. Not only that but also, it was viewed from a critical and reader response theoretical lens, and adopted a transactional reader response theory to analyse the texts, therefore adopting a reader response lens, hence, its uniqueness.

The work herein has intensified a critical consciousness of hidden oppressive and unfair gender practices in a patriarchal society by using literary texts as tools for creating consciousness in our communities. Through engagement with critical, post-colonial theories and reader response literary texts, the study exposed a deeper understanding of, how gender constructions prevalent in a patriarchal society are oppressive to women. This has created a platform of discussion through individual interviews, focus groups and informal conversations, through which the study developed a deepened alertness in readers of gender inequality, discriminations and the critical need for gender equality, hence the advocacy for more African literary texts in the curriculum.

The interpretation of the literary texts during the data gathering process, heightened their awareness on the importance of literary texts in addressing critical gender issues. As a result, I advocated for a fair significant representation of literary texts in curriculum by adding more African writings.

Therefore, it is hoped that this paper is a convincing argument for the change of the status quo in the perception of Igbo values not at the selected works of Achebe only but also at other works written by African authors.

The study contributes significantly towards creating consciousness of the consequences of eroded values which could result to gender inequality and injustice in society as it has been hidden in the literary texts under study. Some of my analysis has interpretations that are critical of such hidden injustices as evidenced from the interpretations made from the texts. Cohen et al. (2011) argue that the critical paradigm allows critical analysis on experiences which require a change. This study's relevance is lodged in its future potential to conscientise to critically look at family values particularly African value systems in general and Igbo values in particular that is gender sensitive in all faculties at the Igbo society. This can be done by educators and parents because their sphere of influence of transformation is broad (Rutoro et al., 2013).

Guidelines for the Critical Theory and Readers' Response Theory

From the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn, and recommendations for the adoption of critical theory, the reader response theory at university level is an enabling strategy for social transformation. The reader response theory gives individuals the capacity to express their views because participants construct meaning in relation to the text (Tyson, 2006). The reader response theory considers readers' reactions to literature as vital to interpreting the meaning of the text and lends credence to Roland Barthes' famous aphorism that the death of the author has resulted in the birth of the reader. As a result, the reader gives meaning to the written text by bringing his/her own beliefs, experiences and knowledge and when the reader interacts with the texts, he/she will be creating meaning. Consequently, this exercise had the leverage to create meanings as they engaged with the literary texts. This enabled a meto express of views, on the way they felt about critical and post-colonial ideologies ideologies observable in the literary texts they were engaged with.

The critical theory used together with the reader response theory helped to comprehend the texts from a historical and cultural viewpoint. The socio-cultural contexts are important when interpreting and understanding a literary text, because gender issues are included throughout history. Patriarchal principles may never be completely eliminated from our society, but students with more knowledge about the historical information of literary texts, may be able to develop a greater appreciation towards gender issues when interpreting these texts.

These texts mirror the values of society and culture, sometimes reinforcing and at times disputing gender stereotypes. It shows how values and beliefs determine how they interpret these texts and alert them to possible biases. Through the critical and reader response theories, I can discuss and dismiss stereotypes and social prejudices which appear in male-authored texts by exploring multiple interpretations heightened by the reader response theory.

Throughout the study, attempts were made to understand the representations of Igbo values in selected, experiences, and meanings they deduced from the literary texts they were engaged with. The different responses they made from the literary texts were accepted as they were. This is the strength of this work because the actual voices of the researcher were presented in this study. Furthermore, the critical paradigm and some pertinent aspects of the critical paradigm which were embedded, added strength to this study. The study was critical in the sense that, it aimed at changing the status quo in the values of Igbo society by conscientising writers on the need for adding more neutral literary texts. These texts are important in that they address gender issues that are topical, globally. However, a theoretical limitation of the study was a tendency to discuss gender in terms of its biological male and female only, any other gender constructs were not considered in this study. However, this does not weaken the argument of the study as the main focus was on the researcher's attitude.

Recommendations

If we can learn to be bold enough to restore reclaim the value of truth in our society, then we will have justice because without truth we cannot get justice. These three literary texts deal with topical and contemporary issues, so these texts should not be studied for literature's sake at the educational level but should be studied to initiate change in people's mind sets. Anyone who study these texts are capable of changing the future of the girl-child and women, and this can be initiated from the communities because our communities are a microcosm of mainstream society. Therefore, I would like to urge lecturers to apply what is read in the texts to real life situations by adopting the reader response theory in the interpretation of texts. The reader response theory gives the reader a platform to discuss social issues in detail. It is with due consideration then, that I encourage all African people to initiate change in society through their cultural education by engaging them seriously with these African texts.

As a cultural activist, I advocate community leaders facilitate seminars addressing the impact of patriarchy on men and women at their various communities, as is presented in these literary texts. All faculties could be invited and literature be given the platform to become the tool of change. Male and female can be given equal opportunities in our communities as our indigenous stories have portrayed. This can help to create awareness of both males and females on how patriarchal ideologies imprison them. This awareness would therefore be created not only in Nigerian literature but also in all other African literature; as a result, these readers can be agents of social change in society.

Finally, data have revealed that I advocate for more African literary texts in our curriculum. This indicates that African voices are not well represented in our curriculum. This might also be the situation in other ethnicities in Nigeria and Africa. African writings by authors like Achebe, Ngozi Chimamanda, Andreas Neshani and Tsitsi Vera, amongst many others. These African authors discuss gender issues in a manner that compel society to change their attitudes towards women.

The alternatives these female authors give in their texts are indications that they advocate for social justice. By including such texts in the curriculum, lecturers will also be advocating for social justice in different societal groups in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This work discussed the research findings, made recommendations to community leaders, recommendations for further study, and contributions to the body of knowledge and strengths and weaknesses of the study. Furthermore, the study made suggestions to community leaders, politicians and policy makers that can be incorporated in cultural stories in the education curriculum. And finally, this study illuminated a means on how to liberate African family values from Western media attacks.

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