

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Literature is the recreation of life of a society in both its traditional and contemporary forms. Ogunde (1991: 1) opines that “the mainstream of African writing to date derives ultimately from definite historical events or social conditions.” According to Ogunde (1991: 1) “every literary work is a response to definite historical, socio-political, cultural, religious and traditional situations.” The Igbo writer as a member of Igbo society depicts Igbo life and socio-cultural conditions of men and women in Igbo society. Nsolibe (2008: 49) shows that “Igbo literature transmits information about social reality, human nature, the states of consciousness of the writers, and their personal visions of life or information about values and practices relevant for everyday life of men and women in Igbo community.” Consequently, the Igbo novel is another medium through which we learn about gendered lives in Igbo society.

Gender is a topical issue, especially as it concerns the socio-cultural position of men and women in society. Many scholars have argued that the perception of men and women in society affects the way they are portrayed in creative writing (Chukwukere, 2000; Kolmar and Bartkowki, 2000; Cornwall, 2005; Sudarkasa, 2005; Akorede, 2011). The roles of male and female in African society were often described as separate and complementary, yet most writers ascribe to men a better position and a higher status (Sudarkasa, 2005). Consequently, the roles of females are considered insignificant to those of males because of the greater ‘power and status’ accorded to males more than females in most societies (Lips, 1997). According to Lips (1997) if women and men are

accorded equal status in society, many of the differences in behaviour that are attributed to gender would disappear.

In a typical Igbo society, there are socio-cultural roles ascribed to men, women, boys and girls in the family. The chores such as hewing of wood, tapping of wine, harvesting of palm fruits, cultivation of yam and bread-winning are exclusive male roles. Conversely, chores like cooking, washing, baby-sitting, sweeping and other home management activities are exclusive female roles. However, some roles are unisex. Such roles include fetching of water, laundering, petty trading, crafts and running errands. The roles assigned to men and women as enumerated above encouraged gender discriminatory practices between the male and female gender. This is evident in the roles performed by males as family heads (those who have authority over everything, especially over women as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters) and the females' roles as wives, cooks, and mothers (Onuegbu, 2004). The power and control men have over women force women to maintain the maternal position assigned to their biology (Lips, 1997).

The cultural roles assigned to male and female contribute to the behavioural patterns they exhibit in the Igbo society. Men, as household authorities and family heads, display superior, possessive, aggressive, and rational behaviour, while women, as wives and mothers, display emotional, caring and submissive behaviour (Dorenkamp, McClymer, Moynihan, & Vadum, 1985; Crawford and Unger 2004; Ikonne 2008). Most men and women in traditional Igbo society freely, happily and strictly accept their positions because they see their roles as natural and ordained. In view of this, mothers socialise their daughters to take up their roles and teach them to be passive, docile, submissive and domestic whereas sons identify with

their fathers roles to achieve their manhood and the power that goes with it. As such the boys take on aggressiveness and other symbols of male identity (Garrett, 1987). The trend is transferred from one generation to the next. The women in Igbo traditional society could not challenge the cultural limitations which they experience in different forms, especially in the family, society, economy, polity and literature. Even when some women perform roles traditionally ascribed to men such as bread-winning, the women are still not recognised in Igbo society.

Consequently, gender-based description is unbalanced against the female. This development is of serious concern to many scholars, especially women, who observed through literature that the society is engaged in differentiating males from females (Hawthorn, 2005). The socio-cultural description of gender roles destines women for a social life entirely different from that of men. It encourages males to view their interests differently from females, and promote in men a sense of superiority over women. Some scholars such as Richardson and Taylor (1993) argue that the roles ascribed to each gender are vital to gender distinction in patriarchal societies such as the Igbo, because it conditions social behaviour from childhood into adulthood. According to them:

As totally dependent infants we are socialized - taught the rules, roles, and relationships of the social world we will inherit. We exchange our infant hedonism for love, protection, and the attention of others; in the process, we learn to think, act, and feel as we are "supposed to" (p. 41).

These societal orientations on gender roles are internalized in a way to define one's self and evaluate one's own behaviour. Through gender roles, females visualize themselves as a weaker being while the males portray themselves as strong and active. Consequently, gender identity is maintained in Igbo literature as in their society. The existence of sex-based

prejudices in Igbo society is, for instance, evident in their novels. This study aims to examine gender portrayal in selected early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels using the womanist African theory.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The premise of the study is the claim by the feminists that literature is sexist; a view equally supported by the womanists. The position of the feminists is that male writers, especially the early ones, present a lopsided view of gender, which is derogatory to the female gender. They believe that the positive or negative pattern of gender portrayal stems from the patriarchal ideology of viewing men as the norm and women as deviant. Dobie (2002: 94) asserts that the feminists agree that this “social structure is reflected in religion, philosophy, economics, education- all aspects of culture, including literature.” He further shows that leading thinkers from Aristotle to Darwin reiterated that “women were lesser beings” and this type of comment is expressed by writers, theologians, and other public figures that disparage and degrade women. According to Dobie, the Greek ecclesiast John Chrysostom (cited in Dobie, 2002: 98) called women “a foe to friendship, an inescapable punishment, a necessary evil,” and Ecclesiasticus (a book of the Apocrypha) states, “All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman”. The Roman theologian Tertullian (cited in Dobie, 2002: 98) lectured women: “The judgment of God upon your sex endures today; and with it inevitably endures your position of criminal at the bar of justice. You are the gate way to the devil.” Even the Book of Genesis blames Eve for the loss of paradise. To Dobie, revered writers of later ages have been equally ungenerous in their descriptions of the nature of women. Alexander Pope (cited in Dobie, 2002: 98) asserted, “Most women have no character at all,” and John

Keats (cited in Dobie, 2002: 98) explained, “The opinion I have of the generality of women- who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar plum than my time, forms a barrier against matrimony which I rejoice in.” These stereotypes about women’s personality abound in literature, including Igbo literature. The portrayal of gender, especially the female gender in literature is negative and this has been acknowledged by Kolawole (1997: 129), who contends that “most early African literary writers are men who logically present a world of male heroism and this trend continues because some male writers on the continent still maintain this attitude.” Chukwukere (2000: 122) strongly affirms that “it is striking that these stereotypes hardly present the male in a negative perspective as opposed to the female who is an available object and victim for the most ludicrous commentaries.” Udofot (2009) maintains that literary language ignores women and defines them as less significant than men and this out-right derogates the female gender. This negative presentation of women in literature is a result of the negative image of women in patriarchal society. Feminists believe that male writers demean women in their novels and portray them as a subordinate group and second sex. Consequently, the feminists seek to redress and rectify women’s image by creating an enhanced status for women. Feminists also argue that women’s writing about women will help to ameliorate sexism and the negative portrayal of women. Precisely, the problem is that women are not properly presented in male-authored works. However, since the emergence of female writers, it is evident that gender portrayal in Igbo works is presently asymmetrical. Consequently, the present study seeks to investigate how gender is portrayed in selected early and later male and female-authored Igbo novels. The study ascertains whether the early writers enhance one gender to the detriment of the other, or if

there is gender balance in their portrayal. The examination of how the later male and female writers in Igbo literature characterise gender in their novels will assist to infer whether the writers, especially the female writers, reconstruct negative portrayal of women in their novels or they still maintain the trend as the early male writers by portraying women negatively.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this study is to analyse gender portrayal in selected early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels. The specific objectives are to:

1. investigate the portrayal of gender in selected early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels;
2. evaluate the discrepancies between the selected early post-war male and female Igbo writers' portrayal of gender in their novels;
3. analyse the similarities between the selected later post-war male and female Igbo writers' portrayal of gender in their novels;
4. identify the ideology that informs the pattern of gender portrayal in the selected early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels; and
5. evaluate the evidence of gender reconstruction in the selected early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will contribute in resolving a raging controversy that female characters are portrayed negatively in male and female-authored texts and the suggestion therein will help to achieve gender balance in life and literature. This will guide Igbo

novelists, both male and female, on how to improve on the presentation of gender in their future novels. Additionally, the study will contribute to a clarion call for women worldwide to write through their experiences in order to redeem their images being distorted in males' texts.

This study will also encourage contemporary Igbo women to write and show through their female characters the reality of Igbo females in contemporary Igbo society, which will help to improve the way women are seen and treated in society. The study will contribute to the promotion of gender equity as a standard framework for the realisation of peaceful co-existence, workplace relations, international understanding and conflict resolutions. On the whole, the study will fill a gap for non-availability of a detailed womanist-based research work on the portrayal of the image of both male and female genders in both male and female-authored Igbo novels and, therefore, constitute a reference material for students, especially students of Igbo studies, for further scholarly work on gender and womanist theory.

1.4 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study is limited to identifying and comparing the way the early and later post-war male and female Igbo writers portray the male and female characters with reference to six Igbo novels written by both male and female Igbo authors. The male-authored Igbo novels are: Tagbo Nzeako's *Nkọlì* (1973), Tony Ubesie's *Isi Akawu Dara N'ala* (1973) and Innocent Nwadike's *Adaeze* (1998) whereas, the female-authored ones are: Ada Meniru's *Nwaeze* (1978), Julie Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom* (1983) and Nkeiru Kammelu's *Makuachukwu* (2006). The decision to select only one Igbo novel each for the later post-war male and female writers is to avoid repetition because their portrayals

have shown recurrent themes. The six early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels selected are based on the fact that they excellently portray the position of men and women in Igbo traditional and contemporary society. In effect, the novels will furnish us with the facts which necessitated the negative or positive portrayal of men and women in literature.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the comparison of gender portrayal in the selected male and female-authored texts in this study:

- i. How do early and later post-war male and female Igbo writers portray gender in their novels?
- ii. What are the discrepancies in the way the early post-war male and female Igbo writers portray gender in their novels?
- iii. What similarities exist in the later post-war male and female Igbo writers' depiction of gender in their novels?
- iv. What ideology informs the pattern of gender portrayal in the early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels?
- v. How do the early and later post-war male and female Igbo writers show evidence of gender reconstruction in their novels?

1.6 Operational Definition of Terms

The purpose of this section is to provide operational definitions for the key terms in the study. Operational definition refers to the meanings of the terms in the context of the

study. The key words in the study include **Sex, Gender, Sexism, Portrayal, Positive, Negative, Gender Stereotypes, Patriarchy, Ideology, Feminism, Womanism, Igbo Novel, and Early and Later Post-War Igbo Novels.**

1.6.1 Sex

Sex is a polysemous word. It, therefore, has the following related meanings:

- a. Either of the two main categories: male and female into which living organisms, including human beings, are classified on the basis of their reproductive functions,
- b. The fact of being male or female,
- c. Group members of either sex, and
- d. Sexual intercourse.

From the above observation, the meaning of sex in (a – c) shows that gender and sex are synonymous. However, if gender is broadly defined it can no longer be a synonym for sex. In this study, sex means the categorisation of human beings based on their reproductive functions or biology.

1.6.2 Gender

Gender refers to non-physiological aspects of being male or female, i.e. the socio-cultural expectations attached to men (masculinity) and women (femininity). In this study, gender refers to the socio-cultural roles and identities assigned to the male and female characters portrayed in the selected texts.

1.6.3 Sexism

Sexism is the denigration of women because of their sex. In this work, sexism means the situations the Igbo male and female writers use to discriminate women from men.

1.6.4 Portrayal

Portrayal is the description or characterisation of something or somebody in a work of art. In this study, portrayal refers to the positive or negative description of male and female characters in the selected early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels.

1.6.5 Positive

In the study, positive means the consideration of male and female characters as good and useful.

1.6.6 Negative

Negative means the derogatory terms used to qualify male and female characters irrespective of their importance in the family and society.

1.6.7 Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes is the stereotypic sex role descriptor for male and female genders. For instance, the male is associated with competency, instrumentality, and activity while the female is associated with warmth, expressiveness, and nurturance (Basow, 1992, p.4). In this study, Gender stereotypes mean the images/traits used to portray male and female characters in the texts.

1.6.8 Patriarchy

In this study, patriarchy means socio-cultural ideology which promotes male roles and relegates those of the female.

1.6.9 Ideology

Ideology, in this study, refers to the idea or socio-cultural belief system on which the writers based their portrayal of the male and female characters.

1.6.10 Feminism

Feminism is a movement or belief that women and men should have equal rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. In this study, Feminism means the belief that women should have equal rights and opportunities as men.

1.6.11 Womanism

In this study, Womanism refers to women (and men) who struggle for the peace and unity of their families irrespective of gender differences.

1.6.12 Igbo Novel

Igbo novel, here, refers to imaginative prose works written in Igbo language about the Igbo and by male and female Igbo writers. In this study, Igbo novels used are novels which reveal Igbo people's perception of gender.

1.6.13 Early and Later Post-War Igbo Novels

Early and later post-war Igbo literature referenced in this study are novels written after the Nigerian civil war. These novels represent two different post-war periods of the Igbo. The early post-war period represents novels written from 1973 to 1988 while later post-war ones are written from 1998 to 2007.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study will deploy the womanist theory as a theoretical tool in the analysis of gender portrayal in selected early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels.

1.7.1 Feminism: Definition and History

Feminism has different meanings depending on the school of thought concerned. Freedman (2001:1) defines Feminism as “concerns with women’s inferior position in society and the discriminations encountered by women because of their sex.” To Idyorough (2005: 14) Feminism is a belief that women are suffering from subjugation, domination, exploitation, oppression and deprivation in different aspects of life in contrast to men; and also a movement aimed at securing and defending equal rights and opportunities for women.” On the other hand, Hooks (2006: 41) sees “Feminism as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression.” The proponents of Feminism view patriarchy (chauvinism) as being the cause of real or perceived oppressive ideals against women. Hence, Feminism is indisputably an ideology that seeks to safeguard the interest of women in the society at large.

Feminism has different shades and ideologies based on the idea of equality. Freedman (2001) categorises it into first, second and third waves. According to Haslanger and Tuana (2008: 22), “Third Wave Feminists” including Black women often criticise Second Wave Feminism for its lack of attention to the differences among women due to race, ethnicity, class, nationality, religion, and emphasize ‘identity’ as the basis of gender struggle. Black women see second wave or contemporary Feminism as located only in United States and also as a prototype for women worldwide (Ajayi-Soyinka, 2005). Black women believe that the Feminist movement neglected their identities and experiences in their struggle for women’s liberation, and as a result, they consider the first-wave and second-wave feminist movements Eurocentric. The middle class white women universalized women’s oppression from their own experiences and life situations,

ignoring the effects of sexism, racism and classism which divide them and African women. According to Bell Hooks in Mobolanle (2008):

Feminism in the United States has never emerged from women who are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically and spiritually - women who are powerless to change their own condition in life. They are the silent majority (p. 17).

Feminism aims to eradicate female oppression from male domination. However, African women felt left out in the Western feminist agenda for women's emancipation. Consequently, Ogunyemi (1995 cited in Ajayi – Soyinka, 2005) contends that:

Since feminism is inevitably rooted in the democratic and economic systems of the West, which affect Africans adversely, the African women have no viable position in such an affiliation, except perhaps to change its orientation to achieve international equity through the women's movement (p. 67).

Black women challenged Feminism and criticized Western feminist for their lack of interest on the experiences of the black race. "Many black women denounced women's liberation as 'white female foolishness' and others reacted to white female racism by starting black feminist groups" (Hooks, 1981: 9) in order to articulate their racial and gender identities. Black women wish to use their movement to fight racial and sexual inequality in order to bring about a change in the predominantly white society. Opara (1990: 158) expresses that African woman "would rather identify more with African in the struggle for social and political freedom than with the middle-class white feminist who ignores the fact that racism and capitalism are concomitants of sexism". The disagreement among feminists concerning the nature of women's oppression and the ways to achieve equality for all women gave birth to different feminist theories.

According to Ikeokwu (2006: 52), “since the 1960s, Feminism has split again and again until it has become Feminisms, a set of groups, each with its own ideology, identity, and agenda”.

The contemporary feminist theory includes Liberal, Radical, Marxist, Socialist, Separatism, Lesbian Feminism, Revalorists, Multiracial Feminism, Power Feminism, Ecofeminism, Psychoanalytic Feminism, Standpoint Feminism, Feminism Studies of Men, Social Construction Feminism, Postmodern Feminism and Queer Theory, Womanist (woman of color), Cultural Feminism, and Third-Wave Feminism (Wood, 2003; Crawford and Unger, 2004; Lorber, 2010). These feminists differ in their ideology on what counts as justice or injustice for women (what counts as ‘equality,’ ‘oppression,’ ‘disadvantage,’ and what rights should everyone be accorded?), and what sorts of injustice women in fact suffer (what aspects of women’s current situation are harmful or unjust?) (Haslanger and Tuana, 2008, p. 24). Liberal Feminists, however, have different ideologies, from Marxist or Socialist, Radical, Womanist and so on, about the subjection of women.

Liberal, Marxist/Socialist and Radical Feminists’ ideologies center on Western women’s oppression ignoring African women. Western women viewed patriarchy and social structure as the main sources of their oppression. They reject domesticity and sexual oppression by men and decided, to take an equal responsibility in determining their future. The abolition of family life as solution to sexist oppression by radical feminists is not supported by African-American women who see racism as more oppressive than sexism. The white feminists practice racial discrimination towards the black people,

especially women, because when the white liberationists “refer to ‘women,’ they are referring solely to the experience of white women” (Hooks, 1981, p.8). Their belief is that “liberation from racial oppression would be all that is necessary for them to be free” (Hooks, 1981, p.1). However, the separation from the men, which the white feminists advocated in order to be free from patriarchal subjection is seen by African women as absurd because they “have fought with men (black men) and have died with men in every revolution” (Weathers, 2005, p. 222). Black women prefer to unite with their men to fight issues of race, class, and gender discrimination which white women see as insignificant in their movement. As a result, black women create their own ideology which is different from mainstream Feminism to portray their real life as African women. To achieve their motives, Alice Walker advocate ‘Womanism’ as an alternative.

Womanism, like Feminism, is taxonomic. Consequently, it encompasses Walker’s Womanism, Africana Womanism, African Womanism, Stiwanism, Motherism, Nego-Feminism, Femalism and Snail-Sense Feminism. Walker’s womanist ideology which is presented in *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983) addresses African cultural peculiarity. Walker’s Womanism, is based on the black folk expression of mothers to their female children “you acting womanish,” meaning “wanting to know more and in greater depth than is good for one... outrageous, audacious, courageous or wilful behaviour.” A Womanist is also “responsible, in charge, serious.” She is committed and Universalist by temperament. She loves men and women, sexually or non-sexually. She loves music, dance, the spirit, food and roundness, struggle, and she loves herself “Regardless.” Walker insists that a Womanist is also “committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. She is not a separatist, “except for health.”

A womanist is a black feminist or feminist of colour. Walker also emphasises that “womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.”

Walker’s views have elicited several responses from scholars. To Kolawole (1997: 21) Walker’s Womanism reciprocates Feminist struggle for gender equality, but vehemently opposes racial discrimination. Many African / American women in western society have appropriated it as a way of affirming themselves as ‘black’ while simultaneously owning their connection with Feminism and the Afro-American community, male and female. However, the concept of Womanism allows women to claim their roots in black history, religion and culture (Williams, 1989). This makes Womanism differ from Feminism in approach by advocating the integration of men into the struggle rather than separation which Radical Feminism propose (Iweriebor, 1998). Walker’s Womanism, therefore, is pacifist in approach and not combative like Feminism.

According to Williams, Womanism reflects more egalitarian relations between men and women, much less rigidity in male-female roles, and more respect for female intelligence and ingenuity than is found in bourgeois culture. The black women want togetherness and closer connection with men through love and shared struggle for survival and for productive quality of life (e.g. “wholeness”) in economics, religion, politics, and education. Walker’s ideology also emphasises sisterhood by informing women to love one another “Regardless.” Women’s love for one another will guide against negative divisions (class hierarchy) among women which can prohibit sisterhood and also avoid the self-destruction of bearing their burden alone but to connect with other women who are concerned about women’s rights and well-being. Walker also advocates against

women's competition for male attention instead women should appreciate and prefer their fellow women's culture and value their emotional flexibility and strength. Walker's definition of Womanism also suggests that no genuine community building is possible when women are excluded (except when women's health is at stake).

"African Womanism," to Nnaemeka (1998: 21), "is what white, middle-class feminism is not" which is union between the males and the females as a whole. The radical solution for the abolishment of family and the Marxist fallacy that they speak for all women caused many African women to be 'anti-feminists' and opt for Womanism. Patricia Hill Collins, (cited in Nnaemeka, 2010), remarks that many black women view feminism as a movement that, at best, is exclusively for women, and, at worst, dedicated to attacking or eliminating men. But Womanism seemingly supplies a way for black women to address gender-oppression without attacking black men.

Womanists' insistence on the unity between black men and women is the fact that African world-view is predominantly family-oriented (Kolawole, p.20). This view was affirmed by Buchi Emecheta (cited in Kolawole, 1997) who succinctly declares that:

I am a feminist with a small 'f', I love men and good men are the salt of the earth. But to tell me that we should abolish marriage like the capital 'F' (Feminist) women who say women should live together and all that, I say No, personally I'd like to see the ideal, happy marriage... (p. 11).

African women advocate peaceful marriages, not turbulent ones. To them the family grows out of harmonious marriages that bring about the unity of all people, men, women, children and the extended family, all which feminism lacks. Ama Ata Aidoo's view of

Feminism (cited in Kolawole, 1997) also touches on the centrality of the family in society:

Feminism. You know how we feel about that embarrassing western philosophy? The destroyer of homes. Imported mainly from America to ruin nice African homes (p. 11).

The failure of western feminists to recognize African women's specificity has caused many African women to embrace Womanism for their self-expression. They are more interested in a womanist ideology that will address the needs of African women. Walker's concept of Womanism "focuses on Black women's identity and commitment to gender issues" (Arndt, 2006: 37). From Walker's view that "Womanist is to feminism as purple is to Lavender," we can argue that feminism and Womanism are dissimilar because Womanism is seen as more broad and effective for Black Feminists than Feminism. Arndt maintains that Womanism as an aspect of Feminism "is concerned with overcoming not only sexist discrimination, but also discrimination based on people's racial or socio-economic identity" (p. 38). Black women welcome Womanism as a means to project their cultural identity as African women. They want to belong to a society where their impact will be felt and recognized like their white counterparts. So, separation from their men was not an issue because African women believe that their struggle cannot be won without the support of their men, notwithstanding that their men are patriarchal in orientation.

Walker's Womanism has also generated debates and controversies. According to Nnaemeka (2010), prominent among those who challenge the terminology's appropriateness for framing and explaining the lives of women of African descent is Clenora Hudson-Weems who proposes an alternative terminology, "Africana

Womanism.” Hudson-Weems argues that this ideology takes care of the needs and aspirations of African women on the continent and in the Diaspora. In her book, *Africana Womanist Literary Theory* (2004), she explains that:

[African Womanism] emerged from the acknowledgement of a longstanding authentic agenda for that group of women of African descent who needed only to be properly named and officially defined according to their own unique historical and cultural matrix, one that would reflect the co-existence of men and women in a concerted struggle for the survival of their entire family/ community (p. 1).

Thus, Africana Womanism, like Alice Walker’s Womanism, emphasizes the integration and unification of people of African descent, which makes it different from Feminism. The absence of black women’s experiences in Feminism prompted Hudson-Weems search for an African-centred paradigm for women of African descent. She realized through the African traditional women’s roles, characters, and activities that the phenomenon of Africana Womanism has long been in existence before the term ‘Africana Womanism’. She claims that her ideology will identify and redefine African women’s reality, who they are, what they do, and what they believe in as a people (p. 2). According to Nnaemeka (2010), Africana Womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African Culture and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of African women (Mogu, 1999).

The basis of Africana Womanism is on self-naming and self-defining because Hudson-Weems believes that “nothing is more important to a people’s existence than naming and defining self” Aldridbe (2004 cited in Hudson-Weems, p. xii). African women need to

reclaim and redefine themselves from the distorted image imposed on them by western writers, especially male writers. This is why Hudson-Weems calls on African women worldwide to use the terminology and concept of literary Africana Womanism, a term that evokes a new paradigm of prioritizing the tripartite plight of race, class and gender for all women of African descent, as a new tool for analysis, to reclaim, rename, and redefine themselves. Her ideology based on African family and black experiences has eighteen features by which Africana Womanism can be described. These include: self-namer, self-definer, family-centred, in contact with male in struggle, genuine in sisterhood, strong, whole, authentic, flexible role player, male compatible, respected, recognized, adaptable, respectful of elders, spiritual, ambitious, mothering and nurturing (p. xix - xx). She maintains that these key descriptors of Africana Womanism will be more plausible to use in rendering authentic African women within a cultural and literary context than feminism, a superimposed, inapplicable paradigm for black life and its women; and by extension Black Feminism, which does not work within black historical and cultural context. This aspect is where Hudson-Weems differentiates her ideology of Africana Womanism from Walker's Womanism.

Hudson-Weems contends further that Walker's Womanism shares a common ground with Feminism and Black Feminisms '...purple vs. lavender,' whose agenda does not express the triple plight of African women - race, class and gender - but focuses only on gender. She asserts that "when the Black Feminist buys the White terminology, she also buys its agenda" (p. 7). Concerning feminist agenda, Morrison argues that "the early image of Women's Liberation was of an elitist organization made up of upper-middle class women with the concern of that class and not paying much attention to the problem

of most black women” (Hudson-Weems, p.9). Hudson-Weems’ notion of ‘Womanism/ African Feminism’ is a duplicate of Feminism. She claimed that Africana Womanism which was coined in 1987 was a result of “the realization of the total inadequacy of Feminism and similar theories (e.g., Black feminism, African Womanism or Womanism) to grasp the reality of African women, let alone give us the means to change the reality” (p. 8). Unlike Walker’s, Africana Womanism is entirely different from feminism in that it was formulated mainly for the needs of women of African descent.

Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, the Nigerian scholar, in her book *Africa Wo-man Palava* (1996) developed another terminology, ‘African Womanism,’ which is similar to Walker’s ‘Womanism’; however, her concept is significant in its focus on content. She argues that:

Since feminism and African-American womanism overlook African peculiarities, there is a need to define African womanism. This is necessitated by African women’s inclusive, mother-centered ideology, with its focus on caring - familial, communal, national, and international. Not only is sexism a problem, other oppressive sites include totalitarianism, militarism, ethnicism, (post)colonialism, poverty, racism, and religious fundamentalism. They prevent us from a space of our own, in which to recuperate in order to join the international discourse from a position of strength. As such, these issues must be addressed, and ignoring them is problematic... (p. 113).

Ogunyemi’s ideology is more encompassing than Walker’s Womanism. She points out other challenges that befall women beyond sexism, which women themselves need to thrash out to have meaningful existence. According to her, African Womanism “believes in freedom and independence like feminism”, but the difference between feminism and the African Womanism is “what each sees of patriarchy and what each thinks can be

changed” (Arndt, p.39), which is why African Womanism has more components than feminism to encompass African women’s life and experiences. Ogunyemi believes that the idea of gender can be treated only in the context of other issues which are relevant to women. She goes beyond “Walker’s ‘race’ – class - gender approach” to list ten aspects relevant to the womanist agenda:

Global capitalism and consumption that impoverish the poor; the political economics of race; feminisms and other imperialisms – postcoloniality in cahoots (sic) with global sisterhood; interethnic skirmishes and cleaning; religious fundamentalism - African traditional religions, Islam; and Christianity; elitism, militarism, and feudalism; the language issue; gender constructions; gerontocracy; and in-lawish and other cultural constraints (Arndt, p. 40).

The above features are pivotal to African Womanism and Ogunyemi believes they should be deployed for the emancipation of African women to make them meaningful.

Ogundipe-Leslie (2007: 549) proposes “Stiwanism” for Feminism. (‘STIWA’ is an acronym for Social Transformations Including Women in Africa). She advocates this perspective to tackle imitation of Western Feminism by African women which African men are not comfortable with. African men believe that feminists oppose men and destroy family life. Therefore, they accuse their women who fight for their rights by emulating feminists. Thus, Ezeigbo (1998) aptly observes that: “in some people’s mind, Feminism conjures up visions of aggressive women who try to be like men, dress carelessly and abandon essential feminine attributes”.

[Consequently] the fear of being branded feminists with the possible adverse consequences this might attract in our essentially patriarchal society has compelled most Nigerian women to deny being feminists or having anything to do with the ideology of feminism (p. 1).

Further Ogundipe notes that “some women like Buchi Emecheta, say they are not feminists without saying why. Others like the Nigerian writer, Flora Nwapa, say that they are not feminists, but they are ‘womanists’ (p. 224). Ogundipe’s proposal is clearly a bold attempt to surmount many of the challenges and fears confronting African women and men respectively on the question of Feminism. She explains thus:

I have since advocated the word “Stiwanism,” instead of feminism, to bypass these concerns and to bypass the combative discourses that ensue whenever one raises the issue of feminism in Africa.... The word “feminism” itself seems to be a kind of red rag to the bull of African men. Some say the word by its very nature is hegemonic, or implicitly so. Others find the focus on women in themselves somehow threatening.... Some who are genuinely concerned with ameliorating women’s lives sometimes feel embarrassed to be described as “feminist,” unless they are particularly strong in character... (p. 229).

Further, she asserts that African women’s ideology must be different from Feminism to project African women’s social and family orientation. Her proposed STIWA includes African women in the contemporary social and political transformation of Africa. Her perspective is family-centred because to her:

All theoreticians of African liberation have failed to confront the issue of gender within the family or to confront the family as a site for social transformation. They will talk about changing society, mobilizing Africa, but not about the issue of the relationship of men and women; gender relations. With the modernization of Africa...there has to be a new reordering of society, particularly at the level of family, because of erosions and changes within the indigenous family patterns stemming from new developments which have to be interrogated (p. 210).

Indigenous African settings have gender roles strictly for men and women. These roles have undergone some changes in the modern society which must be accounted for. Women have taken responsibilities in the families traditionally ascribed to men; a new development Ogunjipe thinks will help women to achieve liberation. She believes in women participating alongside their men in the well-being of the family. By this, they will achieve independence and equality with men. Consequently, she warns that African women,

must cease to want to exploit men financially or to burden the men within the family while talking about equality. African women need to educate themselves about the rights and responsibilities...in a modern nation-state for the woman as an independent individual and not as a dependent. (p. 210)

Women taking responsibilities in their families will help in liberating them from the male-dominated social order. Ogunjipe's idea of equality with men is to encourage women to accept responsibility, especially financial responsibility alongside their men in the family. She believes that if women could do this, no African man will object to including women in the social transformation of Africa.

Acholonu (1995) proposes "Motherism" which "denotes motherhood, nature and nurture". According to her, "Motherism is a multidimensional theory, which involves the dynamics of ordering, reordering, creating structures, building and rebuilding in cooperation with mother nature at all levels of human endeavour" (pp. 110-111). Her perspective portrays motherhood as natural and as the center of African culture. She points out that a *Motherist* must be a humanist, a man or a woman who heals and protects the natural cohesive essence of the family, the child, the society and the environment.

Motherhood is the point of unity between women and men for the well-being of the family and its environs without which Motherism will be impossible. According to her,

A motherist could be a man or a woman; the essence of motherism is partnership, cooperation, tolerance, love, understanding, patience. The motherist is a builder, a healer, not a destroyer, but a co-creator with God, a lover of the child (p. 112).

The foregoing views highlight the fact that the ideology of African Feminism differs in thought and creed from its western counterpart. African women believe in practical motherhood which has existed in African culture before the imperialists disorientated the African way of life. African motherhood is not a separatist, man - heater, or devilish one. Rather, she is humble, obedient and above all, a lover of men and children. The complementarity of both sexes, especially as it concerns womanhood is rooted in African cosmology. This is where African Feminism is different from Western Feminism because it supports male and female complementarity to sustain human existence.

Obioma Nnaemeka (1995) espouses “Nego-feminism” in the sense of “Feminism of Negotiation”. It implies the necessity of challenging given facts by negotiating – a concept that is at the heart of Igbo and many other African cultures. She also adds a new dimension - “No ego feminism” – which is to be read as critical allusion to White Western Feminism’s arrogance, imperialism and power struggles. Ezeigbo (2015: 24) shows that Nnaemeka builds on the idea of “African women’s willingness and readiness to negotiate with and around men even in difficult circumstances” to formulate her theory of “Nego-feminism”. She disassociates her ideology from White Western Feminism and insists on self-naming to match the approach of the other alternative concepts to Feminism, which is Ogunyemi’s African womanism and Ogundipe-Leslie’s Stiwanism to

develop “Nego-feminism as an African concept. Nnaemeka describes Western Feminism as ‘Combative’ while its African opposite is prone to negotiation (Nego-feminism) and collaboration. Ezeigbo (2015: 24) also asserts that Nnaemeka advocates that “African feminist theory should be built on the indigenous”. Her clarion call, according to Ezeigbo, underscores and affirms the efforts of earlier theorists to provide indigenous theories for the interpretation and the criticism of the literature. Moreover, the notion of “Multi-perspectives, Multi-disciplinarity, and intersections of difference” are inscribed in “Nego-feminism”.

Ezeigbo (2012) reveals that Chioma Opara advocates “Femalism” as an alternative to feminism. According to Ezeigbo:

Femalism, a hue of African feminism, is a softer tone than liberal feminism and highly polarised from radical feminism. Unlike womanism which was made popular by Alice Walker and Africanised by Ogunyemi, femalism is essentially African and accentuates the body (p. 23).

Akachi Ezeigbo (2012) proposes the “Snail Sense Feminism/Womanism’ for African women. Ezeigbo’s snail-sense feminism is based on the result of her research on the Nigerian woman from the pre-colonial and colonial periods to the present. Ezeigbo examines the indigenous strategies women used and can still use to protect themselves and negotiate around the rugged terrain of patriarchy with its restrictions and subjugations. Women in African cultures – from different parts of Nigeria – often adopt a conciliatory or cooperative attitude towards men. This is akin to what the snail does with the environment in which it moves and exists. Her snail-sense theory is derived from the habit of snails which most Nigerian women adopt in their relationships with men. The snail crawls over boulders, rocks, thorns, crags and rough terrains smoothly and

efficiently with a well-lubricated tongue which is not damaged or destroyed by these harsh objects. The Igbo people say, “‘ire oma ka ejule ji aga n’ogwu” (The snail crawls over thorns with a fine and well-lubricated tongue). Moreover, the snail carries its house (shell) on its back without feeling the strain. It goes wherever it wishes in this manner and arrives at its destination intact. If danger looms, it withdraws into its shell and is safe. Ezeigbo shows that this snail-sense strategy is what women often use in our society to survive in Nigerian’s harsh patriarchal culture. It is this tendency to accommodate or tolerate the male and cooperate with men that informs her theory of “Snail-Sense Feminism”. She emphasizes that the snail may not be a strong creature physically and can be crushed easily; yet it does not hesitate to climb trees, mount fences, climb up and down rocks, thorny and spiky surfaces. It goes steadily forward. It does not *confront* objects but *negotiate* its way past any obstacle. Ezeigbo affirms that a woman cannot but behave like a snail in our patriarchal society. In her opinion, Ezeigbo confirms that the Nigerian woman adopts snail-sense strategy in her relationship with men, just as the woman of the past (the indigenous woman) did in her interactions with people in her community.

Snail-Sense Feminism differs from other theories because of its emphasis on the individual. The individual must empower herself before she can empower others. She must stand before she can help other people to stand. The pursuit of individual success and development is central to snail-sense feminism. The woman should not just accommodate others, but should ensure that she achieves recognition for herself because self-preservation and self-actualization, especially through education, are crucial to a woman’s success in life. And if she succeeds, the success of the family or the community

follows naturally as portrayed by the early post-war female Igbo writer, Onwuchekwa, and the later post-war female Igbo writer, Kammelu, in their novels, *Chinaagorom* and *Makwachukwu* respectively. Chinaagorom's education and financial independence helped her to support her husband, Chinedum, in the family and train Ajughiekwu's children up to university level. Makwachukwu's education and financial independence helped her to assist her husband, Chiziteerem, in feeding the family and training Nne Ezinwanne's children up to university level. Ezeigbo points out that snail-sense feminism, symbiotically, advocates Western feminism's individualism and African womanism's communalism. Ezeigbo maintains that snail-sense feminism, adopting this habit of a snail, focuses on the individual, but encourages respect and tolerance for the group, with a readiness to negotiate and cooperate with others. Indeed the strength of snail-sense feminism lies in its uniqueness in interrogating existing ideas about sisterhood, female bonding and group consciousness. In the end, it is the individual that constitutes the group. Ezeigbo also points out that *negotiation* or *dialogue* is sometimes more efficacious in achieving success in human relations than aggression or confrontation. The emphasis is on the ability of the snail to smoothen rough spaces to enable it to make its movement easy. In like manner, the Nigerian woman ought to be wise, sensitive and proactive in her quest for justice and self-actualisation. She further stresses that the African woman should employ subtle means (negotiation) to tackle issues concerning men than aggressiveness. This will help promote dignity and respect for womanhood and also solve the problems of male domination.

Ezeigbo's idea of 'snail sense' falls within the context of African Womanism which supports dialogue and negotiation between men and women as a way to reconcile issues

concerning both genders to enhance cooperation between them. A womanist will ensure peace and harmony in the family (not antagonism which brings about separation) by being “committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. In as much as ‘Womanism’ was created by African-Americans, from the quest by black women in America to better their situation in a white society, many African male and female writers have adopted the theory of Womanism to criticize the writings of black men in the United States as well as African works. For instance, Mogu (1999) applies the theory of Womanism to examine the representations of black women in some African-American texts. Shodipe (2008) applies ‘Womanism’ ideology to analyze Akachi Ezeigbo’s *The Last of the Strong Ones* which has the history of Uga town in Igbo land as its setting. Also, Ezeigbo (2009) uses the theory of ‘Womanism’ to analyse Nwapa’s novels as a womanist intervention to interrogate the Igbo cultural tradition.

Walker’s Womanism with its feminist idea of gender also addresses African women’s quest to reclaim and redefine themselves from a distorted identity. Like Feminism, Womanism argues the misrepresentation of women, especially, black women in the United States and in literary works by men. But Hudson-Weems’ Africana Womanism’s agenda is for all women of African descent and it has African family as its focus. Gender issues are of utmost importance in African societies like the Igbo where the male child is preferred to the female child, and women considered inferior to men. According to Davies (2008), there are certain traditional inequalities which continue to subordinate black and African women unlike their Western counterparts. These include:

Absence of freedom in the choice of motherhood and marriage; oppression of barren women; genital mutilation; enforced silence; and a variety of other forms of oppression intrinsic to various societies which still plague African

women and inevitably constitute the crux of African feminist theory (pp. 561 – 562).

These avenues of dominating women roused Womanists and other Feminists who view the African society as patriarchal to action and the demand that males and females be equally treated. The imbalance in gender positions prompted African women to examine gender portrayal in literature, especially the male. As some male writers portrayed women negatively, African women ventured into writing literary works to deconstruct and redefine their identity.

1.7.2 Model of Feminism Selected: Womanism

The study considers the theory of African Womanism propounded by Ogunyemi (1996) appropriate for the study. This is essentially because the theory is situated in the African context. Ogunyemi's African Womanism offers a more holistic approach to understanding the complex issue of gender perception in Igbo society as presented in the relevant Igbo novels. Perhaps, for emphasis, African Womanism is propounded on the need to define African peculiarities which feminism and African-American Womanism ignored. African Womanism advocates a mother-centred ideology with its focus on caring which is very important in the African family, community and society as a whole. It incorporates other challenges that befall women beyond sexism which include extreme poverty, in-law problems, older women oppressing younger women, women oppressing their co-wives and men oppressing their wives.

The theory of African Womanism is necessary in this study because it advocates the analysis of gender only in the context of other issues which are relevant to women; some of them are the language issue and gender construction in literature. Ogunyemi (1996) believes in a strong relationship between men and women irrespective of their gender

differences. Hence, she is against the degradation of women in literary works by male writers. She recognises sisterhood as very important for the emancipation of African women. However, given the seemingly complex nature of gender rhetoric, it is our candid view that one theory may not adequately serve our purpose in this study. Thus, we complement Ogunyemi's 'African Womanism' with two other theories: Ogundipe-Leslie's (2007) Stiwanism and Ezeigbo's (2012) Snail-Sense Feminism. Ogundipe-Leslie's (2007) Stiwanism, which is an acronym for 'Social Transformation Including Women in Africa' provides important road maps for gender re-orientation with its unique delineation of the women as a significant financial contributor in the home. Ogundipe-Leslie believes that women's economic self-reliance can aid the process of women liberation and also enable women achieve independence and co-exist with men. Ezeigbo's idea of 'Snail-Sense Feminism' falls within the context of African Womanism which supports dialogue and negotiation between men and women as a way to reconcile issues concerning gender and to enhance cooperation between both genders. The 'African Womanism' and 'Snail-Sense Feminism' propagate the virtues of tolerance, accommodation, cooperation, negotiation, resilience, sensitivity, wisdom, determination; and above all a non-confrontational attitude towards men as a strategy to achieve the much desired women liberation. The same can be said of Ogundipe-Leslie's STIWANISM in relation to women's liberation. Ezeigbo's Snail-Sense Feminism like Ogundipe-Leslie's Stiwanism, is family-centred. The three theorists aim to confront the issue of gender relations within the family. They desire to achieve gender equality through peaceful means and equal participation of the man and woman for the well-being of the family. Thus, the three theories, African Womanism, Stiwanism and Snail-Sense

Feminism exhibit various ways to achieve unity in the family with respect to gender relations. The three theories will enable us to adequately address the issue of gender perception in a traditional (past) and contemporary (present) sense, as they appear in the relevant Igbo novels.

The various sheds of feminist and womanist ideologies have one common denominator: To liberate women from obnoxious oppressive cultural practices, including offensive portrayal of womanhood at all levels of social organisation. Negative portrayal of women is a central concern of feminists and womanists because it is a perennial issue that should and must be resolved. The issue calls for concerted attention because it has lasted from the preliterate to the modern era, such that it has been reflected in the literature of every age to date. The double-standard in gender portrayal explains the interest of this study in how gender, especially women are portrayed in male and female-authored Igbo novels. However, it highlights how female writers redefine the female gender in their novels.

1.7.3 Justification for the Adoption of Womanism

Having examined the various Womanist theories on gender perceptions, the theory of Womanism by Ogunyemi, Ogundipe-Leslie and Akachi Ezeigbo, which is situated in African context, is considered appropriate for the study. Walker's (1983) Womanism reciprocates feminist struggle for gender equality, but vehemently opposes racial discrimination (Kolawole 1997). It also recognizes 'lesbianism', which is not acceptable in African culture. Hudson-Weems's *Africana Womanism* ignores the issue of gender, which is very important to African women. Her priority is to fight against race which oppresses men, women and children. Acholonu's (1995) *Motherism* excludes the urban women or the educated women and shows a servile rural woman as an ideal motherist,

which indicates that there is no hope for their empowerment, whether educationally or politically (Ezeigbo, 2012). The above theories of Womanism adopted are appropriate because they assist in the analysis of the early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels selected for this study. This is because the Womanist theories are based on African culture and centred on how to achieve and maintain the unity of the African family without gender bias. The selected Igbo novels depict the image of men and women in Igbo family, which necessitates their portrayal positively or negatively. The application of the Womanist theories in the analysis of the selected Igbo novels helps us to infer the root cause or the ideology behind the negative portrayal of female gender, more than the male one, and how both genders are reconstructed.

1.8 Methodology

This study is literary in nature and focuses on the comparative analysis of gender portrayal in selected early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels. Consequently, the study uses content analysis approach in the examination of the selected texts. The study uses the stratified sampling technique; as a result the novels are divided into two strata. The first stratum is the early post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels. The second stratum is the later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels. Out of about thirty-two (32) Igbo novels written in the period under study, twenty-nine novels are written by early post-war male Igbo writers and three novels are written by early post-war female Igbo writers, according to Nnabuihe's (2005) assessment. Fifteen (15) novels are chosen for the study, because they represent the novels often recommended for schools and colleges. Out of the fifteen (15) popular novels, twelve (12) novels are male-authored while three (3) novels are female-authored. Through the

simple random selection two early male and two female-authored Igbo novels are selected amounting to 16.7% and 66.7% respectively. The reason for the choice of two novels from each stratum is for equal representation because female-authored Igbo novels are few. In addition, the number of novels written in the later post-war period are twenty-five (25) according to Nnabuihe's (2005) assessment. The ten (10) Igbo novels published after Nnabuihe's assessment bring the total novels to thirty-five (35). From this number, thirteen (13) novels are used for the study, which represent those novels often recommended for schools and colleges. Out of the thirteen (13) novels, nine are male-authored while four are female-authored. Through the simple random selection one later male and one female-authored Igbo novels are selected, constituting 11.11% and 25% respectively. The selected two early male-authored Igbo novels are Tagbo Nzeako's *Nkọli* (1973) and Tony Ubesie's *Isi Akwụ Dara N'ala* (1973), while two early female-authored Igbo novels are Ada Meniru's *Nwaeze* (1978) and Julie Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom* (1983). In the same vein, the later post-war male-authored novel is Innocent Nwadike's *Adaeze* (2000) and the later post-war female-authored Igbo novel is Nkeiru Kammel's *Makuachukwu* (2006). The reason for selecting one novel from each of the later post-war male and female novels is due to the fact that all the texts are thematically linked in their ideologies, philosophy and acceptance of a unified portrayal of gender.

These novels were chosen as the requisite sample for the purposes of generating the necessary primary data for the study. The aforementioned novels constitute the sample or sampling unit of analysis. These novels satisfy an essential characteristic of the study population given that they are all Igbo novels. The rationale for the selection of these

novels is the fact that the novels are written in Igbo and they reveal gendered lives and experiences of males and females in early and later Igbo post-war society. Additionally, the choice of the three male and three female-authored Igbo novels is for the purpose of providing a balanced comparative analysis of the image of male and female characters as portrayed in the novels. As a result, in this study, the portrayal of men and women by both male and female authors is compared and contrasted. They are compared to identify and explicate the differences and similarities in the portrayal of gender in the texts.

This study, which is mainly a library research, sourced its secondary data from libraries within and outside the University of Lagos. Relevant books, magazines, journals and Internet resources concerning gender, feminism and fomanism were also consulted.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Generally, this section examines extant literature on gender portrayal in male and female-authored works. We examine the concept of gender, the place of gender among the Igbo people, and feminist criticism of the portrayal of gender in male-authored works.

Similarly, we examine female writers' views, including Igbo female writers, on gender portrayal in male and female-authored works. The information obtained facilitates a better understanding of the ideology behind gender portrayal in male Igbo literature and what motivates women's writing. The study also reviews existing critical works on gender portrayal in Igbo novels and other critical works on Igbo.

2.1 The Concept of Gender

Gender as a word originates from Middle English 'gendre,' which is derived from 'genus,' a Latin word that means 'kind', 'sort' or 'type'. The modern French equivalent of gender is 'genre' which also means 'type' or 'kind'. According to Aristotle, the first use of gender as a term is credited to Protogoras who classified nouns in relation to it as being masculine, feminine and neuter, thus introducing grammatical gender. It is noteworthy that since the 14th century, gender as a word has been used to indicate male (masculine) and female (feminine) qualities (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, 2006).

Wodak (1997: 13) explains that gender can be used in two senses. In a specialized sense, it is used as a linguistic term relating to the grammatical categories of words in certain languages. It is also used in its more everyday sense to refer to a social distinction between masculine and feminine. Gender is seen as being different from sex. Sex is the physiological difference between males and females which are determined at conception and at the most part cannot be altered, whereas gender is the sociocultural elaborations of these differences (Mackie, 1983, p.1). Gender, therefore, is what society recognises as femininity and masculinity. Sex, however, is seen as immutable, but contemporary social reality in a few isolated instances facilitated by technological advancement provide

evidence of sex change in a physiological bi-directional sense and even the existence of hermaphrodites. This observation does not in any way invalidate the evident dichotomy of the sexes as noted by Mackie. The distinction between the terms *sex* and *gender* was developed in the early wave of contemporary feminist research to separate the biological (sex) and the social (gender) (Wodak, 1997). This is because gender is seen as the most natural of all phenomena. Gender is the ‘thing’ that defines who we are, the roles we play in society, the way we look, and most of all, how we think of ourselves (Wiegman & Glasberg, 1999, p. 3). In fact, everything about us and around us is gendered.

The polarity of gender in society and indeed in literature influenced much of feminist discourse in the past and even in the present times. The modern feminist meanings of gender are based on Simon de Beauvoir’s insight that ‘one is not born but rather becomes a woman’ (Moi, 1999). Simon de Beauvoir’s words indicate that one becomes a man or woman through the indoctrination of behaviour and attitudes appropriate for their sex. The creation of gender by society stems from a society’s values, beliefs, and its preferred ways of organizing life (Wood, 1994, p. 21). Therefore, gender is a social construct; this implies that individuals in a typical society are gendered according to the cultural preoccupations of that society. Rothenberg (1995:41) affirms that, people are gendered not because of their physiology or hormones but from the exigencies of the social order. In every society, according to Rothenberg, there are two distinguishable genders because the society is built on two classes of people, ‘women’ and ‘men’. To him, “once the gender category is given, the attributes of the person are also gendered: Whatever a ‘woman’ is has to be ‘female’ and whatever a ‘man’ is has to be ‘male’” (p. 41). In this case, every individual sex is always already gendered, in that once a person is born he or she acquires

gender roles suitable for his or her sex. In other words, gender identity is fixed before a person is aware of his/her genital differences (Garrett, 1987, p. 25). The fixed gender identity is reinforced by parents who see gender roles as natural or God-given. But, Ward (1996: 49) argues that “gender roles are not fixed, rigid, or defined at all times.... sex roles are neither divinely assigned nor inherent in something called ‘nature’.” Wodak (1997) also buttresses this point by saying that:

Gender is ‘not... a pool of attributes “possessed” by a person, but... something a person “does”... ‘What it means to be a woman or to be a man also changes from one generation to the next and ... varies between different racialized, ethnic and religious groups, as well as for members of different social classes’ (p. 13).

From Wodak’s standpoint, gender is not biological or physiological but what one performs. Since gender is what one does, which could change at any point in time, gender then, cannot be taken as a fixed identity; rather, it is flexible. But every society, including the Igbo, delineates gender on the basis of fixed identity (sex). As a result of this, every culture prescribes their gender roles according to their precept. The cultural roles for each gender are mostly seen in every social institution, such as family, religion, community, polity, education, as well as literature. But family is the major social institution where gender roles are displayed. It is a place where a male or a female gender is taught what is expected of him/her as a man or a woman and it is evident in literature. According to Nicholson (1984),

Men are thought to be physically tougher, more aggressive, more rational, better able to handle sex without love, and more likely to be successful at work by virtue of their greater will to win. Women on the other hand are held to be more emotional and unpredictable, interested in people rather than ideas, and too

suggestive and dependent to wield authority comfortably over anyone except perhaps their own children (p. 1).

The male and female genders in this case are different creatures and should demonstrate different behaviours in the family and society. Crawford and Unger (2004) posit that in the family and social institution:

Men are expected by culture to be strong, ambitious, successful, rational, and emotionally controlled. Men who are considered to be “real men” don’t cry or need others to help them. They are successful and powerful in their professional and public lives. While women are taught to be attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships. Women who are considered to be “real women” are to look good (preferably very pretty and/or sexy), adore children, and care about home-making (p. 68).

In this manner, the man and woman must learn these gender expectations and perform the lines and cues expected of them by the society. They must show different personality characteristics that suit their roles because they learn gender identity and gender roles in much the same way that they learn other things. Garrett (1987: 26) posits that the parental expectation is “the initiation of a pattern in keeping with cultural expectations according to which males are seen as more assertive and less responsive than females.” According to Garrett, females’ subservient and docile behaviour is encouraged by parents who prepare their female daughters for motherhood and domesticity. Parents, in this situation, are unconscious of the fact that different treatments given to the male and female children might bring gender-typed behaviour in children. Eventually, these children will visualize different gender behaviour in the family as ‘natural’ rather than the product of learning. But Lips (2003) posits that history has shown that some women refused to live within the bounds of behaviour that were prescribed for them by social expectations of femininity.

Such women disguised themselves and dressed as men to fit into the roles ascribed to men. For instance, Burgess (1994 cited in Lips, 2003) affirms that in the American Civil War, an estimated 400 women dressed as men, enlisted, and served as soldiers. The women who acted as men, according to Lips, “were often fleeing poverty or severe restrictions on their lives, and were seeking the privileges, opportunities, and economic security that could be obtained only by adopting male dress” (p. 7). Wheelwright (1990 cited in Lips, 2003) also postulates that many of these women, who dressed as men, lived as men for their entire adult lives. In this case, Lips (2003) asserts that these women who lived like men transgressed the two-gender system by crossing over to the other gender which she called ‘third-gender’. To Lips, in some cultures, more than two genders exist. They are male, female and intermediate (third) genders. The intermediate gender status is by combining or mixing the attributes and behaviours of females and males. Fulton and Anderson (1992 cited in Lips, 2003), argue that there are distinct third-gender – one that is not simply a mixture of masculine and feminine, but defined separately from them. A person who possesses the attributes of ‘third-gender’ is neither a man dressing and acting like a woman, nor a woman dressing and acting like a man, but a man or woman who has adopted a third role that is neither feminine nor masculine. Fulton and Anderson also emphasize that the ‘third-gender’ or ‘man-woman’ attributes, does not fit into the categories, such as homosexual (someone who is sexually attracted to members of her/his own gender) and transvestite (someone who enjoys dressing in the clothing of the other gender) because they do not always adequately describe the behaviour of a ‘man-woman. However, not every ‘third-gender’ or ‘man-woman’ engages in same-sex sexual relations because the individuals with ‘third-gender’ attributes, according to Fulton and Anderson

(1992 cited in Lips 2003), “often presided over transformational events such as birth, marriage, and death and were highly valued by their communities as arbiters of continuity in a precarious world” (p. 8). Every society uproar at any woman who exhibits ‘third-gender’ attitudes because she “ventures into a male stronghold” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 88). Consequently, women strive to maintain the roles appropriate for their gender.

The gender behaviour which men and women learn early in life contributes to the devaluation and powerlessness of women in society (Dorenkamp et al., 1985, p. 109). According to Dorenkamp et al., a true woman should “be passive, and speak unassertive language”. This “kind of condition” is seen by Nwagbara (2001: 213) “as something that can cause communication difficulties in women.” Apart from language, the feminine attitude expected from women is further expressed by Ikonne (2008) who argues that:

A woman must feign softness, grace, tenderness and inability to depend on herself: all attributes defined, by the man, as becoming of the woman. Any attempt by the woman to operate outside this occupation assigned to her is to go against nature and the will of God, her creator (p. 111).

Women, in order not to go against nature and the will of God, remain subservient and dependent on men all through their lives. The women hold this feminine attribute because they feel that if they refuse to act feminine, they will be ridiculed and criticized, and considered ‘unnatural’, ‘unwomanly’ or ungodly, which is seen in most male-authored literature. This attribute can also cause women to be unable to think clearly, take part in a serious discussion and unfit to hold a position of power (Nwagbara, 2001). However, the dehumanization of women is attributed to the roles they are expected to play in the family. This is the reason most writers portray family as the main domain for women’s

oppression. Explaining how the male and the female gender are conceptualized in family life, Omonubi-McDonnell (2003) states that:

When a woman is married, her legal identity merged into that of her husband; she was civilly dead. She could not sue, enter into contracts, make wills, keep her own earnings, and control her own property. She could not even control her physical integrity - her husband had the right to chastise her (p. 35).

The above assertion exposes how societal 'rules' subsumed women as individuals under men, especially in marriage. In the family system, Onuegbu (2004) asserts that "men as husband, brother, and father subject their wives, sisters and daughters respectively to their macho-power" (p. 325). Men treat women with contempt because of the position women are placed in society. The double standard of male and female behaviour in our social system help to maintain a pattern of male dominance and female subordination especially in an area where there is the interpersonal relationship involving gender. Lips (1997: 53) asserts that many theorists now argue that most of the differences between the feminine and masculine gender roles are a result of the greater 'power and status' accorded to males than females in most societies. The power and control men have over women force women to maintain their maternal position assigned for their biology.

Similarly, Yieke (2001:333) argues that gender is not only about biology and cultural differences, but also about 'power' which gives rise to salient issues of subjectivity and oppression by male gender, and there is also the need to achieve emancipation and social change in order that the female gender can benefit from this. In support of her view, Crawford & Unger (2004) postulate that gender and power are intimately connected in the social world because it is through social interaction that men exhibit their superiority and dominance over women. To Crawford & Unger (2004),

...it is in social interaction that women are constantly reminded of what their “place” is and here that they are put back in their place, should they venture out. Thus, social interaction serves as the locus of the most common means of social control employed against women. By being continually reminded of their inferior status in their interactions with others, and continually compelled to acknowledge that status in their own patterns of behaviour, women may internalize society’s definition of them as inferior so thoroughly that they are often unaware of what their status is. Inferiority becomes habitual, and the inferior place assumes the familiarity – and even desirability - of home (p. 68).

Men’s behaviour towards women make women structure their lives according to their inferior status. Hence, women assume their inferior position in the family as normal disregarding their individual qualities. In some cases, where a woman may show unwillingness to consent to a man’s order, the man may apply force to accomplish his intention or criticize her negatively. According to Millet (cited in Tong, 1999),

Should a woman refuse to accept patriarchal ideology and should she manifest her mistrust by casting off her femininity - that is, her subordination - men will use coercion to accomplish what conditioning has failed to achieve (p. 96).

Men intimidate women when they fail to accept their subordinating position in society. The use of coercion by men involves linguistic battery. Forward and Torres (1987: 77) affirm that “men use their words as weapons and their moods to negate women.” Their vituperative words batter women psychologically. According to Forward and Torres, “if the man does not want to physically abuse the woman in his life, he may systematically wear her down through psychological battering, which in the end is every bit as emotionally devastating as physical abuse” (p. 77). Forward and Torres also maintain that men have a repertoire of scare tactics, insults, denigrating comments, and other

intimidating behaviour designed to make women feel inadequate, have low self-esteem and feel helpless. Their obvious attacks involve yelling, threatening, temper, tantrums, name calling, and constant criticisms. Attacks like these are sometimes direct, concealed or out in the open. They (men) have an aggressive arsenal of assault quality in them directed against women so as to subjugate them to their will. This attitude by men humiliates and shapes women's lives, including their beliefs and feelings towards themselves.

The way men are visualized in different socio-cultural perspectives as first class citizens and women as second class citizens are reflected in literature. Wood (1994: 129) maintains that literary "language used to depict gender reveals cultural devaluation of women and femininity and earns male gender accolade. It trivialises, depreciates, and diminishes women and things defined as feminine." Feminism criticizes the use of language coloured by male values in the portrayal of women because male writers demean the image of women. Feminists view male literary language as sexist because it involves sexual inequality. It positions, values and treats the male as superior to the female and this empowers men to belittle women.

Gender subordination of women is prominent in literature, especially male-authored ones. The male writers employ the same notion of gender subordination prevalent in society to portray the female gender in their works. Accordingly, gender subjugation, which exists in Igbo cultural milieu, is also exhibited in literary works produced in Igbo society. The literary language employed in the Igbo texts under review belittles, harasses, negates, excludes and silences women more than men. However, silencing women does not mean

that women do not communicate verbally; rather, the language used to portray or address them in literature stigmatizes them for life and thereby confines them only to the private or domestic sphere. Feminism being aware of this phenomenon, seeks to redress and rectify women's image by criticizing the way women are portrayed in literature, especially male-authored ones. As shown in the selected texts, male bias against women is clearly manifest in the names and stereotypical words used to portray women in these novels. In spite of this, there are a few male writers who consciously or unconsciously portray women in positive light in their writings; but sadly enough there still exists the familiar underlying current of disdain even in such works.

2.2 Gender and its Place among the Igbo

The Igbo are located in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states in the South East and parts of Delta and Rivers states in the South South of Nigeria (Ikwubuzo, 2012). According to Ejiofor (1981 cited in Ikwubuzo, 2012: 145) "the typical Igbo (immediate) family consists of father, mother and children." In Igbo family, the code of conduct appropriate for the male and female gender is defined and each individual is expected to abide by it (Onuegbu, 2010). However, when a child is born in the family the sex determines the role it will play in the family and society (Ozumba, 2005). The socialisation of the male and female gender roles in Igbo society starts from birth. Ogbalu (n. d.) reveals that the training of children in pre-colonial Igbo society is everybody's responsibility and every person is expected to correct a child whether they are related or not, because according to Igbo adage: 'Nwa bu Nwa ora' (The child is the child of all) (p. 19). But, women, Ogbalu (n. d.) comments are particularly responsible for the girls who learn by precepts, observation, and by close association with their mothers. According to

Ogbalu (n. d.), the girls learn directly from their mothers or from the woman with whom they lived simple virtues, laws of hygiene, simple marketing and trading, preparation of various types of food, cultivation of crops particularly coco-yam, cassava and care of children. The boys learn directly from their fathers or masters and identified with their roles and occupations, such roles as cultivation of yam, crafting, blacksmithing and carving. The training of the girls and the boys differs even within and outside the home. Ndulue (1995) opines that in Igbo family the mothers take particular interest in the training of girls, more than boys, because of the belief that the girls are vulnerably exposed to temptation and therefore more difficult to train. Consequently, the mothers start early in the life of a girl to prepare her for eventual marriage. According to Ndulue (1995) the mothers start early to inculcate in a girl feminine qualities. She first instils beauty consciousness in her by applying her eye pencil (otanjele) on her lids, plaiting her hair, applying different types of lotions and cosmetics on her skin to make it look tender, succulent and attractive. As soon as a girl grows up,

She learns from her mother the technique of house-keeping – how to keep the house clean and tidy; how to sweep the compound and dump the refuse into their farm. She is taught how to scrub the floor of the house, how to scrub the wall with ‘aja nwa muo’ (bright dark-red clay), decorate the walls with ‘anunuu’ (dark-green colour), ‘edo’ (yellow) and ‘nzu’ artistic designs. The level of sanitation and cleanliness in a traditional Igbo home was usually very high. The young girl imbibes that culture. She is taught how to sit – that she should not keep her legs astride while sitting down; she is taught how to comport herself; how to be courteous and the need to do so. She assists her mother in the kitchen and from there she is exposed to the traditional menu and how to prepare them. She assists in the farm and in fetching food for domestic animals such as goat and sheep (pp. 51-52).

The above excerpt shows how females are socialised in Igbo traditional society to be mothers, nurturers, docile, subservient and above all to be conscious of their body/beauty.

Emecheta (2008) also explains further that in most African societies:

The girl-child...at a very early age is conditioned from childhood into thinking that being the girl she must do all the housework, help her mother to cook, clean, fetch water and look after her younger brothers and sisters. If she moans or shows signs of not wanting to do any of these, she will be sharply reminded by her mother. 'But you are a girl! Going to be a woman' (p. 556).

The above words indicate that mothers train the girls to assume a life of service at a young age in order to prepare them for womanhood, motherhood and domesticity. According to Olisa (1980 cited in Nwaozuzu, 2007) "in traditional Igbo society doubts and ignorance did not exist about the roles of women. Everyone, including the women themselves, acquired through socialisation, full knowledge about the place of womanhood in the general culture of society" (p. 27). Women in Igbo culture are socialised into their specific roles as women, and the women in turn instilled the same cultural roles in their children, especially girls.

Chukwukere (2000) affirms that before the advent of formal education, traditional education followed the informal and non-formal systems. The Igbo society had its ideals, goals and expectations which were imparted to its young ones. The family was the primary agent of education and socialisation, because every individual grew along the definable roles ready and available in their society (See also Ikwubuzo, 2012). Gabriel (2001) further reveals that in the pre-colonial Igbo society women's education were made with the aim of making the women functional within the society. The traditional or informal education of women commenced from childhood, first, within the home, with

parents, siblings, relations in the immediate and extended polygynous homes as teachers; second, outside the home, where their grandparents, uncles and aunts begin to take part in the children's education. Non-formal education is when the child is apprenticed to another person. The education of a child in pre-colonial Igbo society is "essentially a socializing process" (Gabriel, 2001, p. 61). According to Gabriel (2001), in agricultural education, women from childhood were taught how to grow, harvest and preserve female crops such as maize, okro, cassava, beans, melons and cocoyam. The men learnt how to clear farmland, prepare mounds and how to grow male crops such as yam. While the boys were taught to hunt, wrestle, fight and rear cattle, the girls learnt how to domesticate fowls, goats and ducks. In vocational training, women were taught weaving of baskets, cloth, and mats. The women also learnt how to plait hair, make dress, soap, pottery and salt. The men were exclusively taught how to smith (iron, silver, gold, copper, brass, and bronze), carving (wood and bronze), sculpturing, carpentry, boat-making and wine tapping. The men and women maintained and transferred their prescribed roles and positions from one generation to the next. Ogbalu (n. d.) explains that "children were expected to follow the calling of their parents; daughters of women potters, for example, usually become potters and sons of blacksmiths or carvers become blacksmiths or carvers respectively... to ensure non-extinction of the knowledge from the family" (p. 20). The Igbo societal belief in the continuity of gender roles in the family contributes in visualising the roles of men and women as complementary, natural or ordained, and not a product of socialisation. This is why sex-role conflicts were minimal, for all groups accepted the prescriptions as demanded by their culture (Chukwukere, 2000). Suffice it to

say that complete compliance with the rules guiding gender in Igbo culture is as a result of sanctions put in place to checkmate the defaulters. Chukwukere (2000) confirms that:

Indeed most of these cultural practices were also attached to religious beliefs in such a way that non-observance of any aspect of culture was met with prescribed religious sanctions - from simple purificatory rites to the death sentence: all depended on what the society perceived as the severity of the offence (p. 119).

In Igbo society, men and women are made to strictly comply with their gender roles in order to avoid facing religious sanction or social criticism. Consequently, parents start early to inculcate in their children their specific roles and subdue them when they fail to observe their gender roles. Gabriel (2001) points out that the traditional education of children in Igboland was not rigidly compartmentalized, as was the case in formal Western Education, because both men and women from childhood participated in festivals, rituals, ceremonies and other activities in the society. Although, the men and women were exposed to the same disciplines, the women experienced discrimination. The girls are not allowed to climb. This finds its expression in Igbo language: “Nwanyị anaghị arị elu” (Women do not climb) (p. 63). Gabriel (2001) views this kind of discrimination as limiting the ability of girls to engage in psychomotor activities for development and the exploration of their immediate environment. In traditional Igbo society, girls are brought up to be protected and dependent. According to Garrett (1987: 76), in Western culture, “a girl is seldom given the opportunity to test, develop, and assess her abilities for herself, and is unconfident of doing things alone.” Garrett’s comment about the marginalisation of women in Western culture shows that African women faced the same discrimination like their Western counterparts. Chukwukere (2000) identifies:

Some of the traditional components of curriculum like folktales, proverbs, myths, legends, and cultural festivals such as rites of passage, marriage, title-taking and burial ceremonies. Invariably, these implicit and explicit cultural tools serve as covert and overt ideological instruments, designing sex-role expectations and serving in no small measure in constraining the emergence of a positive image of the female in the African traditional society (p. 119).

In support of Chukwukere about the marginalisation of women in traditional Igbo society, Gabriel (2001) confirms that “in teaching history through folktales, stories, myths and legends, the Igbo eulogized the activities of heroes beyond the roles of women” (p. 63). Women’s roles are not considered as important as those of men because of the honour and privileges bestowed on the men. Gabriel (2001) further maintains that “Igbo society is highly patriarchal, a system where the systematic subordination of women is entrenched in the biological inequality of the sexes” (p. 63). Patriarchy reinforces traditional gender stereotypes, where men are visualized as ‘lord’ of women. Basden (1982) shows that in Igbo society:

Between boys and girls the comparison is all in favour of the former, the latter only counting as a useful accessory in the life of a man. From the outset a youth assumes the position of a ‘Lord of creation’ as his rightful heritage (p. 78).

The above excerpt shows that the status of women in Igbo society is subservient to that of men. In Igbo society, men’s rights and privileges over women manifest in marriage. In the family, the husband, is the ‘lord’ and ‘master’ to his wife.

Okafor (2005) reveals that in Igbo society a man has a full right to his family only when he is married, and his wife also derives benefits from such marriage. According to Okafor (2005),

A woman begins to enjoy a remarkable degree of respect, honour and privileges only when she is traditionally and legally married. In addition, the woman will begin to have deep sense of security and fulfilled life. Hence the Igbo adage: “*Mma nwanji bu di* (A woman’s pride/beauty is her husband), “*Di bu ugwu nwanji*” (A woman is respected on the account of her husband) (p. 177).

A woman has no respect if she is not married. Consequently, a woman’s dignity is dependent on her husband. Men as the heads of the families are expected to be educated, rich, aggressive, providing, independent, hardworking, controlling, rational and assertive. On the other hand, women are expected to be weak, submissive to men, dependent on men, obedient to men, passive, emotional, caring, voiceless, experienced domestically, reproductive and unexposed to some aspects of life experience that will emancipate them or empower them (Onuegbu, 2010, p. 65). The patriarchal nature of Igbo society subjugates women and relegates them to the background.

2.3 Feminist Critique of Gender Portrayal in Male-Authored Literature

There have been several critical works, mainly by women, on gender portrayal in society, culture, religion, economy, education, politics, family and literature. Gender portrayal in literature is now a global issue. This is because many scholars, especially women, who focus on analysing gender in literature, reveal that male-authored literature is replete with a pattern that portrays male superiority and female inferiority. This model of presentation of the female gender in literature is unfavourable to women. Women, therefore, strive to redefine women’s rights, status, images and interests. Thus, female writers aim “to draw attention to and change the way that gender is represented in literature, since it is clear that a great many of these representational practices are not in the interest of either

women or men” (Mills, 1995, p. 1). Given that literature reveals human experiences in society and that “men have used books, for centuries, to further the interest of the male gender” (Ezeigbo, 2004, p. 175), Feminists concern themselves with the analysis of such literary works that dwell on gender portrayal generally. They observe that literary language is sexist because it represents or ‘names’ the worldview from a masculine viewpoint and in accordance with stereotyped beliefs about women, men and the relationship between them (Cameron, 1998, p. 9). Sexism is seen by Udofot (2007: 18) as “all forms of derogatory references, prejudices or discrimination against the female members of the society as evident in the terms and expressions used to refer to them.” Sexism is pervasive, especially in literature. Hence, Feminists/Womanists, aware of this tradition, venture into describing and interpreting (or reinterpreting) women’s experiences as depicted in various kinds of literature (Sotunsa, 2008). This gives rise to feminist literary criticism because women begin by questioning the construction and representation of women not only in material life but in language and literature, especially male literature. For instance, Oppermann (1994) states that Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), which is the precursor of feminist literary criticism, criticizes Professor Von X’s monumental work: *The Mental, Moral and Physical Inferiority of The Female Sex* with strong women’s sensibility. Woolf argues that men’s domination of women in literature is due to their ideas of the patriarchal society which prevented women from realizing their creativity and true potential. According to Kolmar and Bartkowki (2000) Virginia Woolf was roused with anger and curiosity about the reason behind the Professor’s phrase that ‘women are naturally inferior to men’. Woolf’s anger about the professor’s words made her draw the Professor’s face and figure on a

paper and portray him as ‘a man unattractive to women’. To Woolf, “one does not like to be told that one is naturally inferior to a little man”. As a result, she looked at the male student next to her in anger, who wore a ready-made tie and has not shaved in a fortnight. In anger, she began to draw over the Professor’s angry and ugly face until he looked like a burning bush or an apparition without human semblance. To Woolf, all books and articles that portray women negatively are worthless scientifically, although humanly, they are full of instruction, interest, and boredom. Woolf’s action explains the anger women feel whenever they are portrayed negatively. To Woolf, the writers that portray women negatively are angry but she cannot explain why. But from the other articles she read, she deduced that patriarchy is the reason behind the inferior portrayal of women. This means that men have no intention of portraying women negatively but they do that because of patriarchy. Woolf, however, sees the negative portrayal of women by men as the way men preserve and authenticate their sense of male superiority. To Woolf, women have served as mirrors to men for centuries and men who dominate ideas of the patriarchal society prevent *women* from realizing their creativity and true potentials. In this sense, Woolf urges women to write because writing is the only way women can assert their individuality and autonomy. On the contrary, Woolf, in her essay “Professions for Women”, stresses the difficulties of being a female writer because it was not easy for her as a writer. She had to kill “the Angel in the House” in order to write her novels and critical works. To Oppermann, this means that a woman who writes should not think of herself as passive and subordinate and has to destroy the stereotypical image of housewife and mother.

Oppermann (1994) also points out that Mary Ellman in *Talking about Women* (1965) and Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* (1969), based on the perception and representation of women in male literature, criticized the sexist and patriarchal attitude in male-authored texts. To Opperman, Kate Millet initiated the first modern principles of feminist criticism by embarking upon a critique of sexist assumptions in male-authored texts and introducing some of the fundamental terms, such as “patriarchal,” which gained considerable significance in feminist literary studies. This makes *Sexual Politics* a cult book among feminist critics, especially with its politics of female representations in literature. By “politics” Millet means the operations of power relations in society. She also criticizes Freud’s psychoanalytical theory for its male bias. With her readings of passages from established writers like D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer and Jean Genet, Millet shows the perspective of a female reader. Obviously, she uncovers negative images of women in their fiction as submissive sexual objects. Oppermann further explains that, before Millet, the negative image of women both in society and in literature had produced equally provocative but more cautious responses, such as Mary Ellman’s *Talking about Women* (1965), through which modern feminist criticism was initiated in the United States. Ellman’s somewhat humorous treatment of the stereotypes of women in literature written by men makes her one of the pioneers in the development of contemporary feminist criticism. With Ellman, and more forcefully with Millet, feminist criticism has generated much public debate in women’s rights, and in their search for equality in society. Moreover, Oppermann mentions that the continuing criticism of the cultural, social and literary identity of women as the “Other” repeatedly

sparks off a great deal of controversy and interest, not only among feminist critics, but also in literary studies in general.

Kolmar and Bartkowki (2000) also show how Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) based on the gender subjectivity in literature, criticized the social construction of women as the quintessential 'Other'. In her criticism, Beauvoir argues that a woman, like man, is a human being; the man and woman are equal. Yet, more often than not, society uses man to designate human being in general; whereas the woman is used to represent only the negative, defined by limiting criteria and without reciprocity. She sees the position of the man and woman in society as master and slave relationships. According to Beauvoir, "men view themselves as a direct and normal connection with the world whereas they regard women as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it" (p. 177). Male's bias against females is shown by Beauvoir in Aristotle's declaration that "the female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities...we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness" (p. 177). And St. Thomas Aquinas for his part pronounced woman to be an "imperfect man," an "incidental" being. The nature of woman is also symbolized in Genesis, where Eve is depicted as made from what Bossuet called "a supernumerary bone" of Adam. Beauvoir contends that humanity is male because man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him. The woman is not regarded as an autonomous being because "she cannot think of herself without man but man can think of himself without woman" (p. 177). To Beauvoir, the woman is simply what man decrees. Thus, she is called 'the sex'. By this, the woman is essentially to the male a 'sexual being'. For a man, a woman is sex – absolute sex, no less. The woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not man with

reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute while she is the 'Other' (p. 177). Beauvoir also alleges that the category of 'Other' is primordial because in most primitive societies there is expression of a duality - that of self and the other; and this duality was not originally attached to the sexes. But the duality is revealed in the works of male writers, such as Granet on Chinese thought and those of Dumézil on the East Indies and Rome. The feminine element was not at first involved in such pairs as Varuna-Mitra, Uranus-Zeus, Sun-Moon, and Day-Night than it was in the contrasts between Good and Evil, lucky and unlucky auspices, right and left, God and Lucifer. Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought. Beauvoir maintains that women are seen as the 'Other' because they are man's dependent if not his slave because the two sexes have never shared the world in equality. Although she believes that women's condition is beginning to change, she emphasizes that women are still handicapped because of long-standing customs that prevent their full expression in terms of their legal status. Beauvoir reveals that even if women are beginning to take part in the affairs of the world, it is still a world that belongs to men. Beauvoir insists that for women to decline to be the 'Other' they must refuse to be party to the deal, that is, women should renounce all the advantages conferred upon them by their alliance with the superior caste. A man provides a woman with material protection in order to undertake the moral justification of her existence. However, for a woman to assert herself and change her 'Otherness', she must break away from those advantages; because if a man provides a woman all her needs and makes her the 'other', the woman is bound to comply with his whims and caprices.

2.4 African Women Critique of Gender and Male-Authored Literature

The works of the above feminists who criticised gender portrayal in male-authored Western literature influenced African scholars, including Igbo, to employ feminist and womanist consciousness in examining the position of women in African societies and indeed African literature (Davies, 1986; Olujinmi, 2005; Sotunsa, 2008; Olugbamigbe, 2010). Many African scholars, especially women, who examined gender portrayal in male-authored literature revealed unsatisfactory/derogatory depiction of female gender, as against the male gender. African women believe that the negative portrayal of women in African literature stems from patriarchal ideology of viewing men as the norm and women as deviant. As such, the traditional African society allowed men greater access to early Western education than women. The early education of men gave them higher status, power, privilege, authority and superiority over women. According to Davies (1986), the selection of males for formal education and women for household duties, which is common to many African societies, supports the notion that Western education acted as a barrier to a woman's role as a wife and mother. This suggests why the first African writers who achieve prominence in writing were males (cf. Ezeigbo, 1996, p. 79). Consequently, women were not among the first African writers because they received the type of education that would help them adapt to their maternal responsibilities. Olugbamigbe (2010) posits that African women were denied access to education on the basis that Western education may rob them of the chances of 'good' home training and their husbands (not their parents) will enjoy the benefits of their education. Men view education as a barrier to a woman's procreation, motherhood and above all good home training. This male biased and slanted view of the female gender is visualised in the kind of education the colonial institution ascribed to women. Gaidzanwa (2003) affirms that:

During the missionary era, boys were trained to assume leadership and public roles in their societies, native girls were trained to become wives who had to run the homes and bear the children of these leaders. When girls were eventually allowed to go to school domesticity was the cornerstone of missionary education for women (p. 4).

From the foregoing, it is evident that women had no access to Western education. When women were eventually given some access to education, they were trained domestically for the benefit of men. This type of education African society allotted to women was attributed to “the colonial framework and official thinking that women were not to be agents of administration nor community leaders (chiefs), court clerks, court messengers” (Agaba, 2007, p. 80), and political leaders, managers, lawyers, bankers, reputable writers and professionals. On the contrary, the women who had no access to education were made to stay at home to be prepared for eventual marriage (Chukukere, 1995; Gabriel, 2001; Chukwukere, 2000). At times, “the women in the past, and even in contemporary times, were forced into early marriage in order to use their (women) bride price for the training of their brothers” (Ezeigbo, 2012, p. 5). The colonial educational policy laid the foundation for educational discrimination against women in African society, including Igbo. This is because women’s limited access to early Western education contributed to the paucity of female literary works (Davies, 1986; Chukukere, 1995) which would have projected the true realities and experiences of African women. Lapin (1995 cited in Fonchingong, 2006) also confirms that men in the early years were usually the first educated, and hence the first authors. They populated their literature with women but in an idealized mode, woman was mother-nurturer and by extension symbol of a sweeter, more secure Africa which the educated man left behind. The scarcity of written literary

works by women engendered male writers' unbalanced depiction of gender to be accepted as the true condition of African women.

Lips (2003) opines that the acceptance of the way women are portrayed in male novels is seen as dependent on the fact that men are visualised as the powerful group whose judgment of the women is given the most media time, prevails often, receives a great deal of attention, and eventually becomes accepted as the truth. The lopsided portrayal of women affects their personality. According to Lips, if men say that 'Women! They are so complicated, so emotional!' and women say that 'Men are so insensitive; they are all only after one thing!' the impact of these judgements is not the same for every group. To Lips, in case of women and men, where men are more visibly seen as experts, who hold more high-status positions, and are generally accorded more credibility, authority, and power than women, men's judgment about women has more impact on women than women's judgment about men. This is because society believes that men's behaviour is caused by external factors, such as, outside pressures, extenuating circumstances, fear of punishment or hope of reward, while women's actions stem from internal dispositions (Lips, 2003). The belief that women behave the way they are contributes to adjudging them negatively, because the society does not make any allowance for the effects of outside forces on women. The unrealistic portrayal of women makes women's realities unknown because gender is shaped by power relations. Because men as a powerful group, according Lips, "have had the luxury of a privileged view point and defining the truth in terms of their own experience" (p. 12).

Sotunsa (2008: 82) posits that the pioneer African male writers mirrored patriarchy in their works. The male writers often portray man as the protagonist and antagonist who dominate other people, while the women are made peripheral and their characters hardly developed. Oko (2008: 95) asserts that the African male writers' zeal to recreate the image of African society which has been distorted by the Europeans, presented women largely within the traditional milieu, based on patriarchal system, where the interests of the female are taken for granted. The male writers portray the African culture through the perspectives of male in African traditional societies. The African society is patrilineal; hence, men dominate every sphere of life. As a result, male writers project male dominance and traditional images of African women.

Larson (1971 cited in Oko, 2008: 95) affirms that in the early literary works, the female characters play almost no significant part; if they are present, they are more or less objects performing function as mothers, wives, daughters or sisters assisting male gender to achieve greatness. The female character in African male fiction is viewed by Chukwuma (1990: 133) as a facile lack-lustre human being. The female character is portrayed as a quiet member of a house-hold, content only to bear children, unfulfilled if she does not, and handicapped if she bears only daughters. In the home, she is not part of decision making both as a daughter, wife and mother even when the decisions affect her directly. She is docile and as a result yields to a societal ideology which demands complete submission of her will. The traditional image of women as indeterminate human beings, dependent, gullible, voiceless and unassertive is deep-rooted in patriarchy which marked most African societies. For instance, Faseke (2001) shows how women are perceived in some ethnic groups in Nigeria. Yoruba traditional society believed that a

woman should not be made head for she is only suitable as the organizer of the home. In Edo, a boy-child is preferred and has every advantage over the girl-child. According to Edo mythology, a woman by nature is mischievous, frivolous and feeble-minded. Among the Efik, Anang, Ibibio and Igbo traditionalists, a woman is by nature beautiful and patient, and given these qualities, she should take the back seat and help the men to achieve greatness. The passive role of women and the supportive role they play in men's heroics is usually portrayed in male-authored literature. As a result, the only area in which male writers actually feature women is in the area of domesticity; hence, the reality of women's position in traditional African society is not captured in the early literary works by men.

Male writers neglected the role of women in the community apart from mothering. Chukukere (1995: 1) argues that "this partial neglect, as is variously argued, does not correspond with the historical reality of women's experience, especially regarding her pre-colonial status." According to Chukukere (1995):

Although the traditional society was generally regarded as 'a man's world', yet the African woman in her tribal past had, in addition to her revered roles of wife and mother, well-defined social and political functions within the society (p. 1).

The above comment shows that in traditional African society, women performed other social and political functions apart from roles as wife and mother. The women, along with men, performed duties as farmers and traders. Women also performed powerful roles in their communities as daughters of the clan (*umuada*) in burial and title-taking ceremonies and peace-making where they constitute the final court of appeal; their roles as wives of the clan (*umunwunyeobu* or *ndjinyomdi*), and as priestesses and members of

age-grades (Nwapa, 2008: 527). But male writers exclude women's contributions in African traditional society and prefer instead to portray them as weak, irrational, docile, passive and inferior, in their novels (Okafor and Ikwubuzo, 2011).

Raza (1989) points out that, in most African societies, apart from women's role as mother, wife and house-keeper, history shows that men and women worked outside the family to support the household in subsistence production. According to Raza, in many cultures most of the agricultural operations and pastoral activities were predominantly performed by women except comparatively heavier tasks like bush clearing and burning, felling of trees, including also defence and military operations. In addition to agriculture, pastoral production, provision of food, food preparation and normal duties of childcare, women carried on with other chores like constructing the storage bins, household repairs and cottage industries. In a culture in which its customs and traditions did not permit women to directly participate in outdoor activities, women actively pursued food processing for sale, crafts, trading, medicine and small livestock production (Raza, 120) within the family. Even in matters of defence and military operations where most cultures excluded women, it is on record that some African women participated in wars and emerged victorious.

The Aba women's riot of 1929 is also a turning point in the history of British colonial rule in West Africa. For once in recorded history, the women harnessed their strength and sense of organisation and channelled them into a political movement, defied all odds and sustained the momentum for the sole purpose of the liberation of African men and women (Asobele, 1992).

Uchendu (2007), also maintains that Anioma women in Igbo society participated in the Nigerian Civil War. They joined to avenge atrocities meted out to the Igbo and the deaths of some members of their family in Kano. Other women joined “as an indication of their solidarity with Biafra, to invest their efforts in the survival of the new republic and to the rise of the Igbo nation, to save their lives, and to defend their fatherland” (p. 114). Also, some young girls of Anioma extraction joined because their brothers were officers in the Biafran army. During the war, most women took care of the home front by trading and farming, thus providing food for the family. Unfortunately, in some Igbo novels, women are only portrayed, during the war time, as prostitutes and those who abandoned their families for the affluent men. But Igbo women have acted in different capacities to support, defend and unify their families as well as society. Justifying this view further, Uchendu observes that more Igbo women joined the civil defence out of a sense of patriotism and a desire for social justice than for adventure.

Uchendu believes that what prompted women to join the Biafran war is similar to those of Vietnamese women also in the 1960s joined their country’s revolutionary forces for similar motives: “to unify their families separated by the division of the country into North and South” and “to avenge the death of their loved ones as well as the rape of their sisters by the United States’ troops.” Uchendu also compares the action of Anioma women to that exhibited by the Chinese women who joined the communist organisations, and eventually the war in the 1930s in order to participate in a revolution which to them meant freedom from exploitation and the acquisition of a sense of identity. She adds that the Anioma women’s ventures were also similar to those of Tigrayan women in Ethiopia

who joined the Tigrayan revolution to put an end to a life of poverty and exploitation. Women's radical action of venturing into male-dominated domains was a result of the need to fight injustice irrespective of their gender. Women's decision to enter into public sphere, according to Lips (2003) is to develop a sense of independence and strength and to step out from the protective embrace of their families, even their country and culture in order to undertake their own journeys and gather their own experiences.

Incidentally, most writings on Africa's past centred on the spectacular achievements of men and glossed over the experiences and contributions of women (Davis, 1986), presumably because men assumed that their achievements were in the foreground while women's were in the background. It was due to the neglect, and consistent negative and positive portrayal of female and male genders respectively, in African literature, that women began to write literature in order to challenge and redefine their distorted image in male-authored texts.

The negative portrayal of women in literature makes Kolawole (1997) note that, by omission and commission, most male writers in the early phase of African literature encouraged the marginalisation of Women. Poulain de la Barre, a well-known feminist of the seventeenth century (cited in Kolmar and Bartkowki, 2000: 180), also asserts that "all that has been written about women by men should be suspect for the men are at once judge and party to the law suit". From Kolawole and Poulain de la Barre's opinions, the early male writers failed to properly situate and delineate the realities of African women in their literature. They only perceived women from masculine perspectives. Fonchingong (2006) affirms that the male writers like Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi,

Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa'Thiong', and Cyprian Ekwensi in their literary works are accused of condoning patriarchy because they are deeply entrenched in a macho conviviality and a one dimensional and minimalized presentation of women who are demoted and given peripheral roles (see, also Nwapa, 2008: 528). According to Nwapa (2008), "Nigerian male writers have in many instances portrayed women negatively or in their subordination to men" (p. 528). Some Igbo male writers like Tagbo Nzeako, Tony Ubesie, Innocent Nwadike and Chinedum Ofomata are guilty of negative representation of women in their literary works. Fonchingong (2006) emphasizes that these male writers' narrative is androcentric because they trivialized female gender through practices like patriarchy, tradition, culture, gender socialisation process, marriage and domestic enslavement. As a result of these ideological modes, male writers characterised women in different ways.

Little (1980) grouped the position of women in male-authored African novels into six specific categories: girlfriends, good-time girls, wives, free women, mothers and courtesans. Little (cited in Ogbulogo, 1999) also characterised women in his novel as prostitutes, political women and workers. However, Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) regroups women in male-authored novels into three main categories: the sweet mother, the sophisticated city girl and the rural woman. In essence, women are visualised through their roles and relationships in society. Sheila (1980 cited in Akorede, 2011: 112) shows how women are classified in male-authored texts as: "serviceable and non-serviceable images". The women characterized as "serviceable images" are portrayed as the docile, virgin, sweet mother, obedient wife, chaste, pure, innocent and good daughter. The "non-serviceable images," reflect the women as promiscuous, bad and incapable of making

decision, passive, sexually frigid, over emotional, manipulative, troublesome and temptresses. According to Akorede (2011), the male writers judge female characters and thereby assign negative qualities to them but exempt their male characters from pernicious descriptions. In some male narratives, they present woman as the selfless, loving and gentle mother. In many male-authored texts, the idea of young wife is portrayed as submissive, pliable and dependent, almost giving the impression of a half-wit, stupid and unintelligent being (Akorede, 2011, p. 112). This characterization of wifedom shows the notion of femininity which is ideal for every woman. In a situation where the woman rejects femininity, she would be condemned and criticised. But, most often, according to Chukukere (1995: 7), the ideal female created by male writers in fiction often acts within the framework of her traditional roles as wife and mother. These roles are so strong that the respect and love women earn in society are relative to the degree of her adaption to these roles. Chukukere (1995) also present a different position of female characters in male-authored literature. She asserts that:

Some male writers have created female protagonists whose characters and mannerisms are treated with precision and authenticity of detail. The others have departed from this to present certain homogeneity attributable to some basic similarity in men's overall conception of women (p. 7).

From the above assertion, the male writers' portrayal of female characters is based on their experiences and perceptions of women. The male authors with strong maternal influence would not necessarily present women characters as weaklings; others in this class are male writers from social backgrounds with myths and histories about strong women. This breed of writers sometimes reflects a balanced portrayal of women in society (Akorede, 2011). However, if male writers really visualise women as maternally

inclined, nurturing and close to the earth and that the women's roles are complementary to those of men, they will portray women positively along with men. But most often, men use misogynistic language, one not friendly to women to portray them. Greer (1971 cited in Bernard, 1981: 376) calls it "language of women-hatred", noting that words like "witch", originally applied to both sexes become pejorative when applied only to women. Feminists view the use of negative language to portray women in literature as a way of depreciating women (Bernard 1981) and according low status to them.

Lips (2003: 10) shows that there are different clusters of women in contemporary society, "a progressive or non-traditional cluster", which includes: the feminist, the intellectual, and the career woman; "a traditional or conservative cluster", which includes: the housewife, the secretary, the conformist, and the maternal woman; and "a cluster characterised by sexuality", including the vamp, the sex bomb, and the tart". These clusters of women are seen in contemporary male and female literature as rebellious, conservative and immoral women respectively. Although, these women have negative aspects, their personal and communal qualities should be acknowledged. Yet, male writers still portray women as those who are unable to do anything good other than unleashing acts of villainy on all and sundry (Nwaozuzu, 2007, p. 30), while men are exempted from irrational behaviour. The exemption of men, according to Nwaozuzu, rests on the myth in the Igbo traditional society which says "Nwoke anaghị ajọ njo" (A male is never bad). All evils come from the female and to support this, an Igbo adage says, "Nwaanyị bụ njo ala" (Woman is the originator of all evils). In this sense, according to Nwaozuzu, the woman could be likened to the Biblical Eve in the Garden of Eden and all negative qualities should be assigned to her.

Onwusoba (2001) posits that the negative portrayal of women in male-authored Igbo novels is also attributable to the way women are described in the Bible. According to Onwusoba, from the creation of the world, women are portrayed in the Biblical context as bad people, those who put men in trouble and are disobedient like Eve, who misled Adam to disobey God. In the same vein, they are seen in the Bible as wicked and bad-hearted like Jezebel who killed Naboth and then took all his land. They are equally seen in the same Bible as those who divulge secrets, deceptive, seductive and agents of death. Delilah, Samson's wife, seduced her husband and handed him over to his enemies to be killed and many more. But in the same Bible, Faseke (2001) points out that God created the two sexes (male and female) and that the woman was created from the rib of a man. She is, therefore, considered a weaker sex who should be respected and honoured. God also emphasized that there is neither Gentile nor Jew, male nor female; both are to complement each other. A man and a woman should be seen as human beings and neither should be regarded negatively. In Ewrierhoma (2002: 63), the essayist Thomas Hobbes in his writing *Leviathan* again stresses the idea that men and women are equal in principle. Another philosopher, John Locke, also recognizes the equality of both sexes and he proposes that women strive to attain dominance in social relations. To him, political and conjugal powers are open to women and they should employ both to their advantage. However, the equation of women with Eve and all other women like Jezebel and Delilah in the Bible is unacceptable to women because the negative portrayal of women humiliates and shapes their lives, including their beliefs and feelings towards themselves. The negative portrayal of women makes them unable to discover their innate potentials. However, not all male writers are party to women's subordination, as some of

them indeed present an objective image of women, which reflects the reality of women's role in the society (Nwapa, 2008: 527). Unfortunately, these men constitute an infinitesimal minority. The negative and unimpressive portrayal of the female in male-authored literature propelled female writers (African and Non-African) to pick up the gauntlet and write in order to redefine and reconstruct their image.

2.5 Female-Authored literature and Gender

Literary works by women are limited because female writers were inhibited by a complex combination of material and ideological factors (Eagleton, 1990). According to Eagleton, the material problems are inequalities in the educational system, lack of privacy, the burdens of childbearing and rearing, and domestic obligations. On the other hand, the ideological factors are the restrictions of family and social expectations. To Eagleton, even when women writers managed to solve material problems that prevented their writing, an anxiety about their chosen role and how they are perceived in life and literature continued to affect them. Hooks (1981) reveals that, in the last twenty years black women have collectively challenged both the racism and sexism that not only shape how women are seen but determine how everyone interacts with them. However, black women have resisted sexism and the continued devaluation of women by speaking against the negative stereotypes of women that prevail in male-authored literature. Davis (in Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994: xi-xii) also posits that, Ogundipe-Leslie is one of those women's voices which have been speaking, both critically and creatively on the issues of gender, politics, social transformation of women's world for at least three decades; notwithstanding the rejection, condescension and derision women face in trying to portray themselves. Awe (2001: ix), who edited *Nigerian Women: A Historical*

Perspective which was first published in 1992, reflects in its introduction, how it was rejected for publication on the premise that the time was not ripe for the publication of a book on Nigerian women, and that a book on women would not have much market value. She further mentions that, even at that time, no Ministry of Education would adopt it as a textbook for schools because the achievements of women are not recognised in patriarchal Nigerian society. Ezeigbo (1996) also, after mentioning female-authors who have written novels up to the end of the 1980s, states:

In spite of their growing number, women writers received little or no attention from the Africanist and Nigerian male critics who dominated the literature.... It seemed as though women were not writing at all. The critics were completely engrossed in the criticism of the male-authored works, to the exclusion of their female counterparts (p. 83).

The male critics' attitude towards women writers is an instance of the generally acknowledged patriarchal perception of women in society, and their authority to control and limit women's power. It also indicates the masculine resistance to the development of female texts because accepting female texts means accepting their power of writing (Opermann, 1994). The age-old tradition of female subjugation and its attendant self-effacement and inferiority complex which question self-ability and talent continued their toll on the female intellect and creative instinct (Chukwuma, 2000, p. 102). Male writers view female texts as not critical or a threat to patriarchal system. They resist women's texts to avoid any alteration in patriarchal and cultural ideologies they had held for ages. Chukwuma (2000), who was very indignant at the way male critics rejected female texts, asserts:

The irony of the African female writers' late entry into the creative arena is that women are tradition bearers, tradition-

effecters and transmitters in the home, yet they felt incapable of translating the same functionality into the printed word. For writing was, as indeed education, the sole prerogative of men. How can she “intrude” into this masculine world and write on what? (p. 102).

Women’s intellectual capabilities were ridiculed because they were denied early Western education which would have given them the opportunity to write. But women who were privileged to write due to their educational background were also criticised. Ojo-Ade (cited in Chukwuma, 2000), attests that:

The male writer like the male social animal is more fortunate than the female. His presence is taken for granted... unlike the woman whose silence is also taken for granted. It is believed that women must keep quiet when men are talking. Woman is woman, mother, child-bearer, supporter of man. If woman talks too much, she is considered uncouth, uncivilised. If she is educated, she is classified as a weird specimen (p. 102).

With this biased mind about women, male critics review women’s works negatively. This is evident in the male writers’ criticism of Mariama Bâ’s *So Long A Letter* after its Noma Award. For instance, Femi Ojo-Ade after criticising Bâ’s novel, threatened to “tear... up and throw... into the ‘dustbin’ any other such ‘letter’, should one be written” (Stratton, 1994, p. 135). To Stratton, Ojo-Ade’s intention is to discredit feminism and women writers who advocate women’s liberation.

The male critics ignored and criticised female texts because to them what feminism offered African women is “a fake freedom” (Stratton, 1994, p. 135) and therefore African women’s writing is a non-issue. Femi Ojo-Ade’s criticism of Mariama Bâ’s text can be comparable to Walpole’s criticism of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of women*. Kate Millet described Mary Wollstonecraft’s book as ‘the feminist declaration

of independence', while Walpole views it as 'a hyena in petticoats' (Mayes, 1989, pp. 4-5). To Mayes, any movement which attempts to alter existing power relations must face abusive, sometimes violent response. Apart from verbal abuse, the male writers also criticised female-authored books for "discussing personal and domestic issues- marriage, motherhood, childbirth, etc., to the exclusion of the so-called more serious issues like politics, history and philosophy" (Ezeigbo, 1996, p. 83). They also argued that female writers use their experiences in the house as their central theme because, to Oppermann (1994), like their heroines, female writers were almost exclusively confined to the house. However, the female writers' portrayal of their heroines outside the public life is because their experiences were not as their male counterparts', due to the fact that they were isolated especially from public life. And, therefore, their novels display a static way of life. The female writers are criticised for being 'home-centred' in their texts as a result of lack of exposure or experience. Taiwo (cited in Chukwuma, 2000) writes of the female novelist in West Africa:

She may be economically disadvantaged and may lack the clear artistic vision which results in great works of art. She is almost certainly a late-comer in the field and usually tries, for the most part unsuccessfully, to imitate her male-counterpart (p. 103).

The first generation of women writers in the mid-sixties like Flora Nwapa, Delphinia King, Efuwa Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, Grace Ogot, Miriam Tlali, Zulu Sofola and Bessie Head (Chukwuma, 2000), have written serious critical works. However, Ezeigbo (1996) contends that the opinion of male writers concerning women's texts is a partial truth; because there are numerous instances of women's writings that venture into territories beyond personal emotional distress. She argues that women writers have

shown an interest in social and intellectual questions and explored them in their works. To Ezeigbo, “great literature could be created on any subject from any field of human experience. It depends on the skill and commitment of the writer” (p. 83). Kolawole (2000) explains further that a Zimbabwean writer, Tsitsi Dagarembga, in her novel, *Nervous Conditions* (1988), which fictionalises Rhodesia of the sixties, merges gender issues with larger cultural and political matters. The women write about societal ills, apart from gender issues. They focus on gender ideology to express other social matters. That is why Yvonne (2008: 558) affirms that “the woman I am is inside the writing, embraced and freed by it. For me writing is light, a radiance that captures everything in a fine profile.” The women’s writing shows their gender awareness and consciousness. Their writing reveals women’s needs, desires, aspirations and status. However, African women’s literature is not a “solitary fetish”, but “a mode of enunciating collective consciousness” (Kolawole, 2000, p. 120). The women are aware of their invisibility in male literature. So, men’s criticism of women’s texts did not deter women from writing. Instead, their criticism was a powerful spur to women’s writing. Aidoo (2008: 513) testifies that “there is pathos in writing about people, the majority of whom will never be in a position to enjoy you or judge you. And there is some wonder in not letting that or anything else stop you from writing.” With this spirit of determination, the female writers, especially the contemporary ones, commit themselves to writing extensively on different issues about human life, including gender in literature, believing strongly that the portraiture of women by many early writers were lopsided or one-dimensional (Kolawole, 2000). Consequently, the contemporary female writers, apart from Ogunjide-Leslie, have made giant strides in an attempt to redefine and focalise the one-sided

presentation of the African woman in African literature (Fonchingong, 2006). African female critics and writers like Ogundipe-Leslie (1985, 1994), Carole Boyce Davis (1986, 1994), Esther Smith (1986), Akachi Ezeigbo (1988, 1990, 1996), Catherine Asholonu (1995), Chikwanye Okonjo-Ogunyemi (1996), Mary Ebun Kolawole (1997), Helen Chukwuma (1990), Chioma Opara (1990), Gloria Chukukere (1995), Anthonia Kalu (2000), Ada Azodo (2003), Obioma Nnaemeka (2005, 2010), Yetunde Akorede (2011), to mention just a few, have criticized, rejected and spoken against gender disparity in literature. They have also written novels to re-inscribe a new positive delineation of African womanhood in order to rectify previous invisibility of women (Kolawole, 2000) and, therefore, inspire African women to write to redeem their image in their texts. Women writers are called to action because, to Kolawole, they are “cultural arbiters, the moral conscience, collective interlocutors for their gender, as well as ideological mouthpieces for their race” (p. 124). Therefore, women writers are charged with the responsibility of speaking on behalf of women by reconstituting them into the literary canon.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1984: 57) urges female writers to assume two major responsibilities in their creative writings. First, to tell about a woman; secondly, to describe reality from a woman’s perspective. Stratton (1994: 136) affirms that Mariama Bâ advised women writers to politicise their art, to ‘use literature as a non-violent but effective weapon in the struggle to’ overthrow the status quo which harms them. Nfah-Abenny (1997) also explains that Mariama Ba also advised women to rise up to the challenge and write themselves into the literary space, by suggesting that: “Books are a weapon, a peaceful weapon perhaps, but they are a weapon” (p. 97). However, African women owe it to

themselves a duty to draw up and review the African woman question. The African female writers view the novel as a weapon to be used peacefully to recreate, reconstitute and restructure women's distorted identities and bring them to the centre. Kolawole (2000: 124) advises African women writers "to dwell less on tragic heroism, motherhood literature, marital problems and address other equally important problems such as the women's relocation within a changing socio-political milieu and the condition of the every woman." Azodo (2003: xx-xxiii cited in Oko, 2008: 97) "summons women writers from the margins to rewrite the margin, configuring the center." She further explains that marginalised people should try "to reorganise their lives with political power about their governance in their own hands" because it is "only by assuming agency for their plight that a people can create their own subjectivity out of objectification by cruel institutions" (p. 97).

The female writers value literature as a useful instrument in the cause of their liberation because literature is "a veritable tool for gender activism in different parts of the world, especially from the women's perspectives" (Ezeigbo, 2004, p. 175). Register (1986: 170) advises the female writers to use literature to perform the following functions: (1) serve as a forum for women; (2) help to achieve cultural androgyny; (3) provide role-models; (4) promote sisterhood; and (5) augment consciousness-raising. Register further explains that for literature to be useful as a forum, it must allow forthright and honest self-expression. It should be writing, which is not constrained by pre-existing standards that may be alien to female culture. According to Register, Virginia Woolf's first directive to female writers was: "above all, you must illumine your own soul with its profundities and its shallows, and its vanities and its generousities, and say what your beauty means to you

or your plainness” (p. 170). Ellen Morgan, who renews Woolf’s advice to female writers, says that:

They ... should, I believe, encourage an art true to women’s experience and not filtered through a male perspective or constricted to male standards. On the other hand, authors should not feel obligated to offer an exact representation of their own lives, but rather the ‘fictional myths growing out of their lives and told by themselves for themselves’ (p. 170).

Female-authored literature should only be about women. It will not perform any other functions, other than expressing different authentic varieties of female experience. This is to help readers understand what female experience is, what it is like, how it operates and what it feels like to be a woman (Register, p. 170). Register feels that, if literature serves as a forum through which female experience is exposed and discussed, it can assist in humanising and balancing the culture’s value system, which has historically served predominantly male interests. In this way, literature can help to bring about cultural androgyny.

According to Ezeigbo (1990: 164), the female writers should create “female characters who are ‘full and complete women’- women whose survival does not thrive on prostitution or merely on confrontation with men.” Ezeigbo sees female writers as not exploring the “new feminist temper” in today’s society. For the female writers to realistically reflect changes in society, Ezeigbo urges them to create “women who challenge patriarchy not just because they have been victims of such a system, but because they wish to assert themselves as constituting an important and indispensable half of humanity” (p. 148). According to Ezeigbo, only then can feminism give the male and female readership what Heibrun and Stimson call “the vicarious experience of

renunciation and awareness” (p. 148). The portrayal of active women who are full, complete and assertive, according to Ezeigbo, “could play down on gendered conflicts and promote meaningful interrelationship between men and women” (p. 148) and ensure cultural androgyny. Ezeigbo (1990) asserts that the ideal literary work should strive for “positive radicalism” (p. 149). However, the feminist work must be authentic in the sense that it will be a realistic representation of “female experience” or “reality” and “feminine consciousness” (Ezeigbo, p. 149). From these criteria of assessing female works, Ezeigbo asserts that, “the ‘new women’ being delineated in some feminist fiction today cannot provide satisfactory role-models for the female readership” (p. 149). This suggests that female writers should look inward in order to represent their real self and genuine experience of women for didactic reasons.

However, there is a need for female writers’ literature to embody their real experiences, and that of their mothers, grandmothers and those powerful women around them who are story-tellers, griots and traditional poets (Ezeigbo, 1996; Nwapa, 1998; Aidoo, 2008) that were often neglected in male-authored literature, in order to serve as a role model and consciousness-raising to women readers. The use of the novel, according to Hooks (1993), is to break the ways women’s reality is defined and shaped by the dominant culture and assert their understanding of that reality, from their own experience. The African female writers work through their own experiences as women “to have a voice and not just any voice but one that could be identified as belonging to women” (Hooks, 2003: 14). Therefore, the action of African women to write and resist their continued devaluation and assert themselves in literature is termed by Hooks (1993: 1) as “an intervention”, while Arndt (2008: 24) name it “writing back”. Women are writing back,

according to Hooks (1993: 2) to move out of their 'place' (that is away from the bottom of everything, the place the society often suggests women should reside); and moving themselves from manipulatable objects to self-empowered subjects.

In essence, women are called to take their own destiny in their hands. They should assume the responsibility of creating their femaleness in literature in order to redress, redeem and rectify their image. Ikonne (2008) also warns that a woman should not constitute roadblocks to her self-actualization but "liberate herself from herself as sculptured and erected by male chauvinism. If not, the female sex will continue to be dominated by men until women learn their stuff" (p. 116). The female writers being aware of the negative portrayal of women in literature have reacted positively to the challenge. Cornwall (2005) affirms that women do have a voice to talk back and say, "No that ain't it!" (p. 2). African women scholars have been saying 'no' to the way they are being represented in male literature by recreating women's experiences in their texts. As Ezeigbo (1990) points out:

Nigerian artists, particularly female writers, are reacting positively to this development by highlighting women's experiences and views in their works. Some notable male novelists who formerly relegated women's experiences to the background are now focusing their creative lenses on women, so much so that some of them are delineating female characters who are highlighted as achievers, women who dominate the action of the novel in a more positive and constructive manner (p. 143).

The above observation shows that female writers, especially contemporary women, including some male writers who initially neglected women, have recreated the realities

of women in male dominated African society. Ezeigbo (1990) corroborates LaPin (1984) by postulating that:

Nearly three dozen women are currently recognized as authors across the African continent, and they have been joined by some male writers in giving serious treatment and a realistic characterization and all rounded perspective of the female gender (p. 142).

The above comment by LaPin buttresses the point that female writers are not alone in their fight against negative portrayal of women in literature. The male writers who show concern for women's plight are also giving serious attention in reconstructing female gender in their literature. The female writers use literature to raise their voice and visibility which male writers neglected.

The absence of the female point of view from the corpus of writing (Ezeigbo, 1996), drew the ire of African women writers who began to write to portray their realities as African women. The first contemporary African female novel which portrayed the 'female voice' is Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* which was published by Heinemann Educational books, London, in 1966 (Mojola, 1989; Ezeigbo, 1996; Arndt, 2008). Flora Nwapa uses her novel, *Efuru*, to portray a more positive and balanced image of African womanhood, which male authors neglected to point out (Nwapa, 2008, p. 527). Nwapa uses her 'heroine' Efuru to present African woman's industry and economic independence. Nwapa's portrayal of gender in her novel shows that African female writers write to challenge their male counterparts. Hitherto, her novel, which is seen as "'mother' of (Anglo-phone) African women's literature" (Stratton, 1994, p. 58), inspires other women to write in order to defend the cause of the African women. As Yakubu (2001) writes:

African female writers, since the early works of Ama Ata Aidoo, Flora Nwapa and Grace Ogot, have always shown a major sense of commitment to 'righting' women, especially in the African society. They have worked tirelessly at debunking many of the stereotypical images of women created in male-authored works. They have provided realistic portrayals of women's experiences and some doors of possibilities open to women in positive and negative situations. Their commitment aim at moving women to the frontiers of socio-political and economic development in society (p. 160).

The Igbo female writers centred on women in order to subvert stereotypical and negative portrayal of women in male-authored texts. They project an objective image of women, through women's experiences as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers and that of other women around them. They focus on women characters, lives and experiences in their families and communities to portray women's roles and the obstacles they face in traditional society. In the process they also project women's resourcefulness, industry and their capability to achieve social, political and economic power. Okoh (2008) posits that what dominates the creative writing of Igbo female writers are:

Pictures of the disempowerment and physical discomfort that women experience in their socio-cultural milieu where they encounter various types of gender discriminations, obstacles threatening their individual freedom and self-fulfilment abound: widowhood and morning rituals, forced celibacy, imposition of a spouse, bride wealth, male child syndrome, myth of women silent servitude which are common to the lives of most Nigeria women (p. 97).

According to Okoh, the female writers include Zulu Sofola, Tess Onwueme, Catherine Acholonu, Irene Salami, Chinyere Okafor, Amanda Adichie, Julie Okoh, Onyeka Onyekuba, Tracy Utoh, Charity Angya, Folake Adesinon, et cetera. It is important to mention other female writers such as Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, Chioma Opara, Helen

Chukwuma, Gabriella Nwaozuzu and Osita Ezenwanebe. The female writers use the themes enumerated above to present the real situation of women within traditional and contemporary societies, and how the women liberate themselves from patriarchal inhibitions. The female writers use their women characters to show that women have dignity and an identity beyond wifehood and motherhood; and that women are strong, influential, autonomous and articulate, and live up to individual demands (Ardnt, 2003), as against the way male writers portray them as ‘purveyors of violence and evil’. The female writers address the issues that concern them in their novels; the issues that male writers neglect in their texts. This explains why the female characters are more active than their male counterparts in female-authored texts. This manner of gender depiction by female writers is described by Grace Okereke (1994 cited in Ezeigbo, 2004: 175) as “female writers’ inflationary portrayal of female characters and deflationary portrayal of male characters.” The emphasis in creating female characters who are resilient, assertive and self-determined is not only to liberate women from patriarchal domination but it also promotes co-existence between men and women, which guarantees balance in gender relations.

2.6 Male and Female-Authored Igbo Novels and Gender

Ezeigbo (1996: 79) points out that, in pre-colonial Africa, Igbo women were creative storytellers until the introduction of writing culture by the various colonial powers. In the colonial period, according to Ezeigbo (1996: 79), “education and the art of writing were first made available to the male”, while “women became not only marginalized but intimidated into silence” and “women, the creative owners of the ‘story’, eventually lost touch with an art in which they had excelled in its oral form and performance” (cf. Chukwuma, 2000).

The male Igbo writers started writing before the female ones because of their early access to Western education. Emenyonu (1987) posits that when Nigeria attained her independence in 1960, there were two nationally well-known novelists: Chinua Achebe, who published two novels – *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *No longer at Ease* (1960) and Cyprian Ekwensi, who published one major novel – *People of the City* (1954) and two short novels – *The Passport of Mallam Illia* (1960) and *The Drummer Boy* (1960). Timothy M. Aluko published *One Man, One Wife* (1959) in the year following Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Before the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in 1967, a woman, Flora Nwapa joined the major Nigerian novelists with her publication of *Efuru* (1966). The novels above are not Igbo literatures. This is because Emenyonu (1987), Nwadike (1995: 13), Ogbulogo (1999:126) and Ikwubuzo (2012: 146) posit that Igbo literature is “all literary works written in Igbo language and which address themselves to the issues of Igbo world”. The first male Igbo novel according to Emenyonu is written by Pita Nwana, whose novel, *Omenụkọ*, was published in 1933. It is a biographical novel based on actual events in the life of the hero, Omenụkọ. Another male Igbo writer is Leopold Bell-Gam, whose novel, *Ije Odumodu Jere*, was published in 1952. The hero, Odumodu, is born in a poor family but works his way to the top by dint of hard work. His adventures carry him into foreign lands (European, North America, Cuba) where he is antagonized by many of his hosts. He survives and eventually returns to his original home a wealthy man and immediately sets about to modernize his community. Emenyonu asserts that Omenụkọ and Odumodu have similar succession of conflict in the novels. Odumodu's travel has many things in common with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. *Ala Bingo* (1933) is another male Igbo

novel written by D. N. Achara. Emenyeonu demonstrates that the earliest male writers (both writers in Igbo and English) were products of mission schools and the effect of their mission education is evident in the large number of biblical quotations, allusions, Christian imagery and vocabulary in their works. Obiechina (cited in Emenyonu 1987) asserts that:

It should be no matter of surprise that we find in the popular pamphlet literature a reflection of the triumph of Christian missionary education. The popular authors are committed to, and are often ardent propagandists of Christianity. They are, in the main, professing Christians and most, if not all of them, have at some time or other in their education come under the tutelage of Christian missionaries. Many of them are or have been mission teachers in which role they have, not only actively fostered the progress of Christianity, but also built up impressive knowledge of the Bible and Christian liturgy which they put to account in their writing ... it is therefore no wonder that Christian attitudes and principles have provided one of the major inspirations of the pamphlet literature and the Bible one of the chief literary influence (p. 29).

Emenyonu emphasises that the missionaries' presence in the Igbo community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a force both for good and evil. Good, because of its introduction of literacy and formal education, but evil, on account of its damage to Igbo societal values. Emenyonu states that the early missionaries were not interested in Igbo or other African languages for the sake of the language. Their primary mission was evangelism and westernization. In order to carry out their mission they had to learn and translate their instructional materials into Igbo language. The Methodist mission translated the *Pilgrim's Progress* into Igbo for use in schools. Using these books, the missionaries began to teach their pupils to read and create literature. The goal of the missionaries was not necessarily to preserve the Igbo oral tradition but to use it to

Christianise and westernize the Igbo. They were quick to recognize the structure of Igbo folktales and the educational role of folktales in the process of initiating children into the culture of their community. The missionaries' interest in the inclusion of the Igbo oral performances in their teaching was self-interested and did not seek to preserve the Igbo literary tradition. The stories which were collected and published by the missionaries were only imitations of the indigenous Igbo folktales as were the forms in which they were cast. Using the indigenous forms, the missionaries sought to impose a Western style of life and Christian dogmatism on the Igbo. Equally they twisted the framework of a popular tradition, the Igbo narrative, to convey their missionary teachings and message. The introduction of an alphabetic script by the Christian missionaries led to the development of the written literature in English as well as in Igbo by those Africans who had been taught reading and writing in mission schools. Emenyonu shows further that what influenced Igbo male literature was the Indian and American films, novels, booklets and daily newspapers, where the two major characters, a man and woman in love, were inhibited either by customs and traditions, inequality in social rank or differences in religion. The film traced the story of their love until they escape and marry or one of them, at times both, perish in the attempt. Until their tragic end, they spend the days in each other's arms, kissing, cuddling and petting. The only way they succeeded in marrying was by elopement. Such expressions of romantic love (kissing, necking, etc.) and the idea of elopement, according to Emenyonu, were not only new to the Igbo society, they were also revolutionary and reprehensible to the Igbo culture. Emenyonu shows that among the Igbo, marriage is more than the affair of two mature and compatible individuals. It involves the union of both families so that the compatibility of

the families is as important as that of the couple. Parents are part of the whole negotiation and nothing but disaster follows a couple who marry without the blessing and consent of their parents. Courtship was expected to be in the open and any display of affection was a mark of ill-breeding. Nwoga (cited in Emenyonu, 1987) affirms that the Igbo literature:

... started with cheap popular Indian novelettes. These came in large quantities, with flashy 'romantic' pictures of glamorous women being kissed by he-men on the covers, and large scale advertisements for talisman for all occasions – love, examinations, at the back (p. 60).

Emenyonu reveals that new ideas of love and marriage were infesting the new urban ideas as seen in the male-authored Igbo novels. For instance, in Ubesie's *Ukwa Ruo Oge Ya O Daa* (1973), Nna Ngozi refuses his daughter, Ngozi, to marry her love, Chude, because of change in social status. Ubesie's *Ukpa Miiiri Onye Ubiyam* (1975) also shows how Chinyere's father objects Chinyere's marriage to Amadi and forces her to marry an elderly man, Chief Emodi, because of his wealth. Chinyere's father's attitude leads Chinyere to commit suicide which is not typical of women in traditional Igbo society.

Stratton (1994: 15) shows that JanMohamed, following Fanon, characterizes colonial society as a Manichean structure organized according to a real allegory –an allegory of white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority. According to Stratton, there is evidence to suggest that a sexual allegory, an allegory of male and female, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, subject and object, self and other, also organizes the structure of African colonial as well as 'post-colonial' societies. She further posits that Ogun-dipe-Leslie observes that "the ideology that men are naturally superior to women in essence and in all areas affects the modern day organization of societal structures in Africa" (p. 15). Amadiume (1987: 136) points out that the transportation of 'Victorian ideology ...

into Igboland by the British missionaries and educationists' undermined women's traditional autonomy. According to Amadiume, "it is from their ideologies that the expression 'a woman's place is in the home' was derived (p. 136). Chukwukere (2000) and Onuegbu (2010: 51) admit that the domain of literary writing in Igbo has been with the males for several decades until now that few Igbo female writers are emerging. According to Onuegbu (2010), both critics (Chukwukere, 2000 and Onuegbu, 2005) laments that the macho-domination of literary writing in Igbo language studies paved way for the dishonourable image of the female in Igbo literature. Onuegbu concludes by not blaming Igbo women, especially married and educated ones, much for not being able to write due to lack of financial backing, high concentration, private quiet time for writing, and extensive and intensive reading in order to gather experience in writing. On the issue of women's difficulties in writing, especially literary texts, Adebayo (1996 cited in Onuegbu, 2010: 52) asserts that:

Every African woman who writes must have killed the angel in the 'House' several times over as well as overcome many prejudices in a society where the women are supposed to be seen and not heard... in ... traditional set-up of Nigeria and Africa in general ... women are more burdened with humdrum of daily life than men. And therefore, it takes extra effort on the part of the female to write (p. 37).

The intimidation of women and their exclusion in literary works, which Kaplan (1986: 180) termed "full subjectivity", propelled Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (cited in Eagleton, 1990) to enquire if "a pen is a metaphorical penis" (cf. Ezeigbo, 1996, p. 80). Their curiosity made them discover that "literary history sees writing as essentially 'male', a kind of extension of the male generative act, which confers on the male writer, authority, i.e., the right to create, control and possess" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 4), and

appropriate the “written word” (Ezeigbo, 1996, pp. 78–80) to be used in writing, which embodies male point of view, because to Lips (2003), men as a group, have held power to write more than women. Lips concludes that men have also had the luxury of a privileged viewpoint of being able to ignore things that seem irrelevant to them and defining the truth in terms of their own experience and that the assumptions made by men about women carry the most weight.

Men’s creation of women in early Igbo literature is firmly established as the real image of women because women’s experiences were neglected, despite the fact that “God, the supreme creator, endowed women with intuition and imagination and the skill of fabulists” (Ezeigbo, 1996, p. 78). As such, literary creativity in Africa remains “single-faceted, fragmentary and incomplete” (Chukwuma, 2000, p. 101). According to Chukwuma, men wrote about themselves, their wives, homes, their ideals, aspirations and conflicts. They also depicted their confrontations with the white man and his ways and in fact, their society at large. Men, therefore, are the mouthpiece of their womenfolk. But men do not know it all. They cannot take the place of women or even feel the depths of a woman’s consciousness, sensibilities, femininity, impulses and indeed her weaknesses (Chukwuma, 2000). This is the lacuna in male literature which female writers set out to address in their texts. The female writers depict the reality of African women in the pre-colonial period and in antiquity where women were competent farmers, traders, story tellers, oral poets, chanters, rulers, warriors and participants in the development of their societies which were not reflected in male-authored literature. The perception of women in life and literature is important to feminists/womanists because of its negative impact on women.

The first Igbo female writer is Flora Nwapa but her novel, *Efuru* (1966), is not an Igbo literature. Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* addresses the issues of women in the Igbo society but it is not written in Igbo language. Onuegbu (2010) opines that:

... the first Igbo female novelist wrote her work in 1979. Her name is Julie Onwuchekwa while her novel is *Chinaagorom* (1979). She also wrote the first Igbo poetry in the same year 1979. The title of the poetry text being *Akpaala Okwu* (1979)... the first female... writer in Igbo drama called *Obioma Mogboğu*... her work called *Adaaku*... appeared in a gap of ten years from the first literary text of an Igbo female, ... which was in 1989... Igbo female writers are still being counted in tens while the Igbo male writers are counted in hundreds... (p. 52).

Onuegbu shows that the first Igbo female novelist is Julie Onwuchekwe who wrote her novel *Chinaagorom* in 1979. But from the text *Chinaagorom*, we found out that Onwuchekwe's *Chinaagorom* was published by Evans Brothers, Ibadan in 1983. A correction to the above assertions from Onuegbu is that among the female-authored Igbo novels collected, Ada Meniru's *Nwaeze* (1978) is the first Igbo female novelist. Her novel was published by University Publishing Company, Onitsha. However, most female Igbo literary texts were written after the Nigerian/Biafran Civil War which ended in 1970. The few known female-authored Igbo novels are:

NOVELIST	TITLE	YEAR
Ada Meniru	<i>Nwaeze</i>	1978
Julie Onwuchekwa	<i>Chinaagorom</i>	1983
Nkeiru Priscilla Okafor	<i>Mmadu Bu Iyagba</i>	1988
Ogechukwu Stella Agwuna	<i>Mmadu Abu Chukwu</i>	2003
Nkeiru Kammelu	<i>Makuchukwu</i>	2006

Ifeoma Joyce Obidiebube	<i>Kòdìlìchukwu</i>	2006
Oyibo Kate Uzochukwu	<i>Ekwe Ekwe Na-Ekwe N'ute Ekwere</i>	2006
Ifeoma Joyce Obidiebube	<i>Chukwu Kwuo</i>	2007
Kanụ Ngozi	<i>Uwa Adighi Ka E Chere</i>	2009

2.7 Existing Works on Igbo Literature as it regards Gender

Many scholarly works have been written about gender from various perspectives. The scholars' interests range from biological, sociological, political, economic, cultural, educational, religious and literary studies. Gender has been criticized extensively in literature, especially Nigerian literature of English expression, but it has received little attention in the criticism of literature in indigenous Nigerian languages, including Igbo (cf. Ezeigbo, 1996; Ogbulogo, 1999). Since there have been relatively few Igbo works which analyse gender in Igbo literature, especially Igbo novels, this study reviews relevant Igbo works. The review, therefore, examines Igbo literary and non-literary works, apart from the novels, in order to have a holistic and multidimensional view about gender in Igbo society as well as Igbo literature.

Ogbulogo (1999) makes a comparative analysis of the Image of Women in Igbo novels of Nwana's *Omenukò* (1933), Nzeako's *Nkolì* (1973), Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala* (1973) and *Ukwa Ruo Oge Ya* (1973) and Ogbalu's *Ebubedike* (1984), and in some Nigerian novels written in English. He shows that most novels of English expression present women as subservient to men, and as 'mistresses', 'good-time girls', 'common girlfriends', 'fun-lovers', and as dangerous to men, while the novels written in Igbo portray women as companions and associates to men. Igbo women, however, are seen as

‘wives’ who are very content with their supportive roles to their husbands. To Ogbulogo, English novels imbued women with certain qualities that would be considered entirely masculine; and the picture of women in the Igbo novels reflects Igbo society which is not adulterated by foreign ideals as it is in Nzeako’s *Nkọlị*. Ogbulogo, however, views the portrayal of traditional roles of women in Igbo novels as a result of the developmental stage of Igbo literature. This is because most Igbo writers are still presenting issues that border on the traditional/cultural life of the Igbo people. As a result, women’s real life situation has not been reflected in Igbo novels. Ogbulogo argues that, in the years ahead, Igbo novels may begin to adequately reflect the changing roles of women in the changing modern Igbo society. Ogbulogo’s work is very important to this study, although he did not take cognizance of the image of female in female-authored Igbo novels. This work intends to fill this gap.

Ezikeojiakụ (2001) also analysed the “Themes in the Novels of Tony Ubesie”. He describes Ubesie’s *Isi Akwụ Dara N’ala* and *Jụọ Obinna* as thrillers which focus on the Nigerian/Biafran war as their major theme. He also categorises *Ukwa Ruo Oge Ya* and *Ụkpaka Mịrị Onye Ụbịam* as a romantic comedy and romantic tragedy respectively. In it, Ezikeojiakụ discusses briefly in *Isi Akwụ Dara N’ala* the theme of a woman’s infidelity in marriage. How women during the time of difficulty abandon their husbands and go after men who have money and authority. This work only describes the negative aspect of women without taking cognizance of men’s character which the present work intends to incorporate in its analysis.

Another scholar is Nwaozuzu (2001) who examines “Characterization in Tony Ubesie’s Novels”. She reveals how Ubesie characterises the male and female characters in his novels through Ngozi and Chude in *Ukwa Ruo Oge Ya* and Chinyere and Amadi in *Ukpaka Mijiri Onye Ubiam*. Nwaozuzu shows how Chinyere fails to resist forced marriage which Ngozi resists till the end. She also highlights how their fathers are too eager to see that they marry wealthy and affluent men. This is because their fathers do not believe in love which they view as mere childish infatuation. Nwaozuzu, also, explores *Isi Akwu Dara N’ala* and *Juo Obinna* which focus on the Nigerian/Biafran war. She shows how *Isi Akwu Dara N’ala* portrays the habitual greedy woman who cannot bear the suffering inherent in a war situation. She exposes men’s situation during the war and their suffering which is a result of their wives’ inordinate ambition. But she fails to account for some men’s behaviour and their inability to fulfil their family responsibilities which the women undertake during the war. Consequently, women are exposed to suffering and hardship which cause their outrageous behaviour. This study will bridge the gap by presenting the reality of the men and women as portrayed in selected Igbo novels including *Isi Akwu Dara N’ala*.

Chukwukere (2003) examines the language used to present male and female genders in Igbo society. She asserts that the language of gender portrayal for the males in Igbo society is praise-worthy, such as: ‘oke’ (male), ‘okemmadu’ (influential person). However, derogatory terms are applied to the female like: ‘okuelu’, ‘ashawo’, ‘akwuna’ (promiscuous and slut). These sexual tags which portray women as worse than men are a pointer to how language is applied to discriminate against women in society as well as in

literature. The thesis is relevant to this research since the study examines patterns of gender portrayal in Igbo novels.

Onuegbu (2004) discusses in “Transcending Patriarchal Subjugation: The Female in J. C. Maduekwe’s *Uru Nwa* (1973)” the Igbo marriage institution as the core of patriarchal oppression. She reveals in Maduekwe’s novel, *Uru Nwa*, the dehumanised conditions of Igbo women in marriage bonds. Onuegbu shows Maduekwe’s novel as the first Igbo novel which has a female protagonist. Although Maduekwe wrote his novel based on the socio-cultural events of the period of his writing and not as a result of feminist interest, his novel is shown as an eye-opener in feminist literary revolution. Maduekwe focuses more on the enthronement of the female and the dethronement of patriarchy to portray that the marginalisation of Igbo women in marriage is caused by both men and the Igbo cultural tradition. Onuegbu also reveals how men use tradition to subjugate and degrade women, especially uneducated ones. She further shows that Maduekwe portrays women as passive and inferior persons who are exposed to hardship by men’s selfishness, macho-egoism and lust. Marriage, however, is shown to be one of the instruments of patriarchal subordination of women. Onuegbu also highlights how Maduekwe shows women’s ability to change their world in order to build a better future. She finally suggests that women should help their fellow women in fighting patriarchy which shows sisterhood among women. Her work is relevant to this study although it focuses only on the female character without mentioning the male character which will be incorporated in the present study.

Chukwukere's (2006) concern in "Meeting the Challenges of Identity, Gender and other Related Issues in the 21st Century Igbo Literary Writing" is to create awareness in the language, literature and culture among the contemporary Igbo generation. She argues that language of one's formative years is implicated in a person's formation of a coherent identity. She also affirms that literature showcases language and themes in a new, imaginative way that pleases at the same time as it teaches and forges a new vision for society. However, Igbo literature as it teaches Igbo culture and institutions must do so from the dimension of language as a unique form of art, not history or sociology. She mentions through the examples from late Chidolue Ogbalu's (1973), Goddy Onyekaonwu's (1982, 1985) and Tagbo Nzeako's (1973, 1974, 1978) works that writers of Igbo fiction believe that it is their responsibility to create an awareness, which was grossly lacking among the contemporary generation of 1960. Chukwukere shows that in the analysis of gender and other social concerns in Igbo literature, Onyekaonwu's (1982) *Oku Uzụ Daa Ibube* recaptures Igbo monarchical system, Nzeako's (1973) *Nkọlị*, Nzeako's (1978) *Aka ji Akụ* and Igbokwe's (1995) *Ogbu Mmadụ Ndu Na-Agụ* have polygamy as their central theme. She observes with dismay the consistency in pattern, of distracting and irrelevant themes which fill the pages of most Igbo creative works, such as clearing of throat, summoning/abuse of wife or servant and evil woman image, where women are presented as wicked wife or stepmother, evil seductress and malevolent being. She shows that male writers make caricatures of the female by portraying women as either very good or too bad. She, therefore, suggests the use of gender-friendly themes and concepts which reflect all issues of our time. To her, a visionary work of art is one that faces squarely the challenges of using language to create new frames of thought,

action and overall worldview. She, therefore, urges Igbo writers to use language with ingenuity to provide the blueprint for a society's perception of a new vision, to direct and redirect them toward their achievement of useful goals and objectives. Her work is very relevant to the present research.

In the article, "A Study of Gender Balance in Igbo Language Texts: Its Implication in the 21st Century", Chijioke (2006) analyses three Igbo literature textbooks written in 1985 to find out the roles assigned to the males and females by the writers in each of the texts. He identified that the writers conform to the usual stereotype of the male playing more difficult and active roles than the female who plays passive and domestic roles. He also confirms that there are few cases of changing roles and concludes that, as the trend shows today (fourteen years later), the roles are being reversed towards the 21st century. He, therefore, urges Igbo texts writers to adjust to the new trend by exposing the changing roles of men and women in contemporary times. The work analyses different roles assigned to the male and female genders but it does not describe the negative image given to men and women in the Igbo language texts which this study intends to do.

Onyejekwe (2006), who discusses "Gender and Language Use in Some Selected Igbo Poems" shows how Ubesie's poem "Ndu Nwaanyi" portrays the Igbo world view about woman and her ephemeral nature. In this poem, Ubesie uses the images of 'corn' and 'yam' tendrils to depict a young, graceful and beautiful adolescent Igbo woman. Ubesie's opinion is that if a woman is not trained very early in life as a housewife and a mother it may be too late to get her to accept instruction from any man. In this case, she becomes assertive and independent which are not allowed in the patriarchal institution of Igbo

society. This presupposes that women are made to be docile and subservient and that anything less than that is detrimental to the society. The work is very important for this study because it gives us an insight into how women's lives and position are visualised in Igbo society, although it does not account for the position of men which this present study will analyse in selected male and female-authored Igbo novels.

Ikeokwu (2009) examines the male and female characters in *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, and deconstructs images of the female which have been portrayed negatively. Ikeokwu re-represents Chike and Ada through the exposition of the typical roles a man and woman play in traditional Igbo society. He shows that Igbo tradition stipulates specific roles for men and women. Chike, in the novel, does not fully perform his duties, especially during the war. As a result of that, Ikeokwu exempts Ada from her attitude which other critics capitalised on to portray her negatively as wicked, evil and wayward. To Ikeokwu, Ada's intention to venture into business is to assist Chike in the up-keep of their family and not to bring shame and disgrace to him. Ikeokwu also does not blame Chike for his inability to take care of his family responsibilities as a man because he attributes his weakness to the war. Ikeokwu gives a balanced portrayal of the male and female characters in his work. The work is relevant to this study because Ikeokwu is able to show in the work that women cannot be totally blamed for their actions, which may have been caused by some factors beyond their control. Ada is lured into prostitution by the soldiers who demand sexual gratification for releasing her seized goods.

Nnabuihe (2010), who worked on "Of Feminism, Patriotism and Heroism in Written Igbo Drama", examines the natural qualities Igbo playwrights ascribe to female characters. To

him, Igbo society perceives women as physically and intellectually incapable of competing favourably with men. Women are also thought to be fickle-minded, incapable of concealing secrets, reasoning aright, or withstanding rigorous mental ordeals. He attributes such societal notions and perceptions of women to indigenous Igbo and Judaeo-Christian creation myths that tend to favour the man, while projecting the relationship between man and woman as one between two unequal beings. On the contrary, he reveals historical facts and some evidence of women who have performed heroic deeds in the past. Such women include Queen Amina of Zaria, Idia of Benin Kingdom, Moremi and Madam Tinubu of Yoruba land. He argues that the Igbo women, as portrayed in some oral and written Igbo literary arts, have displayed great strength, determination and courage in their lofty achievements just like these women from other parts of Nigeria. Nnabuihe's work is relevant to this study notwithstanding that it only gives an insight into the status of women in Igbo drama. This work focuses on the position of both men and women in some male and female-authored Igbo novels.

Ikwubuzo's (2012) paper "Family and the Igbo Novels" is also relevant to this study. It focuses on portrayal of Igbo family in four male-authored Igbo novels of Ubesie's *Isi Akwụ Dara N'ala* (1973), Nzeako's *Nkọlị* (1973) and *Juochi* (1981), and Maduekwe's *Uru Nwa* (1978). Ikwubuzo shows that each novel explores problems that mar family relationships in Igbo traditional society. In Ubesie's *Isi Akwụ Dara N'ala*, a family can be destabilized by war, and a marriage can be ruined by a wife's unbridled waywardness and promiscuity. Nzeako's *Nkọlị* explores how co-wives' bitter rivalry and acrimony disrupt harmonious and cordial relationships in a polygamous family, and are sometimes occasioned by inimical external forces. Nzeako's *Juochi* exposes how a wife's arrogance

and negligence of her domestic responsibilities, as well as a husband's moral laxity can destabilize a family. Finally, Maduekwe's *Uru Nwa* depicts how a man's distrust and allegations of infidelity against his wife can lead to a broken home. *Uru Nwa* also shows how a female child doggedly playing a manly role can reunite her parents. Ikwubuzo's work reveals that women who are portrayed as perpetrators of family violence can bring peace in the troubled home. However, Ikwubuzo concludes that Igbo novels depict a range of human social behaviour.

These critics have mainly examined the image of the female characters in male-authored Igbo literature, thereby excluding the female-authored Igbo literature. This work will, therefore, examine the male and female genders as portrayed by male and female Igbo writers.

CHAPTER THREE

PORTRAYAL OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS IN EARLY POST-WAR MALE AND FEMALE –AUTHORED IGBO NOVELS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on different ways male and female characters are depicted in male and female-authored early post-war Igbo novels: Nzeako's *Nkọlị*, Ubesie's *Isi Akwụ Dara N'ala*, Meniru's *Nwaeze* and Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom*. It examines the roles and activities the male and female characters perform in the novels. The roles the male and female characters play as children, boys, girls, fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, fathers-in-law, mothers-in-law, uncles, aunts, cousins and friends. The analysis takes into consideration the social status, moral values, linguistic terms, cultural situations and names assigned to male and female characters in relation to their various roles in the novels. This is to highlight different ways male and female early Igbo writers construct gender, in order to determine whether they reflect the same positive and negative gender stereotypes prevalent in early male-authored novels or if they create their own interpretations of gender in Igbo society based on their experiences. In the analysis, the stereotypical images the male and female writers used to portray male and female characters positively or negatively are examined, though with a special attention to the

female characters. This is because according to Riley (1990: 5) “the critical gender is female. It is ‘women’ who are sexualised. It is also femininity which colours existence to the point of suffusion”. In the following chapter, based on contextual analysis and African womanist theory, we highlight the distinctions in the positive and negative portrayal of male and female characters in the novels under review.

3.1 Similarities in the Positive Portrayal of Male and Female Characters in Early Post-War Male and Female-Authored Igbo Novels

3.1.1 Male and Female as Emotional

Robinson (2005) views emotion as simply feelings, rather than as dispositions or tendencies to behave in certain ways. According to Robinson, emotions are not identified through behaviour, but with inner feelings. It can be feelings of love, anger, fear, jealousy, grief, shame, embarrassment, nostalgia, remorse and so on. These feelings can be expressed through autonomic nervous system changes, changes in facial and vocal expressions, and action tendencies. The early male writers (Nzeako and Ubesie) and female writers (Meniru and Onwuchekwa) depict their male and female characters as emotional. In Nzeako’s *Nkọli*, Ogechi is very emotional about her unpleasant situation in her husband’s (Ojeuga’s) house which is caused by the return of her estranged co-wife, Nne Ekwutosi (Ugoye). Ogechi feels that Nne Ekwutosi has caused her a lot of grief. She accuses Nne Ekwutosi of being the cause of her inability to bear another child after *Nkọli*. Every night, she weeps profusely and questions God about her marital problems:

Nne Nkọli bụ Ogechi maa ọsọ, “pịom”, wee bilie nọdu ala n’elu akwa ya, ma jiri obo-aka nri ya dulite agba ya. Echiche ekweghị ka o hie ụra n’abalị ahụ. Anya mmiri na-apụta ya anya wee na-eruda ya agba ka mmiri idee (p. 1).

(Ogechi, Nkọlị's mother, hissed, got up and sat on her bed and supported her jaw with her right palm. She was too worried to sleep that night. Tears flowed profusely down her cheeks).

Ogechi is still weeping when her daughter (Nkọlị) enters her room and greets her. She (Ogechi) is startled and feigns laughter to deceive Nkọlị, without knowing that Nkọlị heard her lament. Ogechi tries to deceive Nkọlị that she is rehearsing the song she was taught in the church but Nkọlị insists on knowing the cause of her agony. She refuses to sleep as her mother has requested. Women are here shown to have an inquisitive mind. Ogechi's attitude shows how women employ "coping mechanism" to hide their emotions in the family. Women pretend to be happy to conceal their unpleasant feelings from their children in order to maintain peaceful co-existence in their family. Nkọlị's persistence prompts her mother (Ogechi) to disclose her problems and she (Nkọlị) relieves her mother's burden through her word of advice and encouragement. Nkọlị's attitude symbolises sisterhood. The Womanists encourage female bonding in women's struggle for liberation.

Ojeuga also is emotionally troubled when his kinsmen summon him and his wives (Ogechi and Nne Ekwutọsi) because of their constant quarrelling and fighting. He feels embarrassed and worried to the extent that he is sweaty:

Mgbe onye ahụ banyere n'ụlọ ahụ, o zie Ojeuga ozi ndị ụmụnna ya zigara ya zie ya. Ojeuga bulie ihu ya elu wee wetuo ya, ma gbanye aka ya abụọ n'ukwu. Oke echiche bịa ya n'obi, nke mere ka ọsịsọọ na-aga ya n'ahụ pem pem. Ahụ ya wee dī ka onye sara ahụ, ma ọ dighi ahụ ọ sara (p. 30).

(When he entered the house, he gave Ojeuga the news from his kinsmen. Ojeuga looked up and down and stood akimbo. He was so worried he began to sweat profusely, as if he bathed when he did not).

Men are equally shown to be emotional like women, especially when their situations are unfavourable, but men hardly weep. The men easily overcome their emotions by quickly devising a means to end it. Ojeuga immediately deceives Nne Ekwutosi and sends her out of his house before the intervention of his kinsmen.

In Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Ada weeps when Chike is unable to establish a business for her: "*Ada biara otu ubochi si Chike na ya chorọ ibido izu ahia, ma n'ezikwu, Chike enweghi okpurukpu ego o ga-enye Ada ka o jiri malite ahia. Ada were iwe puwa.... Ma, akwa Ada bere wutere ya (Chike)*" (p. 67). (One day, Ada told Chike that she needed to start a trade, but in truth, Chike did not have a substantial amount of money to give Ada to start the trade. Ada left in anger... but Ada's tears saddened him). Chike immediately decides to sell his children's bed to set-up a business for Ada. All through the novel, Ubesie presents Chike as emotional. Chike is dumbfounded and speechless when his N8.00 gets stolen while he attends to a man who slumps in the bank (p. 57). Another instance is when Chike displays series of emotions of anger and regrets at Ada's unpleasant attitude towards him. For instance, he weeps on his brother's (Okechukwu's) shoulder when his brother visits them from the war front and narrates to him all Ada's irrational attitude towards him: "*Ya (Chike) na Okechukwu biri onwe ha oma otutu oge.... Mgbe o di Okechukwu ka o nwere mmiri a wusara ya n'ubu, o lere anya, hu na Chike ejirila anya mmiri wudee uwe ya*" (p. 162). (He (Chike) and Okechukwu hugged.... When it appeared to Okechukwu that his shoulder was wet as if he was poured water, he saw that Chike had soaked his (Okechukwu's) clothes with tears). Okechukwu is shocked when he discovers that Chike is weeping. He angrily threatens to kill all Ada's

relations if anything happens to Chike as a result of her irrational behaviour. His response in an attempt to protect his brother shows male bonding just as Nkọlị's word of encouragement to her mother (Ogechi) is an example of female bonding. Wood (2003:88) asserts that "like women, men value friendships, and count on friends to be there for them". According to Wood, many men create and express closeness more through action than through talk. Generally, the centre of most men's friendships is activities rather than conversation as Okechukwu shows in his actions toward Ada in order to defend Chike.

In Meniru's *Nwaeze*, Ifeyinwa weeps profusely when Nwaeze does not recognise her as his wife in front of his kinsmen. Ifeyinwa is embarrassed when Nwaeze asked his father whose wife she is when one of their kinsmen, Akunna, called her 'our wife'. In Igbo tradition, a wife is not married only to her husband but to the entire man's family and kindred. Ifeyinwa feels that Nwaeze does not love her. She returns to her room in tears to pack her belongings:

Ngwa ngwa o wee tugharịa, laba n'ulo ya, nody n'elu akpati ya chebe uwa ya. Mgbe ahụ o nweghi ike ijigide anya mmiri. Mmiri wee si n'anya ya na-awụ pịtipịti. O na-akwa akwa n'ime obi ya. Ihe nile gbara ya gharịi" (p. 10).

(Immediately, she turned, entered his house, sat on her box and bemoaned her fate. She could not hold her tears. Tears flowed uncontrollably. She cried her heart out. She was confused).

Ifeyinwa leaves Nwaeze's house to avoid further disgrace. Nwaeze is also very emotional. He expresses mixed feelings when his girlfriend, Celia, leaves his house. He feels sorrowful after reading Celia's emotive letter: "*Mgbe Nwaeze guchara leta ahụ, o*

kwara akwa nke ukwuu n'ime obi ya" (p. 34). (When Nwaeze read the letter, he cried bitterly in his heart). He immediately goes out to look for her.

Onwuchekwa in *Chinaagorom* presents Ihekammanandu, Dibugwu, Uloaku and Ajughiekwu as emotional. Ihekammanandu is emotionally disturbed because of his daughter's (Chinagoro's) pregnancy. He goes to a medicine-man, Okpotokpo, with his in-law, Chijioke, to find out who is responsible for the pregnancy. Dibugwu feels very sorrowful and disappointed when she realises that her daughter, Chinagoro, is pregnant:

Mgbe nne Chinagoro ruru Legosi hu ihe o cheghị na o ga-ahu, obi kwubara ya n'afọ.... Nne Chinagoro si na nwa ya tere ya unyi n'ihu site n'ituta ime n'azu ezi ogo ya na-emere ya nta, emere ya imo, ya ji kwara nwa nwoke. O sikhara na o gbuchielere ya uzọ iri akụ si n'aka ezi ogo ya huru ya n'anya, ya ji etu onu (p. 11).

(When Chinagoro's mother reached Lagos and saw what she never expected, her heart sank... Chinagoro's mother said that her daughter disgraced her by being pregnant behind her generous in-law, who she has taken as a son. She also said that she (Chinagoro) had denied her of the benefits she used to enjoy from her lovable in-law she is proud of).

Dibugwu cries out in fright because she does not want to lose her good-natured son-in-law who takes care of her as a son. She is very sad that Chinagoro has soiled her relationship with her kind son-in-law. Onwuchekwa also uses anecdote to show how sorrowful Dibugwu feels towards Chinagoro's purported waywardness: "*Dinugwu wee tie si, 'Enwe kwọ nwa ya n'azu o maghi mgbe o jiri ghorọ utu rachaa*" (p. 11). (Dibugwu screamed and cried, a Monkey carried his child on her back without knowing when she plucked cherries). Dibugwu could not believe that the daughter she raised properly would disappoint her.

Ụlọakụ (Chinagorọ's mother-in-law) is also very bitter concerning Chinagorọ's pregnancy. She could not imagine that the girl she loves for her good character and recommends to his son, as a wife, will flirt: "*Mgbe nne Chinedum rutere, o hụ na ihe ya nūrụ bụ ezi okwu. O wutere ya nke ukwu n'ihl na ha nile hūrụ Chinagorọ n'anya n'ihl ezi agwa ya*" (p. 11). (When Chinedum's mother arrived, she noticed that what she heard was true. She was sad because all of them loved Chinagorọ due to her good character). The two women weep bitterly and return to Aba sorrowfully. Ajughiekwu feels remorseful about her lies against Chinagorọ's pregnancy. She could not sleep and blames herself for all the negative things she said about Chinagorọ. She feels bad and kneels down to ask God for forgiveness (p. 60). Ụlọakụ is also shown as a fearful woman. She expresses shock when her son, Chinedum, shows her the accident that happened on the express road when they were travelling to the village. She could not look at it twice because the sight stretches her imaginations (p. 63). From the above discussions, men and women express different types of emotion. The women display emotions of sadness, fear, and regret, whereas men show feelings of anger and dejection. Brannon (1996: 195-199) shows that gender roles and gender stereotypes remain important in the experience and expression of emotions. According to Brannon (1996), women and men report different emotions in similar circumstances, and these differences fall along stereotypical lines. Women are shown to be more emotional than men, but only for a restricted range of emotions - happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, and surprise. Anger is shown to be absent from the list of emotions stereotypically associated with women, while sadness and fear are absent from the emotions associated with boys and men. However, men tend to suppress or deny their emotions, whereas women are more likely to express their

feelings. Men suppress emotions like sadness and sympathy, while women suppress emotions like anger and sexuality.

3.1.2 Male and Female as Industrious, Successful and Responsible

Industry is the ability of a person to be committed in a job and perform it excellently. Therefore, industry is very important in every facet of life. It is not limited to any particular individual. Men and women are supposed to be industrious in their undertakings, notwithstanding their distinctive physical features, which show men as the stronger and women as the weaker sex. Hence, biology determines gender roles in every society. The early male and female writers present their male and female characters as industrious and responsible. But the male writers further show only men who are successful in their chosen profession, while the female writers present more women, than men, who are successful in their chosen fields. Nzeako in *Nkọlị* portrays Ojeuga and his wives, Nne Ekwutosị (Ugoye) and Nne Nkọlị (Ogechi), as hard working. Ojeuga is shown to provide and care for his wives and children. Nne Ekwutosị and Nne Nkọlị are traders. They go to market to sell their wares and when coming back home, buy foodstuffs for the family:

“Ụbọchị ahụ bụ Orié... nne Ekwutosị bukọrọ ihe ole na ole, ọ chọrọ ire n’ahịa wee gaa ahịa. Nne Nkọlị gara ahịa.... O rechaa... zụkọta ihe...ọ chọrọ iji sie ofe, ya na ndinyom ogbe ha wee laa. Mgbe nne Ekwutosị rechara... ọ zụtara ihe ole na ole...” (p. 7).

(That day was Orié... Nne Ekwutosị carried some things she wanted to sell and went to market. Nne Nkọlị went to market.... She finished selling... bought some things... she wants to use for cooking soup, and went home with other village women. When Nne Ekwutosị finished selling... she bought some things....).

Igbo women are shown to be hardworking and assist in feeding the family.

Nzeako also shows through Nne Ekwutōsị that women are industrious and resilient, especially when they are in difficulty. Nne Ekwutōsị starts cassava trading in her parents' house after two days of child delivery, because she has nobody to take care of her: “... *ma nwanyị ahụ ezughi ike, nke mere na mgbe ọ dị mkpụrụ abalị abụọ ọ mụrụ nwa, ka o buliri ụkpa ya wee malite ịga ahịa n'ebe ọ na-azụta ụkpa akpụ wee buru ya gaa n'ahịa obodo ọzọ, n'ebe ọ ga-enwe uru wee ree*” (pp. 76 – 77). (... but the woman did not rest, for two days after child birth, she carried her basket to the market where she bought baskets of cassava and carried them to another town's market, where she sold them for a profit). Nne Ekwutōsị is determined to work hard in order to take care of herself and her children. Women are supposed to be hardworking from the outset in order to avoid unfavourable situation in life. Nne Ekwutōsị's decision to work shows women's steadfastness and unflinching support to feed their family. Women's hard work is important for them to be able to sustain themselves and their families, especially in time of difficulty, this is what Nne Ekwutōsị's efforts has demonstrated.

Nzeako also describes Obiogbodu (a medicine-man) as an industrious, competent and successful man. Obiogbodu informs his friend, Ojeuga, how he receives many clients from different parts of Nigeria: “O wee kọrọ ya *otu ndị mmadụ na-esi abia n'ụlọ ya ka ha bụ igwurube, ma ndị sitere n'Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, Benin, Calabar na akụkụ ugwu Nigeria dị iche iche. Ihe ahụ bụ onye jiri anya hụ, ọ laruo n'ụlọ ya, ọ kọrọ ibe ya.*” (p. 18) (He told him how people thronged to his (Obiogbodu's) house like locusts including those from Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, Benin, Calabar and from different parts of Northern

Nigeria. It is an experience which a person on getting back home shares with others). Obiogbodu is a popular medicine-man whose fame has spread everywhere in Nigeria because of his good works.

In *Isi Akwụ Dara N'ala*, Ubesie presents Chike and his wife, Ada, as industrious and responsible. All through the novel Chike is portrayed as a hardworking and successful man: "*Chike ji ego. O nwere moto. O bi n'ụlọ dị mma*" (p. 18). (Chike has money, car and lives in a comfortable house). He has a chain of businesses and industries in Enugu and Lagos, respectively. He is rich and has houses in Enugu and Awka. He is well-known and commands respect wherever he goes because of his wealth. Ubesie shows Chike as a popular rich Igbo man: "*Nanị Chike bụ onye Igbo m hụrụ kpatara ego, kwe na ya kpatara ego. A bịa n'Awka, ndị agha anaghị ekwe ka mmanụ e ji akwọ moto kọnahụ Chike, maka na ọ bụ onye a mara amara nke oma*" (p. 33). (Chike is the only rich Igbo man I know who admits that he is rich. In Awka, soldiers would not allow Chike's car to run out of fuel, because Chike is very famous). His fame reaches everywhere so much that the soldiers at Awka usually supply fuel for his car. When he goes to the bank at Awka, as revealed in the story, the manager would immediately attend to him notwithstanding that some clients were there before him.

Chike is shown to work hard to sustain his family. He continues to maintain his family irrespective of the war, which makes it impossible for him to work and withdraw from the bank. Ubesie shows that men have authority to sell their family property or borrow money for their family up-keep without consulting their wives. He portrays this through Chike's attitude in disposing of family properties. Chike realizes that their feeding money

has almost finished, he decides to borrow money from his friend, Captain Obi, and in the course of that sells his radio to him (Captain Obi) to raise money for his family up-keep: *“Nke a adighi itufu oge. Chike duuru Obi gaa na be ya. Obi zuuru ezigbo redio ya, para ego a na-achọ achọ, susara Chike”* (p. 42). (This should not waste time. Chike took Obi to his house. Obi bought his good radio, gave him the money he was looking for). Chike is happy that he gets some money to maintain his family irrespective of the insult he receives from Captain Obi’s girl-friend. This is shown through Chike’s prayer: *“Chike wee saghee onu ya, kpeere Chineke ekpere si, ‘Ekele diri Chineke, n’ihi na o mere ka m si n’iwe nwa agboghọ were, nweta ihe m ga-eji na-adị ndu’”* (p. 42). (Chike opened his mouth and prayed: ‘Thank you God, because you made it possible for me to get what will sustain me through the girl’s anger’). Chike’s prayer shows that men care for their families’ well-being. Chike thanking God for giving him what will sustain his life is indirectly referring to his family. The tone of Chike’s prayer indicates that as the sole bread-winner in the family, the man controls everyone including the women and children. Ada is not happy about the sale of the radio because Chike reneged on his promise to give her the radio. Ubesie depicts Ada as insensitive on the plight of her family. Ubesie shows that Ada does not care how Chike gets money for their feeding, what she only knows is to request money whenever she wants to go to market. The description of women as unconcerned about family issues by the male writers is unacceptable to womanists. Chike did not notify Ada when selling the radio. However, Ada did not know the reason behind the sale of the radio. Ordinarily, any human being can feel sad about it. If Ada had known that Chike sold the radio to raise money for their feeding, she might not react negatively.

Chike struggles hard but he still finds it difficult to feed his family: “*O dighi udi mbo Chike na-adighi agba ka o mara na chi ya aga-esi n’aguu na ihe nhiahu wee zoputa ya na ndi be ya. Ma, o na-akwachi uwa ya ka uwe, o na-adoka*” (p. 55). (There is nothing Chike has not done to save his family from hunger and suffering. But despite all his efforts, he continues to experience hardship). Chike later receives four naira (₦4.00) from the bank at Aguata in an exchange for all the money he made before the war. He is perplexed because he knows that the money will not feed his family for too long. He is downcast and slumps in the chair as he gets home. He desperately decides to sell his clock and bed so that his family will not die of hunger:

Chike si ebe o no bilie, gawa n’okporo uzọ Bekee. O dighi anya, ya na otu nwoke soro bata. Ya na nwoke ahụ kwubiri onu ahia elekere Bekee ahụ, na onu ahia akwà ya. Nwoke ahụ kwuru ya ugwo, buru... tinye isi n’uzo ula. Nani n’anya ka Ada na nne Chike na-ele nwoke ahụ.... (p. 58)

(Chike stood up, walked to the main road. It did not take long, when he came back with a man. They settled for a prize for his clock and bed. The man paid, carried them... and left. Ada and Chike’s mother were just looking at the man...).

Chike is a responsible father who cares for the well-fare of his family. The speechless mood of Ada and nne Chike in this context symbolises the helplessness of women in Igbo culture in the face of male masochism. That Chike sells their family properties without consulting his wife and mother also shows the nature of gender relationship in his society at that time. Moreover, it shows that women have no right in the disposition of family property and more so men’s domination in decision-making.

Ubesie also shows men's concern for their family through Chike's attitude when he receives ₦10.00 from the bank after the incidence of the ₦4.00. Chike could not sleep for three days because of the anxiety of how to take care of his family when the ₦10.00 is exhausted. He does not want his family to die of hunger. Chike then joins his friend to supply food to the army in order to raise money for his family upkeep. When he is no longer getting enough money from the business, he goes to Oko, where relief materials are shared. Chike reaches Oko and finds out that the soldiers do not help people to get food or allow them see the Priest who is in charge of the food. They torture anybody who enters without their permission. But, instead of going home without any food for his family, Chike vows to enter without minding the consequences. In desperation to get food for his family, he enters the compound by force without minding the soldiers' instruction and they beat him mercilessly. The soldiers would have killed him if not for the intervention of the priest in charge of the relief material. The priest gives him some foodstuff because he knows that Chike would not agree to go without getting any food for his family. Chike's attitude shows how men, especially Igbo men, are determined to feed their family, even at the point of death.

Chike carries the entire foodstuff he gets from the priest and happily goes home without minding the beating. Chike's attitude shows that men do not bother about their suffering in as much as they get food for their family. When Chike is unable to get food from Oko because his friend, Nna Azuka, who normally helps to supply him food at Oko, is sacked as a result of selling the relief materials, he ventures into menial job of carrying loads in the market in order to raise money for his family. He even goes as far as going to the house of his wife (Ada), who has abandoned him and their children, to beg for assistance

when he could not get money from menial jobs because he is avoiding being conscripted. Men are shown to be determined and fearless in their quest for the survival of their family. This is because men are the family bread-winner. Crawford and Unger (1995) view the main roles of men in the family as that of provider. This shows that the men's main responsibility is economic in nature. However, men are not seen within the domestic sphere. Since women's life revolves around the family, women are expected to take care of their husbands, children and home. Consequently, women's main responsibility is not to provide for the family. They look up to men for family sustenance. As a result, some women become lazy and some who work are not willing to contribute to the family up-keep. These women's attitude visualised them as those who are not committed and responsible like men as Nzeako and Ubesie later show through Nne Ekwutosi and Ada respectively.

Ada is presented as industrious, though she is later shown as irresponsible. Ada is shown as a business woman. She sells salt in the market and when she is going back home, she buys foodstuffs to supplement whatever Chike brings: "*Chike bute ihe oriri, nwunye ya (Ada) were ego o na-erita n'uru zuta ihe a ga-iji si ya*" (p. 69). (If Chike brought foodstuff, his wife (Ada) used the profit from her trading to buy ingredients to cook it). Ada uses her money to complement what Chike brings in their family, which is what obtains in traditional Igbo society. Igbo women work to complement their husband's efforts in sustaining the family. The cooperation and complementarity between men and women is what Womanists advocate in order to maintain peace and unity in the family.

The female novelist, Meniru, demonstrates in *Nwaeze* the Womanist stance in supporting men and women's industry. She shows this through Nwaeze, Celia, Okorocha, Ifeyinwa and Ebuzoaju. Nwaeze knows that a man is supposed to have a source of income before thinking about marriage. He wants to marry Celia (his Western girl-friend) but plans to get a job before the marriage to enable him to take care of his family. He is not too happy when Celia arrives at his house in Nigeria because he wants to get to the city where two of them can be employed, or at least get a job before he invites her. When he does not get a job from the Shell-BP, which invited him for an interview, he goes to different places like Onitsha, Owerri and Enugu in search of job. But he later gets a job in the Public Works Department in Enugu. By the time he gets the job, Celia has separated from him and goes to Lagos where she gets a job in an oil company. Nwaeze's work enables him to get a house, furnish it and marry Ifeyinwa in the end.

Ifeyinwa and her friend, Ebuzoaju, are industrious and responsible women. Ifeyinwa is a teacher: "... *o na-akuzi nkuzi n'obodo a na-akpo Okulu*" (p. 3). (... she teaches in a town named Okulu). She resigns her job to join Nwaeze in America, but unfortunately, Nwaeze returns to Nigeria. When she discovers that Nwaeze is not aware of their marriage, (because Nwaeze's parents married her for Nwaeze when he (Nwaeze) is in America) she leaves Nwaeze's house. She goes back in desperation to Okulu in order to beg for her re-absorption in her teaching job. She is later re-posted to another school in Enugu. Ebuzoaju works as a typist and secretary in the Secretariat: "*Ebuzoaju na-alu olu n'otu nnukwu ulo a na-akpo Secretariat. O bu taipist. O maara olu ya nke oma. O bu ya na-edere onye bu onye isi ha akwukwo. Onye isi ya bu nwoke a na-akpo Mr. Backhouse*" (p. 28). (Ebuzoaju works in a big Secretariat. She is a typist. She is knowledgeable in her

job. She is her Director's Secretary. Her director is a man called Mr. Backhouse). Meniru shows some of the work women are trained to do during the pre-colonial era unlike in modern society where women are currently lawyers, managers, engineers, lecturers, pilots, doctors and so on. The new status of women can be linked to the Womanist call for women to develop themselves beyond their limitations.

In *Chinaagorom*, Onwuchekwa also shows men and women as hardworking, rich and successful through Ekemma, Chinedum, Chinagorọ and Chinedum's friends. Ekemma is a business woman, who travels to Cotonou for her business transactions. Ekemma's hard work also motivates Chinedum to assist her in training her children in school. Ekemma as a real Womanist is determined, and works hard to take care of her children. She does not take the easy way out by going after affluent men as some widows do. Onwuchekwa also depicts Chinedum and his wife, Chinagorọ, as industrious, rich and responsible. Dr. Chinedum works in one of the oil companies in Lagos as an assistant director. He dedicates his time to his job and works for the progress of his company.

Chinagorọ is dutiful both at home and in the office. She takes good care of her husband, Dr. Chinedum Chijioke, and her children as a wife and mother. Her husband comes home for lunch and then returns to the office. Chinagorọ makes sure her husband's food is ready before he comes back home. She does everything necessary to make her family to be united. Apart from being a good housewife, Chinagorọ is educated as a lawyer. She works as a Secretary and a Legal Adviser in the same oil company where her husband, Dr. Chinedum, works. Mrs. Ayodele (Chinagorọ's friend) is an accountant in the same oil company where Chinagorọ's husband works. All these characters are not just depicted as

occupying positions in offices but actually working hard to earn their salaries. Women are shown to work in offices like men, but they maintain the level of work prescribed for women such as secretary, adviser and accountant.

Chinedum's friends, Alhaji Ibrahim and Mr. Kunle Babatunde, are successful businessmen in Aba: "*Ndị a bụ ndị na-azụ ahịa a maara aha ha maka inwe ego. Ha rekasiri erekasi n'ego*" (p. 68). (These are traders who are known for their wealth. They are stinking rich). Men's success is projected more highly than the women's achievement in Onwuchekwa's novel.

3.1.3 Female as Maternal

Lips (2003) views motherhood not as an automatic set of feelings and behaviours that is switched on by pregnancy and the birth of a baby. It is an experience that is profoundly shaped by social context and culture. The stereotypes surrounding motherhood suggest that women are supposed to achieve the ultimate fulfilment of their feminine role through motherhood, and mothers are supposed to be warm, nurturing, and selfless, sacrificing their own needs repeatedly to ensure the welfare of their children. When women fail to meet up the 'motherhood mystique', society castigates them. Mothers strive hard to maintain their feminine role in order to avoid taking blame for failings in their children and even for failings in society. Women are shown as motherly by both the early male and female writers. Women having maternal instinct is not restricted to performing motherly roles to their husbands and biological children, but also to other men and non-biological children in the community, including their house-maids, relatives, sons and daughters-in-law.

In Nzeako's *Nkọlị*, Ogechi is shown as a caring mother who does not want to compromise the life of her daughter, Nkọlị, with anything. She always stays with Nkọlị at night and keeps awake all through the night to protect her from witchcraft which constantly attacks her, while her husband, Ojeuga, sleeps in his 'Obi':

*... nna Nkọlị gwa nne nwata ahụ, ka ya gaghachi hie ụra....
Ma obi nwa ekweghị nne Nkọlị gaghachi n'ebe o na-ehi ụra. O
wee kwuo si, M ga-esoro Nkọlị nwa m hie ụra n'ebe a. O buru
onwu choro igbu ya, anyi abuo anwu o n'otu. O buru ndi mmuo
m ga-ahụ ya. Ma o buru mmadu anya m abuo ka m ga-eji huu
ya (p. 63).*

Nkọlị's father told the child's mother that he wants to go back to sleep. But motherly feelings would not let Nkọlị's mother go back to where she is sleeping. She then said, I will sleep here with my daughter, Nkọlị. if it is death, let two of us die at the same time. Should they be ghosts, I will see them. But if it is a human being, I will see the person).

Nzeako reveals through Ogechi the Igbo societal belief that having a child of her own is a woman's pride and her source of security in the family. Ogechi determines to save her daughter's life. The characterisation of a woman without a child as a nonentity despite her achievement is not acceptable to womanists especially as this could affect a woman's physical and mental health. Women's personality and achievements should be honoured irrespective of whether they have children or not.

In Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Chike's mother and an old woman who protects Chike from being conscripted are shown as motherly. Chike's mother hides him when Ada invites her friends in the army to arrest Chike because he advised her against her illicit behaviour: "*Nne ya wee para oche dokwasị n'elu ibe ya, Chike wee si ebe ahụ rịba n'elu uko*" (p. 155). (She took a stool and put on top of another stool, Chike climbed to the roof

of the house). In another situation, she hides Chike in their food cupboard when an army van parked in front of their house: “*O nuru ugbo kwusiri n’ezi, mara na o bu ugbo ndi ami... Chike wee pioba n’okpuru igbe nri ha, nne ya were ji na ihe oriri ndi ozọ kwachibido ya*” (p. 161). (He heard a vehicle stopped outside, and knew that it was an army van... Chike sneaked into their food cupboard, and his mother covered him up with yams and other foodstuffs). In the same way, an old woman who is Chike’s neighbour hides Chike for three days in her house to avoid his being conscripted by Ada’s army friends: “*Ebe ndu ya gbara ya ghari, otu agadi nwanyi bidobere ha nso si ya bia.... Agadi nwanyi ahụ kwere ya nkwa si na ya ga na-ezo ya ma ndi ami bia. Chike wee biri na be nwanyi ahụ*” (p. 159). (In his confusion, his neighbour, an old woman invited him to her house... The old woman promised to continue to hide him whenever the soldiers came). These two women are the epitome of motherhood. They are committed to save human life.

Meniru’s *Nwaeze* presents women’s motherly love and protection through Ifeyinwa’s mother. Ifeyinwa’s mother makes sure that Nwaeze has separated from Celia before she allows Ifeyinwa to marry him. She also tests Nwaeze’s love for Ifeyinwa before she gives her consent:

Ifeyinwa akochaalara nne ya ihe Ebuzoaju kororo ya maka Nwaeze na nwanyi bekee. O di nne Ifeyinwa mkpa nke ukwu ighota na nwanyi ahụ abughi nwunye Nwaeze. O dikwa ya mkpa ighota na Nwaeze chororo Ifeyinwa chosie ya ike ya na imata ma Nwaeze o makwara na ihe o mere site n’ileli nwanyi ya nke bu na o dighi ihe o jiri lota bu nke o zutaara nwunye ya adighi mma. Nke kacha nke o chororo imata otu nwanyi ahụ na Nwaeze siri di ugbu a (p. 47).

(Ifeyinwa had told her mother what Ebuzoaju told her about Nwaeze and the white woman. Ifeyinwa's mother needed to know that the woman is not Nwaeze's wife. She also needed to understand that Nwaeze wanted Ifeyinwa so much, and to know if Nwaeze understood the implications of coming back without buying things for his wife. Above all, she needed to know the situation of things between Nwaeze and that woman).

The intention of Ifeyinwa's mother is to protect and secure her daughter's happiness in her marriage. Nwaeze assures her he has no relationship with Celia and promises to love and treat Ifeyinwa as his wife.

In *Chinagorom*, Oñuchekwa portrays Chinagorọ, Dibugwu (Chinagorọ's mother), and Uloaku (Chinagorọ's mother-in-law) as maternal. Chinagorọ takes good care of her husband, Chinedum, her children and housemaids, Ekaete and Inyang. Chinagorọ's caring attitude towards them motivates them to take good care of her children and also work for the good of her family. Uloaku cares for her daughter-in-law, Chinagorọ, and protects her when she is accused of infidelity. She persuades Chinagorọ to go home with her so that she will beg the elders to perform a libation on her behalf in order to deliver safely (p. 15). Dibugwu also wants to take Chinagorọ to live with her in order to protect her from any shame and disgrace her pregnancy may cause her. She is ready to take care of Chinagorọ and her baby if her in-laws reject her (p. 15). The two mothers stay solidly behind Chinagorọ and take good care of her in Chinedum's house until it is time for her to give birth: "*Nne di Chinagorọ na nne ya wee kee aji n'ume wee kwuo n'otu olu, 'O ruolenụ. Anyị ga-eso gi aga ulọ ogwu'*" (p. 23). (Chinagorọ's mother-in-law and her own mother now determined said in unison: It is time. We will follow you to the hospital'). Their attitude depicts sisterhood. The two mothers bonding with Chinagorọ strengthened

her to deliver successfully. Nwaozuzu (2007) affirms that “Igbo traditional women rank among the best in the world in terms of playing the dual roles of a very caring wife and mother” (p. 27). From Nwaozuzu’s stand point, Igbo women are very maternal and work for the co-existence of their family. African Womanism advocates cordial relationship among women, especially between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. This is because some mothers-in-law hate, oppress and intimidate their sons’ wives, disrupting the peace and unity in their sons’ families. The difference between African Womanism and Western Feminism is that the Womanists uphold motherhood and domesticity which Radical Feminism wants to destroy in their bid to achieve liberation. Wollstonecraft (cited in Oakley, 1986: 127) urges women to be good mothers. According to Wollstonecraft, “To be a good mother, a woman must have sense, and that independence of mind which few women possess who are taught to depend entirely on their husbands” (p. 127). She believes that “meek wives are ... foolish mothers” (p. 129) and maintains that women should be mothers and good mothers. She, therefore, frowns at women relegating the care of their children to nurses, servants and boarding schools, because many children are absolutely murdered by the ignorance of women. She emphasizes that those women who did not breastfeed their children were scarcely worthy of the title ‘mother’ at all.

3.1.4 Male and Female as Religious

Here, religion is not looked at as a creation or projection of male concerns and imagery and a legitimization of male desire to subjugate women and have power over them (Sharma, 1987, p. 5) but the ability of men and women to pray. Both the male and female writers show that women are more religious (prayerful) than the men. In *Nkọlị*, Nzeako

shows how Adaora advises Ogechi to commit Nne Ekwutosi's diabolic tendencies to God's hand. Ogechi on her own accord refuses to practice diabolic acts and asks for God's protection against Nne Ekwutosi's irrational behaviour towards her: "... *ma o dighi n'ulo dibia m ga-aga. O bu Chineke bu dibia nke m.....*" (p. 5) (... but I will not visit any medicine-man. God is my medicine-man). Ojeuga also prays to God to help him control his temper against attacking Nne Ekwutosi because of her cantankerous behaviour (p. 25).

In Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Chike prays to the extent of reading the Bible in order to beg God to protect him against Ada's plot to kill him to practice her prostitution to the fullest. Chike brings out the Bible and prays to God for two things: "*Nke mbu... Chineke zoputa ya n'aka ndi iro ya bu Ada na ndi enyi ya. O buru na nke ahụ agaghị ekwe mee, Chineke nara mkpuru obi ya ma ya nwuo, chedoro ya nne ya na umu ya, ka ogu wee bie*" (p. 154). (First...let God save him from his enemy, Ada, and her male friends. If this is not possible, let God receive his soul when he dies, and protect his mother and children till the war ends). Chike believes he will die when he immediately opens the Bible and sees a story of David and Uriah's wife. Ubesie demonstrates that women have the ability to kill their husbands. Chike writes about his marriage experiences with Ada. He indicates that if he dies in the war, Ada is the cause of his death because she instructs her army friends to conscript him into the army. He hands the letter to his mother to give his children when they mature. Chike's attitude will have negative effect on the woman and the children. This is because it can destabilize the family permanently and can lead to death, either of the woman or the children. Womansts prefer the husband and wife to continue negotiating until they achieve peace in their family.

Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom* presents Uloaku (Chinedum's mother) as religious. She begs God to bear witness to her daughter-in-law (Chinagoro), when Chinagoro is accused of waywardness (p. 15) Uloaku is shown as a real Womanist. She does not want her daughter-in-law to die during her pregnancy. She determines to save her life by interceding for her. Womanists urge women to employ religion as a 'coping mechanism' in resolving issues affecting their family instead of aggression and/or diabolism.

3.1.5 Female as Domestic

The male and the female writers portray domesticity as solely women's affair. In Igbo society, domesticity is seen as women's role. Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala* presents women's domestic disposition through Ada. Ada insists on finishing cooking their children's food before taking them to Aguata as Chike suggested because the war has reached their house in Awka. Chike continues warning her to leave the food. Ada's reply shows women as naturally domestic: "*Nna Chukwuma, unu bu umunwoke na-elere ihe oputa n'elu elu. M duruo ha Aguata, ginị ka ha ga-eri? Kwe m ka m sichaa ihe m na-esi*" (p. 46). (Chukwuma's father, you men look at things on the surface. If I take them to Aguata, what would they eat? Allow me to finish what I am cooking). Chike's words demonstrate that men think differently from women. Women have innate sense to provide food for their family. Ada is interested in the safety of her children and also in cooking the food that will sustain them at Aguata. But, Ubesie presents Ada as a stubborn, disobedient and uncaring mother. Ubesie unknowingly shows through Ada's words to Chike that men do not reason ahead like women. Men react based on what happens within their immediate environment, while women think beyond their present

situation. For Womanists, Ada is a real mother who cares for the well-being of her family. She maintains her role as a mother and senses that getting food on their way to Aguata will be difficult as a result of the war, but Chike thinks his money can get whatever they need on their way. However, money, at times, does not get one's immediate need. Chike could not buy water at Aguata when their water finishes. Inadvertently, Ubesie's portrayal demonstrates that women are reasonable, intuitive and respond to situation.

Meniru's *Nwaeze* presents idyllic picture of women's domesticity in traditional Igbo society. She depicts cooking as specifically women's role. Nwaeze's mother quickly goes to take care of cooking after her husband, Mgbokwere, instructs her on the different dishes to prepare for Nwaeze's reception. Mgbokwere tells her they will kill a cow and two goats, cook rice, pound yam and cassava (fufu). They will cook bitter leaf soup, egusi and ogbono soups. They will use some meat to cook soup, fry some meat for stew, some meat will be reserved, while the head and other parts of the intestine will be used to make a special delicacy (Ngwongwo). Immediately he finishes, Nwaeze's mother goes into the kitchen to take care of the cooking: "... *nwanyị agaa mewe ihe ndị dịrị nwanyị*" (p. 1). (... the woman went to carry out the woman's role). Meniru also illustrates that both men and women in Igbo society work for the success of the ceremony. Mgbokwere instructs Obi to kill the cow and the two goats while he goes out to take care of drinks. He also sends his nephew, Okoroocha, and Mgbечи, to bring and arrange seats, plates and spoons for the guests. Nwaeze's sisters, Nwanyinkwo and Okwuoyibo, come from their marital homes to assist their mother in the kitchen. Meniru features the role of men, women and children in Igbo family, especially during ceremonial activities, as

complementary. Nwaeze's mother is also presented as a good cook. She kills chicken and prepares a delicious soup for Nwaeze's girlfriend, Celia, when she arrives at Nwaeze's house from abroad (p. 19). Meniru challenges the Igbo tradition that denies women the right to kill chicken or any type of animal.

Meniru shows that women are trained to assume domestic roles during colonial period. Nwaeze's parents married Ifeyinwa for Nwaeze because she is trained in school on how to do domestic chores, especially how to wash clothes and cook food (p. 3). Ifeyinwa is also shown cooking in the kitchen for Nwaeze's father's kindred who are coming to marry her: "*Ifeyinwa n'orij n'usekwu na-esi nri, n'ihi na ndi nile biara ga-eri nri. Mana nna ya na umunna ya noro n'obi chere ndi na-abia*" (p. 5). (Ifeyinwa was already in the kitchen cooking, because their guests will be fed. But her father and his kindred were in the family sitting room waiting for their guests). Cooking is shown as women's sole responsibility in the family. Throughout Ifeyinwa's stay in the house of Nwaeze's parents, she does house chores. She goes to the stream early in the morning with other girls in the village to fetch water. When she comes back, she sweeps the whole compound and the rooms, including Nwaeze's room.

In *Chinagorom*, Onwuchekwa portrays women as chief cooks through Uloaku's words to Ekemma and Alaezi when they come to help Chinagoro in cooking for Chinedum's colleagues: "*Umụ ndi osi ite unu abiala*"? (p. 42). (Cooks, have you come?). Onwuchekwa in different situations shows that every woman is supposed to know how to cook, and also shows how women can maintain their marriage through cooking good food for their husbands. But, Ikpe (2009, p. 6) sees the idea that women are solely

responsible for cooking in the family as socially constructed because there is nothing biological in the ability to cook, which means that a man is biologically capable of cooking. The man does not cook because society ascribes cooking to the female gender. Ikpe also emphasizes that “men would willingly cook, when cooking becomes an employment from which one could earn a living” (p. 6). This is a fact in modern society, where virtually all hotels have men as cooks. Consequently, cooking can be done by either men or women depending on the situation at hand.

3.1.6 Male and Female as Patient and Persevering

The male and female writers present men and women as patient and enduring. In *Nkọli*, Nzeako presents Ogechi (Nkọli’s mother) as a very patient woman. Ogechi respects her husband, Ojeuga, and obeys all his instructions about living in peace with her co-wife, Nne Ekwutosi (Ugoye). Ogechi always endures everything Nne Ekwutosi does to her and waits patiently for their husband to return in order to report to him. Ojeuga thanks Ogechi for her patience: “... *n’ihi nke a, ka m ji ekele gi otu i sirị nwee ndidi n’ime okwu ahụ mmadu gwara gi, wee bia ikoro m ya.*” (p. 13) (...as a result of this, I thank you for how you exercised patience over what somebody told you, and came to report to me). Ogechi’s attitude shows women as patient and enduring in the bid to avoid anything that can disrupt unity in the family.

Nzeako also shows that men patiently endure women’s excesses to an extent. Ojeuga patiently endures Nne Ekwutosi’s insults and cantankerous behaviour, even when her sister, Oduenyi, incites him against Nne Ekwutosi. He makes her sister understand that he is aware of Nne Ekwutosi’s cantankerous behaviour but he does not want to act

aggressively because he is hot tempered: “*Biko, nwanne m nwanyị, anụrụ m ihe nile i kwuru. Nke ọzọ, enwere m obi dị ọkụ, ma ihe m na-arịọ onye kere m bụ ka o mee ka m ghara iwe iwe dị ọkụ mgbe nile.*” (p. 25). (Please, my sister, I heard all that you said. Besides, I am hot-tempered but I keep asking my Creator to help me not to get angry all the time). Ojeuga’s comment shows that men control their hot temper for the peaceful co-existence of their family.

In Ubesie’s *Isi Akwụ Dara N’ala*, Chike patiently endures Ada’s excesses (waywardness and late night-keeping) because Ada feeds the family: “*Nwoke ibe m ji nwayọọ na-edi ihe bịaara ya, maka na ọ maghị nke ọ ga-ekwu, Ada aju inye ya ihe oriri ụbọchị ahụ. Nwoke ibe m mechiri ahụ, na-ele ihe ụwa n’anya, maka na mkpuruaka ọ na-aracha ka di ya mma*” (p. 79). (My fellow man quietly endures what he encounters, because he does not know what he would say, Ada will refuse to feed him that day. My fellow man is unperturbed, and silent, because he is contented with the food he still eats). Ubesies demonstrates that some men are helpless to react against their wives’ immoral behaviour. This also illustrates that men (like women) endure their spouses’ erratic behaviour when they depend on them for sustenance.

Meniru’s *Nwaeze* displays men as patient and enduring through Nwaeze who begs Ifeyinwa for forgiveness when he finally finds her in Enugu where she is reposted. Ifeyinwa frustrates all the efforts Nwaeze is making to explain his relationship with Celia. Ifeyinwa warns Nwaeze when he tries to explain: “*Ọ bụrụ ọgwụ, ọ gaghị erere gi. O nweghị ihe jikoro mu na gi. Eji m aka na ndị ụlọ anyị gwara gi na mu agaghị alu nwoke nwerela nwanyị.... Mgbe o kwuchara nke a ọ gbaa nnukwu ọsọ gbalaa*” (p. 39). (God

forbid. There is nothing between two of us. I hope my parents told you I wouldn't marry a man that has a wife.... When she finished, she quickly ran home). Meniru describes Ifeyinwa as a prestigious girl. She (Ifeyinwa) does not want to taint her image by associating with a married man, which is contrary to what obtains in the contemporary society. Nwaeze goes to the extent of using her friend, Ebuzoaju, to win her back and marries her. Men are shown to be patient when they are determined to achieve their aim.

The taxi driver, who takes Mrs. Backhouse from the airport to her husband's (Mr. Backhouse's) house in Enugu, is shown as being very patient and kind. The taxi driver patiently helps Mrs. Backhouse to discover where her husband lives, because she does not know any route in Enugu: "*N'ezie o ji ndidi duo nwanyị ahụ ụbọchị ahụ n'ihị na ọ maghị ụlọ Mr. Backhouse ma o ji obi ume ala na obi ọma gaa n'ụlọ n'ụlọ tutu ọ juta ụlọ Mr. Backhouse*" (p. 37). (Indeed, he patiently guided the woman that day because she did not know Mr. Backhouse's house, but he kindly and humbly went from house to house before he found Mr. Backhouse's house). Mrs. Backhouse appreciates the taxi driver because of his patience. She gives him a substantial amount of money, which makes him thank God for giving him such a customer, and prays to get such a customer next time.

Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom* also represents men and women as patient and enduring. Ihekammanandu's wife, Dibugwu, stays for seven years without any issue and Ihekammanandu refuses to marry another wife despite the pressure from his parents, siblings and friends: "*Ihekammanandu ji akwukwo fachie ntị ya*" (p. 1). (Ihekammanandu refused to listen to them). His wife eventually gives birth to a girl on the eighth year of their marriage. They named her 'Chinaagorom' (God has borne me witness) but fondly

call 'Chinagoro', to reflect the Igbo culture of naming their children according to their life experiences. Chinedum is also shown to be patient with his wife's (Chinagoro's) inability to conceive after two years in their marriage (p. 4). Chinagoro later on the third year of their marriage, bears a son whom they named Uchechi, to show that it is the Will of God.

3.2 Similarities in the Negative Portrayal of Male and Female Characters in Early Post-War Male and Female-Authored Igbo Novels

3.2.1 Female as Seductive

Women are shown to seduce men with their beauty. Ubesie and Onwuchekwa portray their female characters as seductive. In *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Ubesie depicts women as those who use their beauty and money to seduce men, while men are self-controlled and contented. He narrates how Ada adorned herself to lure the army commandant who seized her goods in Agulu (when some men who trade for her are returning from Otuocha), but he resists her:

O wee je saa ahụ, tụturu ihe o na-ete n'onu tee, tee otanjele, tee otu ude... onye ji egbe ma o bu mma akaghị ya, n'ih na ihe ndi ozọ na-enweghị ike iji egbe gbata, ma o bu jiri ogu luta, Ada na-eji mma ahụ ya na ihe o na-ete n'ahụ na eze ochi ya na-enweta ya.... O wee je lee onwe ya n'ugegbe, tugharikwaa azu ya lekwa n'ugegbe, kwee n'isi, si na ya bu agu abaala n'akpukpo ewu (p. 92).

(She took her bath, applied her lipsticks, eye shadow and rubbed pomade.... someone who has a gun and a cutlass is not better than her because what others cannot get with a gun or strength, Ada gets through her beauty, make-up and laughter She looked herself in the mirror, turned her back and looked, nodded and said that she the leopard has changed into a goat's skin).

Ubesie uses the metaphorical language ‘... *na ya bu Agụ abaala n’akpukpọ ewu*’ (... that she the leopard has changed into a goat’s skin), to show how women camouflage in their attempt to seduce men. Ada’s attempt to seduce the army commander fails, because he is strong-willed. She attempts to bribe him (the army commander) but the commander rejects the bribe, in order to portray men as those who are content with their salary and position:

Ada kpumitere nso ebe ọ nọ, sị nwoke ahụ ka ha abụọ jeruo n’ime ụlọ be ya. Nwoke ahụ ajụ, sị ya na o nwee ihe ọ chọrọ igwa ya, ya gwa ya ugbu a. Ada wee para ego o kere na ngwugwu na ngwugwu bunyewe nwoke ahụ, nwoke ahụ sere aka n’ike, ego ahụ nile toghèe, wusa n’ala.... O wee sị Ada.... ‘Jee kelee chi gị na obi dị m mma taa... agara m igwa ndị agha m ka ha kpochie gị. Asị m gị na-ego a na-akwu m anaghị ezuru m? Asị m na ego ka ndụ m mkpa? ‘Ngwa, si ebe a bilie, lawa!’ (p. 94).

(Ada moved closer to him and asked the man to take her to his room. The man refused, and told her to disclose her mission now. Ada started giving the man some wraps of money, the man withdrew his hand immediately causing the wraps to open and scatter on the ground ... He told Ada ... Go and thank your God that I was in a good mood today. If not, I would have instructed my soldiers to lock you up. ‘Did I tell you my salary is not enough for me?’ ‘Did I tell you that money is more important than my life?’ ‘Now get out of here, go home!’)

Women are then shown as seductive and corrupt and men as faithful and honest. Ubesie’s portrayal is contrary to what happens in society where men wallow in corruption.

Onwuchekwa’s *Chinaagorom* also portrays women as seductive. She shows that women seduce men through their dressing: “*Ha jie ngwa nke a taa, ha e jie nke ọzọ echi. Ha tee*

nke anya, nke onu na nke mbubere anya na-acha ntụ ntụ n'elu anya. O na-afọdu ka ufọdu ha gbara ọtọ ebe ha na-achọ iji ngwa ga-emebi Dọkita Chijioke isi” (p. 85). (They would wear this one today, and another one tomorrow. They would apply the eye pencil, lipsticks and eye shadow. They would almost go naked all in the bid to attract Doctor Chijioke Chinedum). Onwuchekwa also presents well-educated women as seductive: “*O di ọtutu umunwanyị mụrụ oke akwukwọ di ugbo a, ọrụ ha bụ ichupu ndị amughị oke akwukwọ n'ụlọ di ha, ka di ha wee lụwa ha” (p. 80).* (Now there are so many well-educated women whose stock in trade is to displace the less-educated ones in their matrimonial home in order for their husbands to marry them). The women are shown as seductresses who destroy families, which is not Womanist ideal.

3.3 Discrepancies in the Positive Portrayal of Male and Female Characters in Early Post-War Male and Female-Authored Igbo Novels

3.3.1 Male and Female as Important

The early post-war male writer, Nzeako, shows in the beginning of his preface only that men are important in the family by using an Igbo proverb: “*Ụlọ chọrọ ichi echi bụ naanị nwaanyị ka a na-amụ n'ime ya” (p. v).* (A home/family that will get extinct begets only female children). This Igbo proverb shows that a male child is more important than a female, for the purpose of perpetuating the family lineage. It was a practice among some Igbo in the past that a family which has only females, one of the females, especially the first daughter, could be persuaded to remain at home in order to give birth to male children who will propagate the family name. Although it is less common in contemporary society, Bairagi (2001) explains that the preference for boys or a boy has its roots in the patriarchal form of society because parents depend on their sons for

financial support during old age and eventually, the continuation of the family name. This patriarchal ideology is oppressive and thereby detrimental to girls in the family because men view females as less important for the fact that they will marry and leave the family. Nwoko (2009) affirms that the family's business and all the properties are inherited by the male child who propagates the family name. Amadiume (cited in Nwoko, 2009: 92) emphasizes that the only way a man who did not have a son could pass his land and trees to his daughters is if his daughters were recognized as the true children of the man and some rituals of passage will be performed. In this case, adopted children, especially the girls, are not recognized in Igbo traditional society. To Amadiume, "this passage from female-hood to male-hood and the rights of "sons" could only be accomplished and recognized through rituals" (p. 92). The female child's ability to inherit her father's property is achieved through performance of several rituals, which is not the case with the males, is a good instance of gender discrimination in Igbo family. Womanists reject any form of gender discrimination against females because the female gender, as the male gender, should have rights of inheritance in the family.

Nzeako also demonstrates the importance of the male child in the family through Ogechi's advice to her daughter, Nkọli, against polygamy because of her (Ogechi's) ugly experiences as a second wife. Ogechi warns Nkọli: "... *ka o ghara ikwere ka di ya gaa luru nwunye nke abuo, naani ma o... mutaghi nwa, ma o bu na o mutaghi nwoke na ndu ya*" (p. 4). (... not to allow her husband to marry a second wife, except if she did not have any child, or she did not bear a male child). Nzeako once more shows the traditional patriarchal ideology of viewing only the male child as the pillar of the family. Ogechi does not approve of polygamy because of its attendant problems in the family, but she

accepts it in the event of childlessness or lack of a male child, which is what obtains in some parts of Igbo society. However, some men go into polygamy to have male children.

The early post-war female Igbo writers, Meniru and Onwuchekwa, demonstrate a Womanist stance in their portrayal of women as important in the family, notwithstanding that Onwuchekwa further depicts a male child as very important to women, family and society. In *Nwaeze*, Meniru presents women as more important than men in the family through the children's traditional song of Nwaeze's younger siblings and other children, as shown in the following excerpt:

Nke a bu nne nne nne
Nke a bu nna nna nna
Nke a okpara nke etiti
Nke a bu o richaa o gba nkiti
Nke a bu nwa (p. 17).

(This is mother mother mother
This is father father father
This is the son
This one keeps silent after eating
This is a child).

This song dramatized with the five fingers shows children's perception of the Igbo family hierarchy which highlights mothers as more important than fathers because the children are closer to their mothers than their fathers. Meniru shows that the children count their fingers while singing this song and that: "*Isi aka bu 'nne', nke na-esota ya bu 'nna'*" (p. 17). (The 'thumb' which is the head finger is 'mother', and the second finger which is the 'first finger' is 'father'). The children, especially in traditional Igbo family, view their mothers as more important than their fathers because of the residential structure of Igbo family, which makes them closer to their mothers than their fathers. The children live

only with their mothers in their hut, while their fathers stay in a different house called ‘Obi’. They see their fathers only when they go to their ‘Obi’ and at times, they may not see their fathers until later in the day. The children get up in the morning to see their mothers taking care of the family. Their mothers go to market, cook, sweep, wash, fetch water and firewood and clean the environment. Their mothers feed them, cloth them and take good care of their other needs. They rarely see their fathers at home; as a result, they assume that their mothers are the only ones taking care of them, without knowing that their fathers go out in order to provide the means for their livelihood. This explains why the children attach more importance to their mothers than their fathers. Ikwubuzo (2012: 146) shows that in modern Igbo society, this traditional residential structure has changed. Distinction is no longer made between the father’s and mother’s houses because a modern house, with a living room and a number of other rooms, can serve the entire family. Children live and relate with their parents in one apartment and are aware of parents’ roles in their family.

In *Chinaagorom*, Onwuchekwa shows that a female child is as important as the male child. The birth of Chinagoro, a female child, proves her mother’s (Dibugwu’s) fertility and strengthens her stay in her husband’s house, like the male one: “*Obi dika ndi muru Dibugwu utu nke ukwu n’ihi na nwata a a muru agoolara nne ya na o bughị oke nkita ka di ya lutara; ma wee nyekwaa Dibugwu onodu n’ulo di ya*” (p. 1). (Dibugwu’s parents were very happy because the birth of this child has exonerated her mother that her husband did not marry a male dog; and also gives Dibugwu a place in her husband’s house). Dibugwu’s husband, Ihekammanandu, fires a gun into the air to show the world that he is a man: “... *ya adaghị agbo dika ndi mmadu na-ako ya*” (p. 1). (... He is not

impotent as people thought about him). In Igbo society, the birth of a child (male or female) is a proof of womanhood or manhood. The words “*oke nkịta*” (infertile male dog) and “*ida agbọ*” (impotence) shows how women and men are degraded because of infertility. But the language used to refer to women is more denigrating and dehumanising, and it is against the womanist ideal of female representation. Ihekammanandụ expresses satisfaction over the birth of his daughter, Chinagorọ: “...*Ma ọ bụladị otu ọ bụ nwanyị ka nwunye ya mụrụ o juru ya obi n’ihi na ọ si, “Olee nke m hụrụ ju?”*” (p. 1). (... Notwithstanding that his wife had borne a girl, he is satisfied because he said, “which one did I see and refused?”). He glorifies God for giving him a female child because he believes that both male and female children are important in the family.

Ọnwụchekwa also portrays a female child as important as a male one in the area of financial support to the family. Through Chinagorọ’s mother, Dibugwu, she shows that a female child can support the family financially like the male child. Dibugwu, is overwhelmed by generosity of Chinagorọ’s husband (Chinedum) towards her family and joyfully says that: “... *na o sitele n’aka nwa ya (nwanyị) wee mụtakwa nwa nwoke ga-ele ya nka. Ọgọ Chinedum maara na nwa dị uto, na-enyekwa nwanyị ọndụ n’ụlọ di; tūmadị nwa nwoke*” (p. 6). (... that through her daughter she had begotten a male child who would take care of her during her old age. Chinedum’s mother-in-law knows that a child is important and gives a woman a position in her husband’s house, especially a male child). In Igbo society, a son-in-law is regarded as a member of the in-law’s family. As a son, the onus is on him to cater for his family along with that of his in-laws.

Onwuchekwa demonstrates that men prefer to have male children, than female ones, through Dr. Chinedum Chijioke's countenance when Chinagorọ bears another male child. She suggests that the reason men dislike having female children is because they do not want what they do to other female children be done to their own female ones:

O nweghi ihe na-atọ ọtutu umu nwoke ka ndinyom ha muoro ha umu nwoke, n'ih na ha na-atu egwu imuta umuagboghọ n'oge di ugbo a. Ha makwa ihe ha ji agbara imuta umuagboghọ ma o bu otutu umuagboghọ oso; n'ih na a si na ogbu mma anaghi ekwe ka e were mma gafee ya n'azu. Onye si nke ya diri ya, o si nke onye fuo (p. 30).

(There is nothing that delights most men like having male children because they are afraid of begetting female children at this present time. They also know why they are scared of having girls; because it is said that one who kills by sword does not allow a sword to cross his back. One who wants his own to be protected, whose own does he want to get lost?).

Many young girls are maltreated, harassed and abused by men. Ironically, Onwuchekwa implies that the men who abuse them do not want to have girls because of their vulnerability. Some men who have daughters protect them from other men but befriend other people's daughters. Some men play double standard in issues concerning women and it is not acceptable to Womanists because of its psychological implications on women. Even in the Holy Bible, there is an injunction which states: "Do to others what you would like them do unto you" (Matt, 7: 12). If men protect and treat other female children the way they would want their own female children to be treated, violence against women will be reduced to the barest minimum.

Onwuchekwa portrays a male child as very important to women, family and society through the second and third stanzas of one of the songs which Eziukwu Aba Women's

Association, (Chinagorọ's town's women) Lagos branch, sing when Chinagorọ bears a second son:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>2. <i>Inyom ibe m</i>
<i>Bia leenu</i>
<i>Nganga di mma.</i>
<i>Ihe umu nwanyi</i>
<i>Ji eme nganga</i>
<i>Nganga di mma</i></p> | <p>2. My fellow women
Come and see
The pride which is good
What women
take pride in
The pride which is good</p> |
| <p>3. <i>O muru gini?</i>
<i>O bu aba ji ulo.</i>
<i>O muru gini?</i>
<i>O muru tax.</i>
<i>Nganga kwere anyi ekwe</i>
<i>Nganga di mma (p. 76-77).</i></p> | <p>What has she delivered?
It is the pillar of the house.
What has she delivered?
She has given birth to tax.
The pride we want
The pride which is good.</p> |

The above song describes great joy and fulfilment women derive when they bear a male child. This is because they view male children as their source of pride, the pillar of the family and the financial contributor in the society. Ojukwu (2014: 319) shows that “women themselves are taught, in the process of being socialized, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology so that they tend to be conditioned to derogate their sex and co-operate in their subjugation”. The women’s song shows their total submission that a male child is a woman’s pride. One wonders if this type of song will be sung for a female child. Womanist reject this type of degrading portrayal of women and advocate women to be described as self-fulfilled and self-reliant even without a child, especially a male child.

3.3.2 Male and Female as Loving and Caring

While the male writers represent only the male characters as loving and caring, the female novelists demonstrate that female characters are as loving and caring as the male. In *Nkọli*, Nzeako demonstrates that Ojeuga loves his two wives, Ogechi (Nne Nkọli) and

Nne Ekwutōsị (Ugoye), irrespective of Nne Ekwutōsị’s cantankerous behaviour. This is evidenced in Ojeuga’s comment to Ogechi when she doubts his love for her:

Ọ dị otu echiche ị nwere, nke m chọrọ ikwuru gị okwu banyere ya. Ọ dịghị onye n’ime unu nke m kpọrọ asị dị iche, wee hụ ibe ya n’anya. Ọ nweghịkwa onye m ga-akwado ka o megbuo ibe ya n’uzọ na-ezighị ezi, ọ buru ezie na nwunye di gị na-agaghari n’ulọ dibia igwota ogwu, ọ ghaghị ihuju anya ha... (p.14).

(There is a thought you have, I want to correct. There is none of you that I hate or love differently. There is also none of you I will support to oppress the other. If it is true that your co-wife is going around to procure fetish charms from native doctors, she will surely pay for it).

Nzeakọ illustrates that men love their wives equally in the polygamous Igbo family. This is necessary to maintain peace and unity in the family. Ogbalu (n.d.) opines that:

... where the man is unable to exercise effective control over rivalry and competition between the mkpuke’s, chaos is the usual result. The success or failure of a polygamous life depends to a considerable extent on the ability of the husband to be just and dispense love and care equally to all his wives and children and also on the preparedness of the wives and children to obey and respect him (p. 11).

The implication is that, in a polygamous marriage, a man should be able to show equal love to his wives in order to avoid chaos and disharmony in his family.

Ubesie’s *Isi Akwu Dara N’ala* presents Chike as a loving and caring husband and father. Chike cares for his wife, Ada, and lavishes his money on her to the extent that Ada feels that nothing will prevent them from living in peace and loving each other. Ada is shown to love Chike because of his money. Ada enjoys Chike’s money to the extent that she is described as ‘Oriaku’ (A woman who relishes wealth). In the delineation of Chike’s

caring attitude towards Ada, Ubesie states that “*Oriaku Ada na-aza abughị nani n’onyu. O na-eri akụ Chike, kwekwa na ya na-eri ya n’eziokwu*” (p. 18). (The eater of wealth which Ada bears is not for mere saying. She enjoys Chike’s wealth and admits that she enjoys it). Ubesie further shows that the only problem Ada has is to agree to go to market with Chike because any cloth she wants automatically becomes her own. Technically speaking in this context, Chike is the producer of wealth, while Ada is the consumer. Chike’s work does not prevent him from taking care of his wife and children. He goes home immediately he closes from work in order to see his family. Ada is dependent on Chike because Chike stops her from working. He feels that Ada’s salary is insignificant in the family:

Chike si n’ulo oru ya gbasaa, osọ ka o ji ala be ya, nani ka o hukwa Ada na umu ha abuo. Chike jee oru, Ada anoro n’ulo na-agu oge onu, ruo mgbe Chike lotara. Ada adikwaghi eje oru Bekee. Chike si ya kwusi oru, n’ihi na o maghi ihe ego o naruta ga-ezuru ya ime. Onye bu ozu enyi ekwesighi iji ukwu bowa onu abuzu (pp. 19-20).

(Once Chike closes from work, he would run home to see Ada and his children. When Chike goes to work, Ada would stay at home checking time, till Chike comes back. Ada does not work in the office. Chike stops her from working because he does not know what her salary will take care of. A person who is carrying the carcass of an elephant has no need to dig a cricket hole with his foot).

Ubesie uses the proverb ‘*Onye bu ozu enyi ekwesighi iji ukwu bowa onu abuzu*’, (A person who carries the carcass of an elephant has no need to dig a cricket hole with his foot) to show that Ada does not need to work because Chike’s money is enough to take good care of her needs. Chike’s action depicts the life of the average Igbo man in African society. The men love to take absolute care of their family which is necessary for the

progress of the family, but restricting women at home will not benefit the family. Womanisists reject men confining women at home because it contributes to women's total financial dependence on them (men), which will retard family progress. Encouraging women to work is very important in order for them to contribute and support the men financially for the maintenance of the family. Women's financial independence as Ogundipe-Leslie suggests in 'STIWANISM' ensures their involvement in family decision-making and equity in the harmonious co-existence of men and women in the family.

Ubesie also demonstrates that men love their wives notwithstanding women's irrational behaviour. Chike refuses to accept his mother's advice to abandon Ada and marry another woman because of her waywardness: "*O chụọ Ada, Chukwuma na Ọbíanuju ga-ebido na nwata kwawa arịrị ndị na-enweghi nne, ebe nne ha ka nọ ndụ. Nke abụọ, Chike hụrụ Ada n'anya nke ukwu*" (p. 147). (If he sends Ada packing, Chukwuma and Ọbíanuju will start from childhood to suffer like those who have no mother, when their mother is still alive. Secondly, Chike loves Ada so much). Chike's attitude depicts men as caring and considerate. Chike considers the plight of his children and decides to forgive Ada because he knows that Ada's irrational behaviour is a result of her wealth (p. 147). Ubsie shows that women's financial independence can lead to their becoming irrational in behaviour.

On the other hand, Meniru in *Nwaeze* describes both women and men as loving and caring. She shows how Ifeyinwa cleans, arranges and decorates Nwaeze's room when Nwaeze returns to Nigeria (p. 7). She also serves Nwaeze's food and arranges it neatly on

the table when he has gone to bathe: “... *Ifeyinwa butere nri ya, kwadoo ya nke oma, dotere ya ngaji na mma na ngaji eze. O butekwara mmiri nke onunụ na nke ikwọ aka*” (p. 7). (Ifeyinwa served his food, arranged it very well, and provided spoon, knife and fork. She also served drinkable water and water for washing hands). Ifeyinwa’s attitude shows women as caring and homely. Meniru also shows Nwaeze as very affectionate. This is evidenced in Ifeyinwa’s comments about the reason she loves Nwaeze. Ifeyinwa narrates how Nwaeze takes good care of her when he discovers that she has headache:

O cheta otu o siri wute ya (Nwaeze) mgbe ọ gwara ya na ahụ adighi ya, na otu o siri kpọrọ ya baa n’ụlọ ya, wepu akpatị ya, chọọ ọgwụ isi ọwụwa nye ya... sịkwa ya, ‘Ekwela ka gi rịa ọzọ, I nula? Ihu gi adighi mma igbaru agbaru’” (p. 11).

(She remembered how he felt sorry when she told him that she was sick, and how he took her into his house, brought out his box and gave her paracetamol... also told her, ‘Don’t allow yourself to be sick again, do you hear? It is not good for you to be unhappy’.)

Men win women’s affection through their caring. This is because in traditional Igbo society women are not given the right to choose their life partner. They marry their parents’ choice. However, the women’s happiness in marriage and their love for the men depend on how the men care for them. Ifeyinwa develops love for Nwaeze because he cares for her well-being.

Meniru also illustrates that women care for their fellow women’s happiness. Nwaeze’s sisters, Nwanyinkwọ and Okwuoyibo, express sadness over Nwaeze’s lackadaisical attitude towards his wife, Ifeyinwa, when Nwaeze did not recognise her as his wife. They instruct Nwaeze to give Ifeyinwa her own gift as he gives them: “*Ha sịkwara na ọ dị mkpa ka Nwaeze were ihe nke ọ zụtaara nwanị ya bụ Ifeyinwa nye ya, n’ihi na ha chere*

na o dighi mma otu o siri hapu inye ya nke ya mgbe o kere ndi ozọ ihe o zutaara ha site n'ala Bekee” (p. 12). (They also said that it is important for Nwaeze to give his wife, Ifeyinwa, what he bought for her, because they felt that it was not good that he didn't give her any gift when he shared what he bought from abroad). Nwanyinkwo and Okwuoyibo's intervention intensifies the belief in female bonding which is a technique used by many feminists to create a sense of camaraderie among women in the hope of reducing the agony of oppression and sabotage by men (Ojukwu, 2014). Nwaeze's sisters support Ifeyinwa to achieve what is due to her in her husband's house.

Nwaeze is shown as naturally caring through his attitude towards Celia, his Western girlfriend. Nwaeze always protects Celia and takes her home to her parents' house whenever they visit the film house: *“Nwaeze na-ahụ na ya dururu enyi ya ulọ, bịa laba nke ya. Otụtụ mgbe ka o na-eji ukwụ aga mailụ asaa site n'ulọ Celia ruo n'ulọ nke ya”* (p. 22). (Nwaeze ensures that he escorts his friend home, before he goes back. Many times he treks seven miles from Celia's house to his own). Nwaeze's attitude reflects how men suffer in order to care for their girlfriends. Nwaeze's care towards Celia makes Celia's parents love and accept him as their son because he is a good man: *“Ha kwetara na o bụ ezigbo nwoke n'ihia na ndi Bekee kwere na nwoke o bula bụ nwoke anaghị ekwe ka nwanyị taa ahụhụ, ma nwanyị ahụ o bụ onye o maara mbụ, ma o bụ onye o hụrụ n'uzọ, o tosirị ka nwoke gbooro nwanyị mkpa ya otu o nwere ike mgbe ahụ”* (p. 22). (They agreed that he is a good man because white people believe that a real man does not allow a woman to suffer, whether the woman is someone he had known already or a stranger, it is expected that a man should relieve a woman of her need within his strength). Nwaeze's humaneness makes Celia's parents approve his company for their

daughter, Celia. A man's attitude towards a woman is very important in a relationship. This is because it can make or mar a relationship. Women prefer to associate with men who love and respect them to men who are abusive. Celia agrees to marry Nwaeze because of his loving tendency. Nwaeze also confesses his love for Ifeyinwa when he finally married her after his separation from Celia. He promises Ifeyinwa's parents to love and care for Ifeyinwa as his wife.

Meniru demonstrates that love is very important in gender relation. Mr. Backhouse receives his wife with admiration when she visits him in Nigeria: "*O wee hu nwunye ya wee tie oke mkpu, gbaa osọ makuọ ya, susuo ya onu otutu mgbe. Ha no n'onu, onye taxi kwa ukwara iji mee ka ha mata na ya no. Backhouse wee lee ya anya, chefuọ ya. Ya na nwanyi ya korọ akukọ baa n'ime ulọ*" (p. 37). (He saw his wife and screamed with joy, ran and hugged her, kissed her several times. They were in joyful mood when the taxi driver coughed to remind them of his presence, Backhouse looked and ignored him. He and his wife continued discussing and entered inside the house). Backhouse's attitude to his wife shows how men and women should co-exist in the family. Meniru uses this scenario to emphasise the importance of love as the bedrock of every relationship.

In *Chinaagorom*, Onwuchekwa presents Chinedum and his wife, Chinagorọ, as loving and caring. Chinedum and Chinagorọ care for each other, their parents, in-laws, housemaids and other people around them. Chinedum takes good care of Chinagorọ, especially when Chinagorọ is delivered of her first child, Uchechi. Chinedum brings a babysitter, Ekaete, and a cook, Inyang, to assist Chinagorọ in taking care of their children

and household chores (p. 7). Chinedum also takes his mother-in-law to different places for a sightseeing tour of the city of Lagos like:

Federal Palace Hotel, Ikoyi Hotel, Eko Hotel; Arts Theatre, Bar Beach, Badagry, Ikeja- ebe ugbọ elu na-ada na ọtụtụ ebe a na-emepụta ihe dị iche iche na Legọsi. Ọ kwọkwara ya jee na Yunivarsity ukwu dị na Legọsi. Otu a ka ọ kwọgharịkwara nne ya mgbe ọ bịara” (p. 6).

(Federal Palace Hotel, Ikoyi Hotel, Eko Hotel; Arts Theatre, Bar Beach, Badagry, Ikeja – the airport and many industries. He also takes her to the prestigious University of Lagos. In the same way, he took her mother around the city when she visited).

He buys different things for her the way he does for his own mother. Chinagorọ gives her mother some clothes: “*Chinagorọ chinyekwara ya akwa ochie ndị ọ chọkwaghị n’ihi na di ya bụ Chinedum na-azuru ya akwa ọhụụ dị iche iche ka a ga-asị na ọ bụ nwunye eze”* (p. 7). (Chinagorọ also gave her mother her unused old clothes because her husband (Chinedum) buys different new clothes for her as if she is a king’s wife).

Onwuchekwa demonstrates that in Igbo society a man’s wealth is evident in the way he cares for his wife (p. 44). Chinedum drops his cheque book with his wife when he is travelling to America for his Doctorate degree to make sure his family does not lack anything in his absence. He also keeps a car for her to help take care of house-hold errands. Onwuchekwa shows that some men are restless and unsettled when their wives are pregnant: “... *obi na-ekoro ọtụtụ umụ nwoke n’elu ma ndị oriaku ha arịdatabeghi”* (p. 28). (So many men are unsettled when their pregnant wives are yet to give birth). Chinedum, in his absence, makes sure that Chinagorọ gives birth successfully. Chinedum calls their company doctor, Dr. Smith, to take care of Chinagorọ until she gives birth to

their baby. Chinedum loves Chinagorọ so much that even when some women, especially those in his office, are luring him into a relationship he resists them because: “*Ihunanya ya n’ebe oriaku ya na umu ya no agbanweghi ma otu*” (p. 87). (His love for his wife and children remains strong). Chinedum cares about Chinagorọ’s health. He takes her to a family planning clinic after their third child in order to prevent her from having more children.

Chinagorọ in her own part cares for Chinedum’s food and his safety. She prepares his food and makes sure he eats when necessary. She always advises their driver to avoid excessive speeding whenever he takes her husband out. Her caring attitude makes Chinedum love her so much to the extent that he extends the love to her children and parents. He buys clothes and shoes for his wife and children, his parents, in-laws and house-maids when he returns from abroad. Chinagorọ is described as a woman who sees a husband as a woman’s pride. Skinner (1996) emphasises that it is the duty of husbands and wives to care for each other. He says, “It is their duty to dwell together with one another. Surely they should dwell together; if one house cannot hold them, surely they are not affected for each other as they should. They should have a very great and tender love affection to each other” (p. 12). However, Skinner urges parents to act wisely and prudently in the marriage of their children, so that they may marry people who are most proper for them. Skinner’s words maintain the African traditional marriage system, where parents are involved in their children’s marriage, but not in the case of forced marriage. This is to ensure peaceful co-existence in accordance with the Womanist ideal.

Onwuchekwa illustrates that a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law can co-exist peacefully in the family. Chinagorọ’s mother-in-law, Uloaku, loves and cares for Chinagorọ. She

protects and fights for Chinagorọ when she is accused of infidelity. She endures the pain and beating she receives from her husband, Chijioke, because of her zeal to defend Chinagorọ's innocence. She refuses to believe her husband's view that women are naturally wayward. Uloaku also shows that Chinagorọ loves her like a mother: "*O sika na nwunye nwa ya huru ya n'anya kariadi otu otutu umu ndinyom na-ahu nne afo ha, tumadi nne di ha*" (p. 18). (She also said that her son's wife loved her more than many women love their own mothers, especially their mothers-in-law). Onwuchekwa demonstrates that mother-in-law and daughter-in-law can actually co-exist in the family which signifies sisterhood as advocated by the Womanists. Chinagorọ is saved by the bonding of her mother-in-law, Uloaku, in her strong efforts and determination to liberate herself from the shackles of tradition and patriarchal intimidation. Uloaku is a strong womanist who determines to save her daughter-in-law from shame and disgrace in her marriage.

3.3.3 Male and Female as Brave and Courageous

Ubesie delineates the male characters as those who have a strong desire and courage to undertake any task, while women are emotional and fearful. But Onwuchekwa represents the female characters as brave as the male. In *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Okechukwu, Chike's brother, decides to join the army and informs his mother about his decision. His mother objects and takes Okechukwu to Chike's house in order for Chike to stop him from going. Chike's mother holds Okechukwu around the waist, cries and tells Okechukwu that if he wants to go to war let him first of all kill her and bury her before he leaves. Chike laughs at his mother's childish behaviour. This is because his mother does not know that what is stopping him from joining the war is his marriage. Through Chike and

his mother's interaction concerning Okechukwu, Ubesie shows women as fearful and men as brave. Okechukwu later leaves the house to join the war without his mother's consent:

Mgbe a na-eche ka Okechukwu lɔta ebe o jere n'abalị, ọ dighị onye hụrụ ya.... Mgbe chi foro, otu nwa okorobia wetaara ha akwukwọ Okechukwu dere, na-agwa ha na ya ejewela agha. Ila azụ adighị ya. Nne Chike beere akwa.... (p. 22).

(When they were waiting for Okechukwu to return from where he went to that night, nobody saw him.... In the morning, one boy brought a letter Okechukwu wrote to them, informing them that he had gone to war. There is no going back. Chike's mother cried....).

Ubesie demonstrates that men are courageous and cannot accept any hindrance when they intend to embark on something. Women are shown not to be courageous, and as such, constitute a hindrance to men's progress. Chike's mother laments when she does not see Okechukwu: "*Ji ole ka m nwere, wee hụ nke m ga-eji aka m tūhapuru onye mụ amaghị?*" (p. 21). (How many pieces of yam do I have let alone giving out one to an unknown person). The metaphorical use of 'Ji' (Yam) to qualify men shows their importance in the family. 'Yam' is superior to all the crops in Igbo land, and only men cultivate it. Consequently, Chike's mother uses it to arouse some emotion.

Ubesie also captures men's bravery during the war: "*Umụ nwanyị na-achoghari umụ ha. Umụ nwoke koro egbe ha puta ezi*" (p. 22). (Women were looking for their children. Men carried their guns and marched outside). This portrayal does not expose true position of women in African society, particularly Igbo society. The Aba women riot in 1929 where women vehemently protested against taxation of women for example illustrates what women are capable of doing. Awe (2001) posits that, in the past, there were

Nigerian women who acted as saviours of their societies. These women were the traditional rulers, political leaders, decision makers, preachers and warriors during their own time. For instance, Awe mentions the Nigerian female legend Princess Inkpi of Igala, who died in a heroic way by burying herself alive to save her people from death; Moremi of Ile Ife, who sacrificed her most precious son to save the people of Oduduwa in Ile Ife from Igbo raiders who made their life unsafe and Queen of Daura who was at the helm of affairs and as a ruler contributed to the development of the northern parts of Nigeria. There were other Nigerian women like Queen Amina of Zaria, an elected traditional ruler of Zazzau, who fought without rest till she conquered distant territories and incorporated them into Zazzau and this made Zazzau become the largest of the Hausa states. Queen Kambasa of Bonny was seen as the first and only female ruler in the history of the Delta states. She was the warrior who was the first to organize and lead the kingdom of Bonny in an external military campaign. Uchendu (2007) reveals that Anioma women in Igbo land participated in the Nigerian civil war to avenge atrocities meted out to the Igbo and the deaths of some members of their families in Kano. Nnabuihe (2010) posits that in both the oral and written Igbo arts, Igbo women have displayed great strength, determination and courage in their lofty achievements just like some women from other parts of Nigeria.

In *Chinaagorom*, Onwuchekwa buttresses the fact that women are brave and courageous through Ekemma who travels frequently to Cotonou for business ventures. Ekemma buys different clothes and baby items for Chinagorọ and her baby. Chinedum's mother addresses Ekemma as a woman who is as brave as a man: "*Nne Chinedum wee tuo ya, 'o me ka nna ya. I kpagburu nwoke. I bu agu nwanyi. Ebe ihe ndi a si puta, Obasị Dị N'elu*

dochiekwa ha!’’” (p. 27). (Chinedum’s mother calls her, ‘One who does like her father. You do more than men. You are a brave woman. Where you got all these things, the God in Heaven will replenish them). In the Igbo society, the above excerpt is used to refer to men when they have done something brave. But Onwuchekwa uses it to refer to a woman in order to show that women also can act bravely.

3.3.4 Male and Female as Strong and Superior

The male writer, Ubesie, describes men as physically strong and superior while women are weak. On the other hand, the female writer, Onwuchekwa, depicts men as strong, but shows women as stronger than men. For instance, in *Isi Akwu Dara N’ala*, Ubesie pictures Okechukwu as superior to Ada, because of his profession and physical strength, during their confrontation. Ada refuses to answer him because of the dehumanising way he addresses her in respect of Chike. Ada angrily makes him understand that she is older than him notwithstanding his profession (p. 163). But Okechukwu sees it as an insult and feels that: “*Agwo emeghi nke o jiri buru agwo ndi mmadu anwuru ya n’aka*” (p. 163). (If a snake does not react as a snake people will pick it up in their hands). Okechukwu furiously lifts Ada with one hand and brings her into the house to show his strength. Ubesie uses the above proverb to describe men as strong and domineering. Ubesie further shows that Okechukwu is not only superior to Ada but stronger than Ada because he is a man while Ada is a woman:

Onwu chorọ igbu Ada ekweghi ya mara ndi kariji ya, na ndi ọ kariji. Nke mbu, ọ maghi na Kaptain Okechukwu Jideofọ ka ya. Ee! Ndi na-achị achị emeela Okechukwu ka ọ kara ya. Onye ruwa uka, ya lee ya anya n’ubu hu kpakpando ole di ebe ahụ na-eti ka onwa. Chineke kere okechukwu ka ọ kara Ada, n’ihi na Ada bu nwanyi, ma Okechukwu bu nwoke. Ike Ada bu

n'ony, ma nke Okechukwu di n'okpukpu aka. Nke a bu ihe o ji buru nwoke (p. 164).

(The fate that is about to befall Ada does not let her know those who are her superiors and those who are her inferiors. First, she does not know that Captain Okechukwu Jidefo is her superior. Yes! The government has made Okechukwu to be superior to Ada. If anybody doubts it, let them look at his shoulder and see many stars that are there shining like the moon. God created Okechukwu to be more powerful than Ada, because Ada is a woman, and Okechukwu a man. Ada's strength is in her mouth, and Okechukwu's own is in the strength of his hand. This is why he is a man.)

Ubesie demonstrates that men's physical strength is one of the qualities which define a man and make them superior to women. This strength is a natural gift bestowed on men by God. Women are portrayed as the weaker sex who would be only foolhardy to challenge men no matter what the men do to them.

Ubesie also proves that men have power to maltreat women and women can do nothing about it, as shown below: "*Ada amaghị na Okechukwu chọọ ugbo a, ọ sị ndị otu ya kpuru ya kpunye n'ugbo ya. O ruo ebe ọ nọ, ọ sị ha jee kpochie ya. Ada amaghị na Okechukwu nwere ike jiri ura machie ya ntị. Ọ dighi ihe Ada ga-eme*" (pp. 164-165). (Ada does not know that if Okechukwu likes, he can tell his men to bundle her into his car. When he gets to his camp, he orders them to jail her. Ada does not know that Okechukwu can give her a dirty slap. There is nothing Ada can do about it). Women are portrayed as the weaker sex who cannot challenge men no matter what the men do to them. Ubesie shows that men have the authority to deal with women and their mediators and no one can question them about it. Specifically, women are seen as inferior to their male counterparts in terms of physical strength. Incidentally, the supposed inferiority of the

female, shown by Ubesie, is mainly based on natural predisposition and not on any discernible feminine deficiency. Simone de Beauvoir expresses that it is not women's inferiority that has determined their historical insignificance: it is their historical insignificance that has doomed them to inferiority ("Feminism-Rationalwiki." 2013, p.1). In other words, women are not inferior because of their natural dispositions and tendencies, but due to their non-recognition in the society. Ojukwu (2014: 315) also affirms that power is not limited to physical strength alone but one's ability to control or to sustain whatever influence and authority one has over the other or others. Womanists reject the portrayal of men as superior to women. Womanists do not seek equality with men at home, although they do not accept being seen as weak. Sojourner Truth (cited in Kesselman, 2003) asserts that women are as strong as men:

I am a woman.... I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have ploughed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that? I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now (p. 517).

Sojourner Truth also emphasizes that "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone... women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again" (p. 518). Women can face challenges in life. They should not be discriminated against because of their biology. Ahule (2007) argues against the notion that God created men to be superior to women. He uses quotations from the Holy Bible and Quran to support his claim that man and woman are created equal and are acting in unison to portray the true nature of God. He shows the equality of man and woman through a simple arithmetic equation: "man + woman = man", and regrets that the word 'man' is almost often used to refer to the whole of humanity, which

shows male domineering attitude to women. Ahule's position shows that men can be womanists, a corollary to Acholonu's reference to men who support the cause of women as motherists.

In *Chinaagorom*, Onwuchekwa points out that men are strong but women are stronger. This is shown in Chinedum's greetings to Ekemma as a result of her success in business: "*Eze Nwanyị. O ka nwoke ike, kaa nka!*" (p. 34). (Queen of women. One who is stronger than a man, you will live long). Ekemma reciprocates: "*Agu nwa, mgboso ka ohu. Onye tinyere gi n'ofe anaghi achọ utazi. I bu nwa a na-amu amu, burukwa di a na-alu alu, burukwa ezi ogo kpagburu nwa afọ*" (p. 34). (Strong child, one greater than twenty. Anyone who puts you in a soup does not look for vegetable. You are a real child, and also a marriageable husband, and a good in-law who does more than one's relation). Ekemma is portrayed as a strong woman because of her doggedness, resilience and success in business. In the same way, Chinedum's strength is a result of his goodness. Ekemma's husband died when her children were young. She starts a business through which she trains her children up to university level of education. Women are encouraged to be strongly committed to their cause in order to liberate themselves and their family from poverty and untold hardship.

3.3.5 Male and Female as Benevolent

The male writer, Ubesie, pictures only the male characters as benevolent while the female writer, Onwuchekwa, recreates her female character as benevolent as the males. In *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Ubesie portrays Chike as kind and generous all through his novel. Chike is addressed in two main ways because of his generosity: "...*ikpo ahijia na-azuru*

okuko umu” (p. 18). (...a heap of waste which feeds the chicken’s chicks.) and “*Mbe ji ihe o ji na-aza ‘Ogbuefi’*” (p. 18). (A tortoise which has what it takes to be addressed as a Chief.) These two descriptions of Chike portrays him as a philanthropist, a humane and benevolent personality and an achiever. Chike is shown to help a lot of people on different occasions. One instance is when Chike shares money to the refugees who stayed in his house at Awka during the war: “... *o kpokoro ndi bi be ya, kewe ha ego di ka mkpa onye obula si di, ka ha wee malite izu ahia.... Ndi bi be ya na-eri ihe, nke Chike na-eri ga na-adi ya utu*” (p. 32). (He gathered his tenants, and shared money to them according to their needs, so that they would start up trade.... When his tenants were eating, Chike would be delighted by his own effort). His tenants are surprised that, instead of collecting house rent, he shares money to them for their family upkeep. Chike continues his benevolent attitude even after the war. He happily shares some of the profits he gets from his granite company in Lagos with his manager and workers. He also shares money, cloths and foodstuffs to many families in his home town, Awka and in Agwata where he lived during the war. As a result of his generous gifts, women are singing, dancing and praising God that he survives Ada’s plot to kill him.

In *Chinaagorom*, Onwuchekwa is able to present both the male and female characters as benevolent through Chinedum and Chinagoro. Ekemma describes Chinedum as the pillar behind her business: “*Na mu bu Ekemma guzo si ike na-azu ahia na Kotonu taa bu gi....*” (p. 34). (That I, Ekemma, am strong in my Cotonu business is owed to you....). Chinedum’s colleagues also show him as kind and generous: “*Dokita Chijioke bu agu nwa, o na-emepuru onye o diiri na njo.*” (p. 37). (Dr. Chijioke is a generous man, he helps those in need). The female protagonist, Chinagoro, assists her husband, Chinedum,

in training Ajughiekwu's children, Nnenna and Nwanyieze, in school: "*Dokita Chijioko na oriaku ya wee zugide ha tutu ha putasia koleji. Ha nyekwara ha aka ha nweta oru Bekee. Umụ agboghọ ndị a wee gbakota aka zuputakwa nwa nne ha nke nta*" (pp. 93-94). (Dr. Chijioko and his wife trained them in school till they finished college. They also helped them to secure employment. These two girls joined hands to train their younger sibling). Chinagoro helps in training Ajughiekwu's daughters in school, notwithstanding Ajughiekwu's irrational behaviour towards her, which shows Womanists' zeal to uplift their fellow women. Ajughiekwu's daughters, Nnenna and Nwanyieze, also show a Womanist's commitment by assisting in the family sustenance and in the training of their younger sister, Ogonnaya, in school. Women's benevolence is encouraged by Womanists because of its contribution to the development of the family and society at large. Chinagoro's attitude reflects the popular saying, "train a man, you train an individual and train a woman, you train a nation."

3.3.6 Male and Female as Educated

Ubesie portrays male characters as educated while Nzeako depicts only one of the female characters as educated. On the other hand, Meniru and Onwuchekwa present both their male and female characters as educated. Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala* presents men as educated through Chike's younger brother, Okechukwu and Okechukwu's friend, a Captain in the army. Okechukwu's education also earns him the position of a Captain in the army during the Nigerian Civil War. Okechukwu shows through his warning to Ada that Chike trains him in school: "*Lee nwanne m nwoke bu Chike; i maara nke oma na o bu ya zuru m n'ulo akwukwo. Ihe m bu na soja bu kaptin. Lee m anya n'ubu, ka i jiri mkpuru anya gi abuo hu!*" (p. 163). (Look at my brother Chike; do you know that he was

the one that trained me in school. I am a captain in the army. Look at my shoulders and see for yourself).

In *Nkọlị*, Nzeakọ portrays women as educated through a female teacher, Ndịrịka, who harbours Nkọlị in her house at Awka when she (Nkọlị) is nearly killed by witchcraft. Ndịrịka decides to enroll Nkọlị in a nursery school in order to stop her from worrying about her parents: “*Ndịrịka wee denye aha Nkọlị n’ụlọ akwụkwọ, ka o soro ndị ọzọ na-agụ akwụkwọ ‘ota-akara’ (p. 66).* (Ndịrịka then registered Nkọlị in a nursery school). Ndịrịka’s action shows that women are aware of the importance of female education and its benefit in helping them to develop their minds positively.

In *Nwaeze*, Meniru presents Nwaeze as a well-educated man. Nwaeze obtains his doctorate degree in America. He was still in America when his parents married Ifeyinwa for him, because she is equally educated. Ifeyinwa is shown as one of the women who are popular in her town because of their education. She studied up to standard six and performed excellently well. She attended school at Ijele where she learned laundry and catering as subjects. She teaches at Okulu town. Her education and good moral behaviour prompt Nwaeze’s father, Mgbokwere, to marry her for Nwaeze. Meniru shows that women’s education in the past is for domesticity.

Ọnwụchekwa’s *Chinaagorọm* pictures Chinedum, his wife, Chinagorọ, and Mrs. Ayọdele as educated. Chinedum had M.Sc. Engineering in America and works in an oil company at Ikoyi before he marries Chinagorọ. He later goes back to America and obtains a Ph.D. degree in Engineering and becomes Dr. Chinedum Chijioko. Chinagorọ’s parents, Ihekammanandụ and Dibugwu, notwithstanding the fictitious belief of the Igbo about

female education, trains Chinagorọ up to secondary school. Her teachers like her because of her intelligence and humility. She gets married to Chinedum and later continues her education. She enters the university where she reads law and eventually becomes a legal adviser and a secretary in the same oil company her husband works. Chinagorọ's education affords her the opportunity to contribute to her family's welfare and in the education of Ajughiekwu's daughters. Ajughiekwu's appreciation for the assistance she receives from her female children, Nnenna and Nwanyjeze, and their husbands as a result of their education prompts her (Ajughiekwu) to announce to the world that female's education is very important: "*Ugbu a ọ matala na nwanyi bu nwa matakwa na nwanyi muru ezi akwukwo bara uru, ma ọ luru di ma ọ lughị*" (p. 94). (Now she has known that a female child is important and also known the importance of a female child who is educated, whether she is married or not). Ajughiekwu's children's education affords them the opportunity to marry graduates and assist in their family up-keep. Women assist in the family when they are educationally empowered.

Onwuchekwa shows that Ajughiekwu (a widow) rejects the education of the female child because she feels that educated women are wild and disobedient. She feels that Chinedum has made a wrong choice by marrying an educated woman when Chinagorọ is accused of being wayward:

Ugbu a Chinedum ahula nsu di n'ilu nwanyi mara oke mma ma muokwa oke akwukwo. A si ya luru onye amaghi akwukwo, ọ si na ya chorọ onye gara koleji. Ndo, ọ hula isi ya ugbu a. Anaghi agwa ochi nti na ahia esula. Nwanyi muru akwukwo nkita rachara anya ka nwoke na-alu. Ọ gaghị ere. Umụ ndinyom atọ ndi a ndi m muru agaghị aga skuul, ka ha ghara iwa anya iberibe na-eme umu nwanyi iso ndikom ozọ wee hapu di ha (p. 58).

(Now, Chinedum has seen the loss in marrying a very beautiful woman who is well educated. He was told to marry an illiterate, he said he wants an educated woman. Sorry, he has seen the effect now. You don't tell a deaf person that there is commotion in the market. Would a man marry a wild educated woman? No. My three female children will not go to school, so that they will not be wild and assertive like other women who flirt irrespective of their husbands).

Ọnwụchekwa exposes the fate of women in traditional Igbo society. The societal belief that that educated women are discourteous contributes to women being denied basic education but rather married them off. Ọnwụchekwa shows through Chinagoro that educated women, married or unmarried, are good-natured. However, Chinagoro's innocence and lifestyle prompt Ajughiekwu to send her children, Nnenna, Nwanyjeze and Ogonnaya to school in order to emulate Chinagoro's good-nature. She admires Chinagoro's unique shape and the way she arranges her house and strongly believes that female education is important: *"Ajughiekwu kweere si n'ezie na ya achoputala na imu akwukwo nwanji bara uru. O si na o na-eme ka nwanji luta ezi di, marakwa otu esi elekota onwe ya anya, umu ya na ulo di ya"* (p. 60). (Ajughiekwu agreed truly that she has found out the importance of female education. She said it assists a woman to marry a responsible husband, take care of herself, her children and the home). Chinagoro relates peacefully with her husband's (Chinedum's) female friends and they see Chinagoro as a good woman. Chinagoro is a role model to many people who use her education and character as an example to their wives. This is because they have realized that women's world does not end in bearing children and cooking:

Anya wee bido meghewe otutu ndi mmadu, ndi chere na uwa nwanji bu naani imu nwa na isi nri n'usekwu. Otutu ndi mmadu wee bido matawakwa na oge a na-ahapuru nwoke nani

ya ibu mkpa ezi na ulo agaala, na aka abuo na-achidata aki n'uko karia otu aka. Egwu dara n'ihu azị ka azị na-agba (p. 93).

(Many people are now aware that a woman's life does not end in giving birth to children and cooking in the kitchen. Many people are also aware that it was in the past that men solely took responsibility of the family, and that two hands are better than one. This is what obtains in the contemporary society).

Women's roles are beginning to change in contemporary society as a result of their education. Women assist in the family sustenance. Some women even assume the role of bread-winner. Mrs Ayodele studied accounting in one of the universities in America. She encourages Chinagorọ to further her education because, as a womanist, she knows that education is a gateway to self-fulfillment, creativity and autonomy, and it helps to guarantee women's liberation, self-assertion and freedom from poverty (Chukwukere, 2000, p. 118).

3.3.7 Male and Female as Peaceful

Ubesie shows only the male characters as peaceful while Nzeakọ portrays the male characters as more peaceful than the females. The female writers, Meniru and Onwuchekwa, present both the male and female characters as peaceful. Nzeakọ's *Nkọlị* depicts Ojeuga as a peaceful man throughout his novel. Ojeuga makes sure his wives live in peace by refusing to condone any evil perpetuated by any of them. This is evidenced in his words to Ogechi when she feels that he is unconcerned about Nne Ekwutọsị's cantankerousness:

Chere, ka m gwa gị oriakụ m O nweghị mgbe m ga-ahụ ihe ojọọ n'ụlọ anyị a, wee kpuchido ya akwa. Ụlọ a bụ ụlọ anyị nile, ọ bughị nke ndị ọzọ, n'ìhi ya, ọ buru na udo dị n'ime ya, ọ bụ anyị ga-eri uru ya, ma ọ buru kwa ụtutu, na kwa ehihie, ọ

buru ilu ogu na ikọ onu, o bu onwe anyi ka anyi na-akpasa. O bu kwa mmadu ikosa akpa ya ruru inyi n'ihu oha mmadu. (p.13)

(Wait, let me tell you my wife I will never see something going wrong in this family and condone it. This house belongs to all of us, it is not for others. As a result, if there is peace in it, we shall enjoy the benefit, but if it is fighting and quarrelling in the morning and evening, we are dividing ourselves. It is like spreading your dirty bags in public.)

Ojeuga is shown as a man of peace and a dispassionate arbiter in his wives' disputes. Ojeuga promises her to discipline Nne Ekwutosi if he finds out her complaint is true. In Igbo society, women rely on their husbands to find a solution to their problems. Nzeako also shows that some women are peaceful through Ogechi's reply to Ojeuga, that she has never had problem with anybody by trying to avoid a particular issue, which will bring a misunderstanding between them (p. 14). She assures Ojeuga that she will not react but only wait for his decision.

In Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Chike is shown as a peaceful man, while Ada is a cantankerous woman; so is Nne Ekwutosi in Nzeako's *Nkọli*. Chike always tries to make peace with Ada, but Ada is shown to be very obstinate. Each time he advises Ada to change her attitude towards him in order for them to live in peace as husband and wife, Ada insults him (p. 86). Even when Chike begs her to make 'gari' instead of 'cassava meal' for him as a result of his stomach upset, Ada still gives him the 'cassava meal'. When Chike complains, she insults and asks him whether he brought money for either of them. Chike still begs Ada to be patient because he has enough money that will take care of them when the war ends: "*Nne... Ihe m nwere n'ulo bank di iche iche n'obodo bekee kariji puku najra anọ. O buru na i nwee ndidi, ogu bie, anyi amalite kporiwe ndu. Ihe*

ọbụla na-eme ugbu a, cheta na m bụ di gi. Na-akwanyere m ugwu di ka di gi, ka o ga-abụ...” (p. 86). (Beloved... what I have in different banks abroad is more than four thousand naira. If you are patient, after the war we will begin to enjoy life. You should remember that I am your husband. Irrespective of what is happening now, you should respect me as your husband). Ada is always angry whenever Chike is talking about having money in different banks or reminding her of the respect she owes him. Chike has not finished talking when Ada shuns him: *“Ada ekweghi ka Chike kwuchaa ihe o kpụ n’ọnu, wanye ọnu ya ka nkita ara”* (p. 86). (Ada did not allow Chike to finish what he wanted to say, and attacks him like a mad dog). She hurls abuse at him. Chike seems not to bother about Ada’s insults until she tells him *“Di gbakwaa oku!”*(p. 86). (Husband my foot!). Chike is shocked. Ubesie illustrates that women respect their husbands because of their money and discard them when they are disadvantaged. Ada calls Chike *‘nna anyi’* (My lord) or *‘Nna Chukwuma’* (Chukwuma’s father) when he is wealthy. But, now Chike is poor as a result of the war, Ada disrespects him and calls him *‘that man’*. Ada’s attitude portrays women as those who destabilise peace in the family. Ubesie’s portrayal of Ada is not typical of Igbo women. Womanists encourage women to live peacefully with men for the good and progress of the family. Nnaemeka (2010) urges women to work in readiness to negotiate with men even in difficult circumstances. However, Ada’s radical behaviour is not typical of an African womanist, because she refuses to embrace peace for the co-existence of her family.

Nwaeze and his Western girlfriend, Celia, are portrayed as peaceful in Meniru’s Nwaeze. Ifeyinwa’s comments shows Nwaeze as peaceful: *“O cheta otu Nwaeze si eme ihe ya nwayo nwayo. O naghị akpọ mmadu iyi, o naghị ekwusi okwu ike na-eme ụzụ otu ụmụ*

okorobia si eme. Uwe ya nile na-adi ucha mgbe o bula” (p. 10). (She remembered how Nwaeze does things peacefully. He does not insult people; he is not aggressive like other men. He is always neat). Ifeyinwa shows that apart from Nwaeze being peaceful, he is quiet, respectful and neat.

Celia is a peaceful and considerate woman. Celia and Nwaeze are engaged in America before Nwaeze finishes his studies and returns to his parents’ house in Nigeria. Celia comes to Nigeria after her graduation to join Nwaeze. Nwaeze’s parents and kindred express their sadness over Nwaeze’s engagement with a white woman (Celia). They reject Celia as their wife. Celia wants a peaceful home. She does not want her relationship with Nwaeze to bring a quarrel between Nwaeze and his family. She decides to leave Nwaeze’s house since they have not done wedding. She tells Nwaeze in the letter she drops for him that: “... *na ya n’onwe ya echeela echiche nke ukwu banyere ya bu alimdi na nwunye ha, wee hu na o bu ihe ga-eweta nkewa n’ime ulo ha, ya bu na ya chere na o ka mma ka ha were ututu chorọ uzọ ozọ*” (p. 33). (... that she had thought over their marriage and noticed that it would bring division in his family, and therefore thought that it was better for them to separate when there was still time). Celia’s attitude shows women as those who maintain peaceful co-existence in the family.

In Onwuchekwa’s *Chinaagorom*, Ekemma and Chinedum are peace-loving. Ekemma, who is the president of her town (Eziukwu) women’s organisation in Lagos, is described as a good and peace-loving woman leader. She settles a quarrel between two of their members, Alaezi and Ajughiekwu, over the sharing of kolanut in Chinedum’s house. Alaezi forgets to give Ajughiekwu her own share of the kolanut and Ajughiekwu, who is

described as cantankerous, attacks her (Alaezi) like a roaring lion. Immediately Ekemma discovers what has happened, she pacifies Ajughiekwu: *“Ekemma bu onye isi ndinyom huru na ikpe kaara Ajughiekwu o wee medoo ya obi site n'inye ya oke oji nke ya, n'ih na o maara... Ajughiekwu bu oku na-enwu enwu na-achokwa onye ga-etinye ya mmanu oku ka o wee mee ire karja”* (p. 5). (Ekemma, the women's leader, saw that Ajughiekwu was right and appeased her by giving Ajughiekwu her (Ekemma's) own share of the colanut. This is because she knew... Ajughiekwu as a cantankerous woman). Women are shown as good leaders and peacemakers. Ekemma's leadership quality and peaceful character endear her to both men and women. Chinedum is also shown as peace-loving. Chinedum reconciles his parents over the quarrel they had concerning Chinagoro's pregnancy. Chinedum's father, Mazi Chijioke, feels that Chinagoro's pregnancy does not belong to his son, Chinedum and wants to send Chinagoro away from his son's house. But his (Chijioke's) wife, Uloaku, defends Chinagoro and this leads to their quarrel, which makes Uloaku leave their house to his son's (Chinedum's) house in Lagos where she stays with Chinagoro until Chinedum returns from America and makes peace between her and her husband: *“Chinedum mekwara ka udo di n'etiti nne na nna ya”* (p. 67). (Chinedum also brought peace between his parents). Chinedum's character shows that men cherish peace in their parents' house.

3.3.8 Female as Assertive

Phelps and Austin (1975: 2) define assertive behaviour as “behaviour that allows a person to express honest feelings comfortably, to be direct and straightforward, and to exercise personal rights without denying the rights of others and without experiencing undue anxiety and guilt.” According to Phelps and Austin, “A non-assertive person expends

much energy in avoiding conflicts.” The female writers, Meniru and Onwuchekwa, represent more of the female characters who are more assertive than the male writers, Ubesie and Nzeako. Meniru’s *Nwaeze* depicts women’s assertiveness through Ifeyinwa when she returns to her parents’ house. She leaves Nwaeze’s house when she discovers that Nwaeze is not interested in their marriage because of his friendship with Celia. She tells her mother about her unwillingness to go back to Nwaeze’s house after informing her of her experiences in his house. Ifeyinwa’s mother advises her to go back to Nwaeze’s house because she has married him: “*Nne ya siri ya na o ga-alaghachi n’ihi na ndi ahụ aluola ya, na nwunye ha ka o bu*” (p. 14). (Her mother told her to go back because those people have married her and she is their wife). Ifeyinwa’s mother upholds the tradition of Igbo society that a woman has no right to abandon her marriage whether good or bad. Lips (2003: 10) classified this type of women like Ifeyinwa’s mother as belonging to “a traditional or conservative cluster”. The women who are in this cluster according to Lips are the housewives, the secretaries, the conformists, and the maternal women. Ifeyinwa’s mother is a conformist and maternal, because she aligns herself with the Igbo cultural practices in her bid to save her daughter from public disgrace. The same women who are subjected and negated by culture are the ones who uphold it.

But Ifeyinwa challenges the traditional Igbo belief about female marriage. She tells her mother that only illiterate women will stay in an unwanted marriage: “*O bu ndi agughị akwukwo, enweghi aka oru nke aka ha, ga-ekwe laa n’ulo ebe di ha nodu ma di ha o masiri ha, ma o bu na o masighi ha. Ifeyinwa adighi n’otu ahụ. O hughị ihe ga-eme ya agbakwuru nwoke achoghi ya site n’ihi na emeela ego n’isi ya*” (p. 14). (It is those who are not educated, and do not have a job of their own, that will agree to go back to their

husbands' house to stay whether they want their husbands or not. Ifeyinwa is not among those women. She does not see anything that will make her stay with a man who does not want her because he has paid her bride price). Ifeyinwa's action is a radical one. She vows that Nwaeze will suffer to get her back. She immediately goes back to Okulu where she teaches without her father's knowledge in a bid to avoid her parents' intervention in the matter and/or an attempt to reconcile them. Ifeyinwa prefers Nwaeze to willingly desire her. Ifeyinwa's self-confidence is a result of her economic independence. Lips (2003: 10) terms this type of women like Ifeyinwa as "the feminists, the intellectuals, and the career women", who cannot compromise their happiness. Ifeyinwa's educational and economic empowerment helps her to reject being subdued by tradition. Womanists support women's empowerment and assertiveness but prefer women to negotiate their way towards achieving liberation and not abandoning their families. Ifeyinwa's action is similar to what pertains in the contemporary society where girls' financial independence feel unperturbed about marriage which is not encouraging.

Meniru illustrates that women are treated as children in marriage in order to prevent their assertiveness. She shows that married women in traditional Igbo society are not allowed to go out alone. Ifeyinwa leaves Nwaeze's house without his parents' knowledge. Okorocha expresses surprise that Ifeyinwa left without any company: "*O wutere ya na o nweghi onye sooro Ifeyinwa lota ubochi ahụ ọ lotara n'ihina o tosiiri ka mmadu soro ya. Nwa agboghọ ọ bula aka nwe anaghi apu ije nani ya*" (p. 16). (He was not happy that nobody accompanied Ifeyinwa the day she left because it was necessary that somebody accompanied her. Any girl who is married does not go out alone). Women are seen as children who need protection.

Ifeyinwa's father's kindred also show that in Igbo tradition it is difficult for a woman who abandons her family to remarry: "*Alum nwanyi n'ala anyi bu ihe nwere nkọ hie nne. Nkọ a mere na nwanyi o bula a siri na o na-ala be di, anaghi enwekwa di ozo, ma o mechara luo nwoke ahụ ma o bu na o lughị ya*" (p. 15). (Marriage in our society has too much string. The string makes it difficult for a woman who is known to have married, to remarry, whether the man takes her as his wife or not). Meniru provides a unique dimension that challenges the Igbo belief system that marriage bonds women forever. The myth that a married woman must stay in her marriage whether it is heaven or hell fire is challenged by Ifeyinwa who leaves Nwaeze's house when she realises his irresponsibility. But, Ezeigbo (1990: 48) urges the female writers to create "women who challenge patriarchy not just because they have been victims of such a system, but because they wish to assert themselves as constituting an important and indispensable half of humanity" (p. 148). To Ezeigbo, only then can feminism give the male and female readership what Heilbrun and Stimson call "the vicarious experience of renunciation and awareness" (p. 148). The portrayal of active women who are full, complete and assertive, according to Ezeigbo, "could play down on gendered conflicts and promote meaningful interrelationship between men and women" (p. 148) and ensure cultural androgyny.

Chinagoro in Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom* rejects Ekemma's pleas to leave Chinedum's house because of her unwanted pregnancy. She insists on staying in her husband's house until he comes back and sends her away. Ekemma sees Chinagoro's assertiveness as being stubborn and wild: "*Ekemma gbara n'aka si na umu nwanyi a na-alu n'oge di ugbu a muru akwukwo na nkita rachara ha anya*" (p. 10). (Ekemma snapped her fingers

and said that educated women who marry these days are wild). Women as humans have the right to reject what they consider as dehumanising to their personality.

Ubesie's *Isi Akwụ Dara N'ala*, unlike Nzeako, portrays women as assertive through Ada. But, he also shows that irrespective of a woman's assertiveness, she cannot intimidate a man, even when the man is dishonest. Women's assertiveness is shown through the relationship between Obiọra and Ada. Obiọra's action towards Ada shows how men dominate and deceive single women who are desperate to marry or who want to be in a relationship with them (men). Obiọra, through his interaction with Ada, shows that women are at men's mercy when it comes to marriage. Ada is shown to be desperate to marry and when Obiọra professes his love for her, Ada thinks that Obiọra is sincere, as Ubesie shows through Obiọra's words to Ada when Ada finishes bathing and is about entering her house: "*Ka ọ (Ada) na-azọbata ụkwụ n'ọnu ụlọ ya, Obiọra nọrọ n'ọche ọ nọ tie mkpu sị, 'Ada, nne, ị maara ụma na-asa ahụ, n'ihì na chi gị kere gị mma site na mbụ' "*" (p. 7). (Immediately Ada enters her room, Obiọra shouted from where he sat on a seat, 'Ada, my dear, you were wasting your time bathing, because from the beginning God created you beautiful'). Obiọra admires Ada. His romantic words thrill and trick Ada into believing that he loves her and would marry her. Ada desperately waits for him to propose marriage, but to no avail. Obiọra only professes love to Ada and avoids any conversation tending towards marriage. Ada, who is impatient at his delay, proposes to him instead: "*Ebe ọ bụ na ị hụrụ m n'anya n'ụdị a ị na-ekwu, ọ dị gị ka o nwere ihe ga-egbochiri anyị abụọ ịlụ di na nwunye?*" (p. 7). (Since you love me as you claim, do you think anything can prevent us from becoming husband and wife?). Obiọra is startled by Ada's courage to propose to him. He is dumbfounded and bends his head silently in

shame, thereby displaying feminine quality: “*Obiọra gbara nkịtị ọtụtụ oge, kpudo ihu n’ala. N’ezi okwu, ọ bughị ọrụ dịrị nwanyị igwa nwoke ụdị ihe a*” (p. 7). (Obiọra kept quiet for a long time, bent his head to the ground. To be truthful, it is not a woman’s right to tell a man such a thing). Ubesie shows that women are not in a position to propose marriage to men, because it is men’s prerogative to do so. Obiọra’s mood frightens Ada who feels remorse and regrets her androgynous tendency.

But, when Obiọra realises that Ada’s irrational behaviour is a threat to his masculinity, he chooses to reject feminine tendency which this proposal subjects him to. In trying to show that he cannot be intimidated and subdued by a woman, he raises his head abruptly and immediately gazes at Ada steadily in silence to assert his masculine prowess. Ada looks at him but in trying to withdraw her eyes, Obiọra gains ground to position Ada in her inferiority state. He rejects Ada’s assertiveness and subjects her to the tradition of the Igbo society, where women have no right to propose marriage to men. He engages Ada in a long interrogation and discredits Ada’s motives for wanting to marry him. Consequently, he doubts Ada’s love for him and accuses her of seeking to marry him because of his money. He ridicules Ada because of her assertiveness concerning their marriage. Ubesie illustrates this through Obiọra’s questions to Ada:

Obiọra: “*Ada!... I hụrụ m n’anya?*” (p. 8). (Ada!... Do you love me?).

Ada: “*Gị onwe gị maara nke ọma na m hụrụ gị n’anya.* (You know very well that I love you). Ada convinces him that she loves him.

Obiọra: “*Ọ bụ maka na enwere m ego ka i ji hụ m n’anya?*” (p. 8). (Do you love me because of my money?). Ubesie shows that women do not truly love men, but their money. Here, Obiọra’s expression portrays women as

materialistic. Ada vows that her love for him has nothing to do with his money, and that to her nothing can separate them except death.

Ada: *“Chineke Ekwela! O bụladi na i dara ogbenye, aga m ahụ gi n’anya dika m hụrụ gi ugbu a....Gini ka i chere na o siri ike isesa anyi abuo? Nani Onwu”* (p. 8). (God forbid, even if you are poor I will love you as I love you now.... What do you think that will separate us? It is only death). Ada’s candid expression seems not to douse Obiora’s suspicion and mistrust. Obiora goes further to trivialise and subdue her by portraying women as untrustworthy and insincere through his question to Ada.

Obiora: *“O buru na o nwee ihe m metere n’ulo oru, ndi oru anyi tuo m nga, i gaa kwukwa m n’akuku?”* (p. 8). (If I do something wrong in my office, they jail me, would you stand by me?). Ada is surprised by this kind of question, but Ubesie uses an Igbo proverb which explains women’s insincerity in marriage about ‘for better for worse’ to support Obiora’s question to Ada. But she still assures Obiora that she will wait for him.

Ada: *“O buru na o nwee ka udi ihe di otu a si daputa ma anyi gbachaa akwukwo, m were ya na o bu ka Chineke si choo ka o mee. I jewe nga, anoro m leziwe ezi na ulo anyi anya, ruo mgbe i putara”* (p. 8). (If such a thing happened after our marriage, I will accept it as God’s wish and take care of our house until you are out of jail). Men hold women up to ridicule and subjection because of their (women’s) assertiveness in their desperation to marry. Obiora who is not satisfied and convinced with Ada’s response keeps on subduing her in order to display his power.

Obiọra: “*Ọ burukwanu na anyi abubeghi di na nwunye udi ihe a ewee mee, ginị ka i ga-eme?*” (p. 8). (If we have not yet married, what will you do?). As usual, Ada in her meekness continues to assure him that, she will wait if he truly promises to marry her when he comes out from jail.

Ada: “*Ọ buru na i ji obi gi kwe m nkwa na i ga-alu m, aga m anọ chere gi, i jechaa nga, pụta*” (p. 8). (If you sincerely promise to marry me, I would wait until you came out from jail). Ubesie through Ada’s reply shows that men are not trustworthy and reliable. Men limit, dehumanise and subject women for the cause of marriage and yet abandon them for not being their type or marriage material but for fun. Obiọra treats Ada with scorn and contempt. He nods at Ada’s response but he does not look convinced. He then clears his throat as if he wants to propose to Ada who is enthusiastic about accepting the proposal. But Obiọra surprises her more and says.

Obiọra: “*Ọ buru na anyi aburu di na nwunye, i nu na o nwere nwa agboghọ ozo m na-akwado ilu, olee ihe ga-abu uche gi?*” (p. 9). (If we were married, you heard that I wanted to marry another girl, what would be your thought?). Ada is dumbfounded, marvelled and wondered at Obiọra’s comment.

Ada: “*Ebe i si na i huru m n’anya, ginị ga-eme ka i hu nwanyi ozo jewe ikwu na i ga-alu ya? Ọ buru na i mee nke a, o gosiri na ihunanya i nwere n’ebe m no esikwaghi ike nke ukwu*” (p. 9). (If you claim to love me, how would you marry another woman? If you do it, it shows that your love for is not real). Ubesie, through Obiọra’s expression shows how women are

reduced to the level of mere property which men obtain and change at will. It also shows men's insincerity to women. As if her humiliation is not enough, he informs Ada that he has married.

Obiọra: *“Aluọla m nwanyị, mụta ọtụtu ụmụ. Abuọ n'ime ha amalitela jewe akwukwo”* (p. 9). (I have married with many children; two of them have started going to school).

Men degrade, dehumanise, and assert their authority and superiority over women on the verge of marriage. Ada is shocked and bewildered. Ada in a confused state orders him to leave her house. Ubesie does not condemn Obiọra's deceptive act towards Ada, but shows Ada as aggressive due to the way she pushes Obiọra away from her sight in such a way that she would have wounded him when he reveals his marital status. Ubesie shows that Ada insults Obiọra and rushes into her kitchen in annoyance to bring either a knife, pestle or soup spoon. Obiọra who senses that blood will flow, if Ada comes out from her kitchen and meets him still staying in her room, runs out immediately to avoid lies he will tell his wife. Ubesie's portrayal shows women to be antagonistic, hostile and murderous, but presents Obiọra's action as a normal men's behaviour. Women who assert their rights, especially in marriage issues, are dehumanized in Igbo society. Women as human beings should be free (like men) to propose marriage if they are pleased with a relationship.

3.3.9 Female as Submissive, Humble and Respectful

Nzeako's *Nkọlị* shows through Ogechi that women are submissive of men's authority as head of the family. Ogbalu (n. d.) points out that “the head of the family has enormous powers. He must be consulted in all matters involving any member of the family.... In

many places, he literally has the power of life and death over his family....” (p. 11). Therefore, the men in Igbo family structure are regarded as ‘semi-gods’, on whom everybody in the family depends for their sustenance. Consequently, the superiority of men is evident in their role as head of the family, decision-maker and controller of women. Men are the fulcrum around which the family revolves. As the controller of family, men exercise power over women, including women’s decisions. The status of men is mainly seen during decision making. In the Igbo family, women do not take decisions or react to any issues without the consent of their husbands. It is their husbands who decide on matters concerning their families and in some extreme cases the women are not consulted. Even if the woman’s life is at stake, she must wait for her husband’s decision. Ogechi obeys her husband’s (Ojeuga’s) instructions to report any problem that concerns them to him in order to take proper action.

Nzeako illustrates women’s humility through how Ogechi goes to the ‘Obi’ to report Nne Ekwutosi’s irrational behaviour to Ojeuga. In the traditional Igbo home, the “*Obi*” the family’s main hall is primarily a man’s domain while the woman, that is, his wife, stays in another house called “*Mkpuke*” but all are within the same compound. This is the practice in pre-colonial Igbo society. The term “*Obi*” in this sense symbolizes higher status than “*Mkpuke*”. As a rule, wives do not share the “*Obi*” with their husbands and vice-versa. However, a woman goes to the man’s “*Obi*” whenever she desires to discuss any important issue with the husband after which she goes back to her “*Mkpuke*”. Ojeuga (Ogechi’s husband) shows this in his words to Ogechi: “*N’okwu ahụ i kwuru, akụkọ ahụ nile dị m ka ọ bụ nrọ. E-m, ihe bụ uche m n’ ime ya bụ na ị ga-alaghachi n’ụlọ mkpuke gị*” (p. 13). (What you said seems like a dream to me. Well, what I think is that you

should go back to your hut). The “*Obi*” symbolises men’s superiority while the “*Mkpuke*” symbolises women’s inferiority in the compound. It is the wives who shuttle between the *mkpuke* and the *Obi* for sundry reasons ranging from the offering of food to their husband, presentation of kola nuts to visitors, laying of complaints and making of requests, and sex. The man hardly goes to the *mkpuke* except if something serious happens or if his wife or children are sick, as Nzeako shows (p. 62). Uwasomba (2008) argues that the binary opposition between the “*Mkpuke*” and “*Obi*” is healthy and desirable for the progress and survival of the Igbo society. The structure of relationship between the “*Mkpuke*” and the “*Obi*” throws up different but needful values such as compassion, love, peace, the spirit of common motherhood in the ideology of ‘*umunne*’ and the spirit of competitiveness, masculinity, valour, force and even violence in the ideology of ‘*umunna*’. Each unit (*obi or mkpuke*), therefore, is not meant to undermine the other or to usurp the power of the other. The above explanation by Uwasomba nevertheless shows that women are hierarchically segregated from men for the purpose of maintaining peace and harmony in Igbo society.

Nzeako also shows women’s humility through the language Ogechi uses to address Ojeuga. In his novel, it is apparent that in traditional society, women especially wives, do not address their husbands without using the term, “*nna anyi*” (our father). In some cases, the term is further embellished with “*biko nna anyi*” (please, our father) or, *biko, di m oma*’ (please, my good husband) when they wish to talk or make a request from their husbands. The women observe this tradition as a mark of respect and submission, instead of a means to subsume them under men. Ogechi, in this novel, more often than not uses

the afore-mentioned phrases to address Ojeuga (her husband) whenever she wants to talk to him, as shown below:

Biko nna anyi, agara m ahia taata, wee loghachi n'oge Di m, biko okwu ahụ nwanyị ahụ gwara m wee gbagwojuo m anya. M wee chee echiche nke oma, wee kwado na o dighi n'ulo onye dibia m ga-aga, kama na m ga-akoro gi akuko ahụ ka i choputa ihe bu eziokwu... (p. 12).

(Please our father, I went to the market today and came back early.... Please, my husband, I was confused by what the woman told me, so I reasoned very well and decided not to visit any medicine-man, but to relate the matter to you in order to find out the truth).

It is obvious that the reason why the wives are made to use the term 'nna anyi' (our father) to address men is to subtly admit that they (women) are not in the same category as men and therefore they need to respect and honour them. Igbo men love women who are humble and respectful. Ojeuga's remarks to his wife, Ogechi, show how he constantly affirms his status as decision-taker.

He always tells his wives to report any problem affecting them to him, as Nzeako shows below: "*Obi di m ocha n'ihia akuko a i koru m. O bu ihe di otu a, ka m na-achọ. O buru na i chee echiche nke oma, i ghaghị icheta okwu m na-agwa unu, na o kwesiri ka onye o bu la n'etiti unu nwere nsogbu o bu la bia koru m, ka m mara ihe m ga-eme banyere ya*" (p. 13). (I am happy about what you reported to me. This type of thing is what I want. If you think very well, you will remember what I normally tell you, that if any of you has any problem, she should relate it to me to know what I will do about it). Ojeuga's comment suggests that women lack the capacity to handle problems. This also shows that women's response to issues that concern them is very minimal in Igbo society. Women

are made to be silent so that men can speak for them. Men like women who depend on their decisions. Women are ideologically seen as emotional; therefore, men feel that women react irrationally which makes them unsuitable for decision making. Men view themselves as more rational beings and the only people that can solve family problems amicably. As a result of Ogechi's obedience, she awaits her husband's return before inquiring on how to stop the witchcraft that disturbs them at night:

Ka enyi m nwanyị bụ nne Mgbogo biara...ọ hụrụ ihe ahụ nile kara m n'ogwe aka o wee tie mkpu ...gwa m na ihe ahụ bụ n'ebe amusu tara m ... ọ hụrụ nke Nkọlị ...Nwanyị ahụ juo m ma m agwala gi (Ojeuga) ihe ahụ na-eme. M wee gwa ya na m agwaghị gi, kama na m choro igwa gi mgbe i lotara (p. 35).

(When my friend, Nne Mgbogo came... she saw scratches on my body and shouted... told me that I was bewitched... she saw Nkoli's own... That woman asked me if I had told you about it. I told her that I had not informed you, but I wanted to notify you when you were back).

Nne Mgbogo's words show that women solely depend on their husbands' decisions. They do not react or make decisions that concern their lives without their husband's consent. Consequently, women constitute a road block to themselves (Ikonne, 2008). Women who depend more on their husbands are handicapped because they cannot think or find solutions to their problems without the help of their husbands. They feel complacent with their situation, because they are made to sit down and watch, while waiting for their saviour to arrive. Ogechi believes that Ojeuga will solve all her problems.

Ogechi informs her husband, Ojeuga, how Nne Ekwutosi attacked them but she did not fight because she does not want to disrespect her husband:

Mgbe ọ na-agwa m ihe m ga-eme ka amusu ahụ ghara ita anyị ozọ, ka nne Ekwutosi jiri olu ike wee na-ekwuru anyị okwu

ojojo di iche iche. O dighi onye kporo ya aha, ma o dighi onye kwuru okwu ojojo banyere ya. Mgbe nwanji ahụ choro ıla n'ulo ya, nne Ekwutosi puo chechie ya n'uzo wee manye anyi ogu.... Ma ihe m ji agba oso ahụ abughị n'ihị ujo, kama o bu inye gi bu di anyi ugwu na nsopuru diiri gi (pp. 35-36).

(When she was telling me what to do for the witchcraft to stop, Nne Ekwutosi abused us. Nobody called her name, and nobody said bad things about her. When the woman wanted to go back to her house, Nne Ekwutosi waited for her outside and fought us.... But I ran not because I was afraid, but to give you our husband prestige and respect).

From Ogechi's words, women are not fearful or weak to deal with issues that affect them in life, but, for the sake of respecting their husbands' decisions, they accept unfavourable situations. Ogechi acknowledges the fact that women have a right to react to any issue in the family. This is seen in her remarks to her friend, Adaora, after she (Ogechi) alludes her situation with Nne Ekwutosi to that of Mbediogu whose enemies came to his house to carry him, he told them to exercise some patience that he was coming, he went outside and used his hands and feet to burrow the ground so that when people enter his compound they will know that he fought with his enemies before they captured him, she informs her (Adaora) about Nne Ekwutosi's character: "*O bughị na nne Ekwutosi e nweghi ike ime ihe o bula siri ya n'obi wee puta, kama o bu ka unu bu ndi enyi m jiri nti unu wee nuru ihe na-eme n'etiti anyi*" (p. 10). (It is not that Nne Ekwutosi cannot do what she has in mind, but it is for you my friends to know what is going on between us). Ogechi's words expose her helplessness in her husband's house. She discusses her problem with Adaora just for her to know what is going on in her life. Ogechi's action reveals sisterhood, which African Womanists urge women to embrace. Sisterhood is women's solidarity in solving their fellow women's problems. It is through women

sharing their predicament with their fellow women that their problems will be known and solved. Ogechi's decision to avoid fighting her co-wife shows the womanists' ideal. She seeks peace and negotiation instead of violence or confrontation in her quest for justice. Womanists advocate the inclusion of men in their struggle in order to achieve liberation, equity and fair play. A womanist must act for the well-being of her family. Ogechi is a real womanist who listens, observes, and maintains the co-existence of her family. Although Ogechi behaves like a typical womanist, her behaviour enunciates that women play a secondary and subservient role in resolving matters in the family.

Nzeako illustrates women's humane attitude in Igbo family. Ogechi goes to her parents' house without the consent of her husband, after the fight she had with her co-wife (Nne Ekwutosi). Her family insist that she must go back to report to her husband, since he was not at home when she left, except if he fails to handle the situation, then they will step in, as shown below:

N'isi ututu ahụ Nkọlị na nne ya buuru mkpirisi anya mmiri n'anya wee garuo n'ụlọ nne ya ochie, ndị niile bi n'ụlọ ahụ gbakọtara wee juọ ihe mere ha ji akwa akwa. Nne Nkọlị wee kọchaara ụmụ nne ya ebenebe na-egbu n'ụlọ di ya.... Ha wee juọ ya ... I kọchaara di gị ihe niile ndị a, ma ndị mere n'isi ututu taata? O gwa ha na di ya ... anoghị n'ụlọ, mgbe ya na nwa ya hapuru ụlọ ha... ha gwa ya na ha kwadoro ka o laghachi azu wee kọrọ di ya ihe mere ... Ma o buru na o meghi ihe di anyi n'obi, mgbe ahụ anyi atuputa ihe anyi ga-eme (pp. 31-32).

(That early morning Nkọlị and her mother went to their grandmother's house in tears; everybody in that house came to ask them why they were crying. Nkọlị's mother related to her siblings everything that happened in her husband's house... They asked her... did you tell your husband all these things, and the ones that happened early this morning? She told them

that her husband... was not at home; when she left their house with her daughter... they told her that they wanted her to go back and relate what happened to her husband... If he did not do what we had in mind, that time we would decide on what to do).

Ogechi, the helpless woman, has no choice than go back home in tears. The Igbo society gives men honour and dignity as head of the family, even if their wives' health is at stake.

Nzeako demonstrates that men involve their wives in decision making as a result of their humility and obedience. But, the men only seek their wives' opinion or suggestion, especially on matters concerning their children before they make the final decision.

Ojeuga involves his wife, Ogechi, in finding a solution to Nkoji's incessant attacks from witchcraft. Ogechi humbly suggests a place for him:

Biko di m, ewela iwe... biko di m, lee ikpere m abuo n'ala. Biko di m, ka anyi cheputa n'ebe anyi nwere ike ikporo Nkoji. Anyi nwere ike icheta n'ulo onye anyi ga-akporo ya n'obodo ozo.... Biko di m chee echiche banyere nke a (p. 60).

(Please my husband do not be angry... please my husband, look at my two knees on the ground. Please my husband, let us think of a place to send Nkoji. We may remember somebody's house we will take her to another town.... Please my husband think about this).

Ogechi's plea illustrates that women do not make decisions but suggest solutions for the men to make the final decision. Ojeuga instructs Ogechi after her suggestion that they will sleep on the issue and in the morning decide on where to take Nkoji. Then Ogechi in desperation to save her daughter's life quickly proposes to take Nkoji to a prayer house:

"Ma n'uche nke m, ana m aju ma o di mma ka anyi kporo ya gaa n'ulo ekpere" (p. 60).

(In my opinion, I am asking if it is good for us to take her to a prayer house). Nzeako

shows that women react impulsively without proper consideration. Women in the bid to make suggestion without offending their husbands employ a question tag. Yet, Ogechi's suggestion attracts Ojeuga's negative reaction. He reprimands her: "*Okwu ka m gwara gi, nwanyị m. O dighi mma ka anyị mee ihe nile ngwa ngwa, nke ga-eme ka anyị taa aka n'onyị n'oge ikpe azụ. O di mma ka anyị chee echiche nke oma, tupu anyị amalite ime ihe o bula*" (p. 60). (I just talked to you, my wife. It is not good for us to do everything in a haste, which will make us regret at last. It is good for us to think very well, before we start to do anything). Ojeuga's utterance proves that women do not think before they act. Nzeako, through Ojeuga, also indicates that women's unthinking attitude can lead one into big problems, which one will regret later. Ojeuga's reaction suggests the reason women are not allowed to make decision in the family. The portrayal of women as a thoughtless character is not acceptable to womanists because women nurture their children, husbands and the whole family without men's contribution. Women have shown great ability in agriculture, economy, finance, education, and politics for the progress of the country. Snail-sense mechanism is all about women using their humility to their own advantage. Women should be humble and respectful and, at the same time, negotiate towards their liberation as Ogechi does when she implores her husband, Ojeuga, to take her daughter, Nkoli, to Ndirika's house in order to save her life. Although her husband is not happy with her impatience, Ogechi uses soft pleas to negotiate her way until she gets what she wants. Ojeuga finally takes Nkoli to Ndirika's house in Awka. Nzeako later shows in his novel that men can include women in decision-making if the woman is humble and obedient to them. Ojeuga involves his wife, Ogechi, in the decision

to bring Nne Ekwutōsi back when they discover that she (Nne Ekwutōsi) is innocent of the allegation levelled against her (p. 94).

Meniru's *Nwaeze* portrays Ifeyinwa as a humble and respectful girl. She is presented as a girl who humbly greets anybody she sees on the way: "*Ọ na-eji obi ume ala jucha ọha, were nwayọọ kele ekele tụtụ ọ gawa ebe ọ na-aga*" (p. 3). (She humbly exchanges greetings, and quietly greets people before going out). Ifeyinwa's humility and self-respect prompt Nwaeze's parents and his kinsmen to marry her immediately for Nwaeze before any other man. This shows that women's character is among the criteria for their early marriage.

Ọnwuchekwa's *Chinaagorọm* presents Chinagorọ as humble and respectful, irrespective of her beauty and education. Chinedum's parents (Ụlọakụ and Chjioke) advise their son, Chinedum, to marry Chinagorọ because of her good character:

Nne Chinedum na di ya bụ Chjioke chetara nke ọma na Chinagorọ nwere agwa ọma, mụtakwa ezi akwụkwọ ma maakwa mma di egwu.... O jighi ukwu ebie okazi di ka umu agboghọ ibe ya ji nke ha ebie. O di juu ... (p. 3).

(Chinedum's mother and her husband, Chjioke, remember vividly that Chinagoro has good character, is educated and very beautiful She is not flirtatious like her mates. She is humble ...).

In Igbo society, a woman is expected to possess a good character. She must be humble, obedient, chaste and respectful in order to be seen as a good woman who can manage a home. Chinagorọ respects her husband's (Chinedum's) instructions, especially when she is accused of waywardness. Her humility and good character endeared her to her husband

and his family. Onwuchekwa shows her as a woman who brings good luck to her husband and a woman who knows her husband's desires:

Chinagorọ abughị onye ihu uchu, ego na-enubatara Chinedum ka mmiri. Chinagorọ wee were agwa oma ya rie obi Chinedum. Ndị agbataobi ha na-akpọzi Chinagorọ, Obidiya. Chinedum wee na-elekọta ndị mụrụ ya anya... nke ka nke, Chinagorọ dī ya mma n'aka. Ndị ụlọ Chinedum wee were Chinagorọ kpaa nzu anya (p. 4)

(Chinagorọ did not constitute a bad luck, her husband's business flourished. Chinagorọ won Chinedum's love because of her good character. Her neighbours named her 'Obidiya'. Chinedum took care of Chinagorọ's parents ..., more importantly, he valued Chinagorọ. Chinedum's family loved her).

A woman's good character is shown to bring luck to her husband. Chinagorọ's neighbours also recognise her humility. Her obedience and respect for her husband prompt him to take good care of her parents. Onwuchekwa also shows that a man's relationship with his in-laws depends on his wife's attitude towards him. A good and respectable woman is shown to be loved by her husband, in-laws and neighbours, which is what the womanists advocate for the unity and peace of the family.

3.3.10 Female as Friendly

The female writers, Meniru and Onwuchekwa, including the male writer, Nzeako, present female characters as good friends, while Ubesie does not. Women are shown to help their fellow women to conquer their challenges in life. In Nzeako's *Nkọlị*, Ogechi's friend, Adaora, advises Ogechi on how to deal with her situation in her husband's house. She urges Ogechi to be patient and commit Nne Ekwutosi's irrational behaviour towards her to God, for He will surely take control of her situation: "*Hapuru Chineke ihe nile, ugbu*

a, o bu a mutaghị nwa ozo bu ihe na-ewute m, ma Chineke a ghaghị i nyere gi aka, ka i muo otutu umu, naanị chekwube Chineke...” (p. 11). (Leave everything to God, now, I am not happy because of your inability to bear another child, but God will surely help you to bear many children, just believe in Him). Nzeako also presents women as good friends through Nne Ekwutosi’s friend, who gives Nne Ekwutosi some money to help her alleviate her suffering in her parents’ house. Her friend is moved to tears when she sees Nne Ekwutosi’s condition and was unable to eat in Nne Ekwutosi’s house. She also promises Nne Ekwutosi to be visiting her. Nne Ekwutosi’s friend’s attitude shows sisterhood among women. Nne Ekwutosi’s friend also goes back home to inform some people, including Ojeuga’s kinsmen, about Nne Ekwutosi’s condition in order to elicit some help for her (Nne Ekwutosi). She persuades some women to visit Nne Ekwutosi, while some send different things for her sustenance. Women through sisterhood help their fellow women to face their problems courageously.

In *Nwaeze*, Meniru presents women as good friends and advisers through Ebuzoaju who accommodates Ifeyinwa in her house when Ifeyinwa has nowhere to stay in Enugu (p. 28). When Ifeyinwa is emotionally depressed because of Nwaeze’s marriage to Celia, Ebuzoaju advises Ifeyinwa to forget about Nwaeze and go on with her life because such a marriage does not last. *“Ya bu echela echiche banyere Nwaeze na nwunye ya ozo... Ekwela ka gi taara ha ahụ.”* (p. 30). (So, do not think about Nwaeze and his wife again.... Do not punish yourself). Ebuzoaju strives to make sure that Ifeyinwa forgets Nwaeze by taking her everywhere she goes, especially to relaxation centres where they play different games: *“egwuregwu a nyere Ifeyinwa aka n’ichefu ihe mere ya.”* (p. 31) (This game helped Ifeyinwa to forget what has happened to her), and she starts living a

normal life. Women's commitment to uplift their fellow women from their predicament is what Womanists advocate.

Mrs. Ayodele (Chinagorọ's friend) is shown as a good friend in Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom*. She notices how women disturb Chinedum (Chinagorọ's husband) in his office and advises Chinagorọ to further her education in order to complement her husband's position and save her marriage from destruction. But Chinagorọ feels that education is not necessary since her husband takes good care of her and her children. Her reply amuses Mrs. Ayodele but she manages to convince Chinagorọ to get a university degree in order to save herself from embarrassment. Chinagorọ agrees to inform her husband about it. Before her husband comes back that afternoon, for his siesta, she has already set his food on the table. When they have finished eating and had their siesta, Chinagorọ humbly informs her husband of her intention to further her education in university: "*Mgbe ha tetara ka oriaku ya gwara ya n'obi di umeala na o ga-amasi ya ma ya bu di ya kwe ka ya bu oriaku ya mutuzie akwukwo, ya ga-ewelitekwa ugwu na aha di ya; nyekwara ya bu oriaku ya aka iba uru di iche n'ulo ebe a luru ya*" (p. 80). (When they woke up, his wife humbly told him that she would appreciate it if he (her husband) would agree for her (his wife) to further her education. It would bring the greatest respect and honour to him; and also make her useful to their family). Chinagorọ's attitude shows how women negotiate with their husbands to achieve their aim. Snail-sense feminism/womanism is all about women devising a humble means to negotiate their way to the top. Chinedum supports Chinagorọ's education. He gives Chinagorọ some money to obtain the WAEC form and buy all necessary books for her study:

Chinedum wee nye oriaku ya oḡu naịra na ise ka o were jee zuta forms na postal order o ji etinye maka ya bu ule... Di ya nyekwara ya oḡu naịra na ise ka o were zutakwa akwukwo di iche iche o ga-agu maka ule ahụ. O gwakwara ya si na ma ego ezughị ka o gwa ya (p. 82).

(Chinedum gave his wife N25 to buy forms and postal order for the registration for the examination.... Her husband also gave her N25 to buy necessary textbooks which would aid her in the examination. He also told her to inform him if the money was not enough).

Mrs Ayodele helps Chinagorọ to register for G.C.E and buys all the necessary books she needs for her studies. Chinagorọ also collects money from her husband, Chinedum, and Mrs Ayodele helps her to register for JAMB examination to study Law in the university. Mrs Ayodele also buys important books, with her own money without requesting it back, in order to aid Chinagorọ's academic pursuit. Chinagorọ has an outstanding performance in the two examinations. She gets admission in two universities: University of Lagos and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Mrs Ayodele advises her to study in the University of Lagos, in order to be close to her family. Her husband supports her throughout her studentship in the University of Lagos and the Law school. Sisterhood is very important in women's lives. African womanists emphasize sisterhood because it is one of the coping mechanisms which help African women to resolve their problems. However, the liberation of women, as shown in these Igbo novels, is usually made possible by female bonding. Bernard (1981, p. 95) argues that female friendships made many women succeed in their struggle against patriarchal oppression. According to him,

The resulting "relational deficit" in the lives of women might have been even more serious than it was were it not for warm and supporting relationships among women. Female

friendships were, in fact, what made many marriages bearable
... women alone could know the heart of a woman (p. 96).

She went further to say that, although the cult of domesticity has served as a bond of womanhood, “women practicing the domestic vocation perceived it as an experience that united them with other women”. She, however, advises that “female friendships assumed a new value in women’s lives...because relations between equals- ‘peer relationships’- were superseding hierarchical relationships as the desired norms of human interaction...” (p. 97). Sisterhood, therefore, is very necessary in women’s relationships for women’s liberation to be achieved.

3.3.11 Male and Female as Faithful

Ubesie shows only male characters as faithful while Oñwuchekwa, presents both the male and female characters as faithful. In *Isi Akwụ Dara N’ala*, Ubesie presents men as faithful. When Chike visits Captain Obi’s house, he sees a beautiful girl seated in that place and does not make love advances towards her because he is married: “*Ọ bụrụ mgbe Chike ka bụ Chike, ọ dighị ihe ga-eme ka ọ ghara iji ọñụ ụtọ ya kwuhie nwa agboghọ ahụ obi. Ma ugbu a, Chineke ejikoọla ya na Ada ọñụ. Ọ dighị ihe nwere ike itọsa ha, ọ bụladị nwa agboghọ mara mma*” (p. 38). (If it were when Chike was Chike, there is nothing that would prevented him from seducing that girl. But now, God has united him and Ada. There is nothing that will separate them, not even a beautiful girl). In Oñwuchekwa’s *Chinagorom*, Chinagorọ and Chinedum are presented as faithful. Chinagorọ is shown to be faithful despite false accusations levelled against her, especially from her father-in-law, Chijioke, and a medicine-man, Ochaachagbute, who supports Chijioke’s belief that Chinagorọ is unfaithful. As a result, Chijioke vows to send Chinagorọ out of his son’s

house. But Chinedum shows in his words to his parents and in-laws that Chinagorọ is faithful and he is responsible for her pregnancy: *“Nwa oriaku m muru bu nke m. Mu na nwoke o bula anaghi adọ nwa ohuru a. Echiche echela unu n’ebe oriaku m no. O maara onwe ya... na o bu ya takwara azu ahụ ya tinyere na ngiga na o dighi onye ohi zuru ya”* (pp. 55-65). (The child born by my wife is mine. I am not contending with any man about the paternity of this new child. Do not worry about my wife. She knows herself... that I am responsible for her pregnancy and not another man). Chinedum is shown to be a faithful husband. He has self-control even though he associates with women in his office: *“Umunwanyị na-achupu ya n’ofisi ya ma.... Dọkita Chijioke bu nwa maara onwe ya. Ma o buladi otu a o bidoro sotuwa ufodu ha O ka makwaara onwe ya”* (p. 83-85). (Women are always in the office... Doctor Chijioke is a responsible man. Even now that he has started befriending some of them... he is still well behaved). Men are portrayed as those who are faithful to their wives.

3.3.12 Female as Trustworthy

Ọwnuchekwa in *Chinagorom* presents Chinagorọ as trustworthy. Chinedum shows this in his words when he appreciates Chinagorọ for obeying his instructions. Chinedum tells Chinagorọ to keep his visit to Nigeria, which leads to her pregnancy, secret from their parents. Even when Chinagorọ is accused of committing adultery behind her husband, she maintains her husband’s words without minding all the criticisms, until she is delivered of her baby boy. Chinedum is happy for Chinagorọ’s obedience by thanking God for giving him such a wife who is trustworthy: *“Obasi Di N’elu mere m luta nwanji di ka gi. I bu nwanji kwesiri ntukwasị obi. O maara obi di ya.... Mu na mmadu ejighi gi atọ. I maara na di bu ugwu. Jidesie agwa oma gi ike ka I wee na-eri mkpuru obi m na-*

aga n'ihu (p. 45). (God helped me to marry a woman like you. You are a trust worthy woman. One who knows the mind of her husband.... I do not joke with you. You know that your husband is your honour. Hold on to your good character so that you will continue to win my heart all the time). Women dehumanise themselves to please men. Chinagoro suffers humiliation from her parents, in-laws and friends and still remains calm and resolute to satisfy her husband. Womanists urge women to be trustworthy but they are not in support of women's long-suffering disposition as a result of their subordination by men in order to test their obedience, reliability and societal perception of them. This is because such abuse can traumatize women and can maim them for life.

3.4 Discrepancies in the Negative Portrayal of Male and Female Characters in Early Post-War Male and Female-Authored Igbo Novels

3.4.1 Male and Female as Prostitutes

Prostitutes devote, or usually offer their body to indiscriminate sexual intercourse, especially for hire; or as a common harlot (Mills, 1989, p. 194). In *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Ubesie portrays men and women as prostitutes through Ada and an army officer. Ada is shown as a common harlot:

Ada puo n'utu, mgbe a na-ahu ya anya bu oge ndi ihe abali sichara.... Akuko si n'elu na-abara Chike na nwunye ya no na di, ma o kaghi akwuna mma. Ndi maara Chike na-akoro ya na ebe nwunye ya na-apukari oriri ugbu a bu n'ogige ndi ami (p. 78-79).

(If Ada went out in the morning, when she would be seen was when people had finished cooking dinner.... Chike heard different stories that, although his wife was married, she was no better than a prostitute. Those who knew Chike were telling him that his wife normally went to the army camp).

If Chike inquires about her (Ada's) whereabouts, she ignores him. Ubesie shows immoral women as wicked and useless women who are not worth dying for or living for. The army officers feel that they prefer to be given a befitting burial than to be scorned because of a woman. Therefore, the army men abandon Ada to avoid a shameful death.

Ubesie shows that it is difficult for women to stop prostitution. This makes Chike wish that he would have stopped Ada's business if he had a means of feeding his family. This suggests why rich men in Igbo society refuse their wives to work because of fear of infidelity. This type of fear is illogical because all women are not like Ada. The African womanist supports women's right to work because it helps women's independence, assertion and allows them to support their family. They frown at women using prostitution to get financial independence, which may cause family chaos and disunity.

Ubesie shows through Ada that women's quest for financial independence leads to immorality. Ada's children are aware of their mother's immoral behaviour to the extent that they refuse to follow her to Nanka where she wants to continue her prostitution. Children are known to love their mothers, but Ada's prostitution makes her children hate her. Womanism frowns at this type of behaviour because a woman's character should command respect in order to function as a role model to other women. Ada's behaviour is not womanish. The Womanists condemn Ada's character as untypical of an Igbo woman. Women, especially married ones, struggle for the interest and well-being of their families, and not for selfish gain. Ada moves to Nanka to be able to meet his male friends at will: "*O kwuru sị na ọ bụ maka ịzụ ahịa ka o ji biri ebe ahụ.... Ọ nọ ebe ahụ na-azụ ahia nnu, na-erekwa onwe ya kọbọ*" (p. 88). (She said that she lived in Nanka because of

her business.... She was there to do business and sell herself cheap). Ubesie uses the metaphor, *'na-erekwa onwe ya kòbò'* (selling herself for a penny), to suggest that prostitution devalues womanhood. By *'kòbò'* (penny) (the least denomination in the Nigerian currency), he maintains that whatever money Ada realises from her illicit business is nothing (*kòbò*) compared to her worth as a woman.

On the contrary, Ubesie portrays men as prostitutes. An army officer who detains Ada and her men from the way back from Otuocha and wants to kill them is cited as an example: *"Obi kporo nwoke a nku, ma nani otu ihe o jighi egwuri egwu bu mmanya na umunwanyị. O nwere ike iji mmanya mee ebere, ma nwanị mara mma anaghị esi ebe o no agafe"* (p. 104). By this, Ubesie suggests that men are as weak as women. The army officer's lifestyle is used to balance Ada's lifestyle. Ada's business trip to Otuocha leads her into the hands of a randy army officer who could have killed her group but for Ada's presence. Some men are shown as not strong-willed. They are unreasonable when they see women. Ada lives with the army officer in Awka until she runs away.

Ada's relationship with men at Nanka also depicts women as prostitutes. Chike visits Ada to sympathize with her for what has happened to her: *"Mgbe o na-eru be Ada nso, o nuru ka umu nwoke no n'ime ulo Ada, na-achị ochi. Obi ya ekweghi ya jide"* (p. 111). (When he was approaching Ada's house, he heard some men laughing inside Ada's house. He became sad). Chike is greatly annoyed at his wife's prostitution. He feels that the woman whose bride price he paid is being used freely by men. Ubesie shows this through the following idiom: *"Ndi mmadu na-akpa nku n'ubi ya ka a ga-asị na o bu ohia nku. Ma, uta adiiri umu nwoke no ebe ahụ. O bu Ada si ha biawa, ha nile ji wee na-abia be Ada"*

(p. 111). (People were collecting firewood in his farm as if it was a bush. But, men who were there were not to blame. All of them were there because Ada invited them). Women are portrayed as property owned by men like farmland. Chike sees Ada as his farmland which men use as if it does not belong to anyone. Ubesie exonerates men from women's prostitution because they are invited by women. Ada despises Chike and follows men to a night party. Ada's waywardness is prominent from the way many men sit around her in the party. They are not jealous of the man who has brought her at the club because Ubesie shows that Ada is: "... *akwu chaara oha, onye gburu, ibe ya egburu*" (p. 143). (... Palmnut which belonged to the public, people, everybody took turns to harvest it). Ubesie uses the above idiomatic expression to depict Ada's wayward practices. The justification of men's immorality by Ubesie is a clear indication that Ubesie is not gender sensitive. He is obviously biased against women. The truth of the matter is that both Ada and the men who visit her are guilty of immorality. The reason behind the invitation does not justify the response to the invitation by her male friends.

Ubesie shows the height of women's prostitution through Ada's attitude when she comes back to Chike's house. Men are visiting Ada in Chike's house without minding his presence. Ada's attitude is an affront to her husband and family. It is an unmitigated reduction and debasement of her husband in the eyes of the whole world. Ubesie blames women for the subjection their husbands receive in their house in the cause of their (women's) prostitution. Ada's lack of respect for Chike makes men troop Chike's house as if he were dead:

*Umụ nwoke na-echu be Ada ka a na-echu mmiri, na-abịa ka ha
na-abịara onye mmadụ nwụrụ mgbaru, sị na be ya na-ala ka*

ndị jere kee ala nna ha. O dighi mgbe mmadu jere ebe ahu, o ghara ihu otu nwoke ma o bu mmadu abuo (p. 139).

(Men were going to Ada's house like they were fetching water, trooping there as if they were going to sympathise with the mourner, going out from her house like those who had gone to share their father's land. There was no time a person got there, without meeting a man or two men).

The picture of Ada's male friends frequenting her house with impunity is an apparent suggestion that the entire home has broken down; that there is no man in the house or that the man is dead. Chike's capitulation at this point suggests that the man in him has died; he has lost his manhood. Ubesie shows that Chike is unable to react against Ada's prostitution because of his poverty: "*Nwoke adighi ka o na-adị na mbu, o naghị emekwa ka o na-eme na mbu..... Ma agha ghaara ihe nile gharikoo...*" (p. 139). (The man was not as he used to be, he did not behave the way he used to behave.... But war had totally destroyed everything). The alliteration "*agha ghaara ihe nile gharikoo*" (p. 139). (The war has destroyed everything), is a testimony to the total destruction and gross devaluation of all traditional institutions (including marriage) by the civil war. Through Ada, women are shown to be born prostitutes and will die in prostitution. Ubesie does not criticise men's prostitution, but shows women as prostitutes through Ada's speech, behaviour, appearance and relationships. It is questionable why Ubesie does not reach the same conclusion about Ada's male friends who patronise her. Prostitution is a matter of give and take, so both the giver and the taker should be judged alike. It is surprising that Ubesie is silent on Ada's parents; if prostitution is deep-rooted in Ada's gene, then her parents also share the same genetic stain. Ubesie demonstrates that a beautiful woman can be her husband's joy or pain, and women like Ada are their husbands' heartache.

Olasope (2012) shows that women are castigated because of prostitution but men who are prostitutes are viewed exhibiting ordinary behaviour.

3.4.2 Female as Stubborn

In Nzeako's *Nkọli*, women are portrayed as stubborn through Nne Ekwutosi's persistent quarrelling with her co-wife, Nne Nkọli, irrespective of their husband's (Ojeuga's) advice and attempt to make peace in his house. Ojeuga confirms Nne Ekwutosi's stubbornness in his words to his sister, Oduenyi, when she warns him against Nne Ekwutosi's behaviour: "*otutu mgbe ka m kporo nani ya wee jiri olu di nro wee duo ya odu, gwa ya ka o wetuo obi n'ala, n'ihina o nweghi uru mmadu ga-enwe na o nwere ajo obi*" (p. 26). (I have called her so many times and advised her quietly, and told her to calm down, because nothing is gained in possessing a bad heart). Ojeuga also shows that he has done everything possible to make Nne Ekwutosi happy, but she refuses to heed his advice. The more he talks to her, the more she commits one crime or another, and that now, he is coming back from Obiogbodu's house concerning her fight with Nne Nkọli. Women's stubbornness is shown to disorganise the peaceful coexistence in the family.

Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala* portrays women as naturally rude as seen in the characters of Captain Obi's girlfriend and Ada. He shows them as the architects of discord in a peaceful home. Captain Obi's girlfriend insults Chike and ignores Captain Obi when he orders her out of the sitting room where she has come to disrupt his discussion with Chike. Ubesie pictures women as troublesome creatures. The women disrespect men who are feared and respected outside their homes:

O buru umu nwoke ka Obi tiere iwu ahụ ha si ebe ahụ puo, ha enyeghi ya nsopuru ha enye dimkpa o dara nsopuru. Ha

enyeghi dimkpa o dara nsopuru, ha enye kpakpando o bu n'ubu ya, n'ih i na inweta otu kpakpando na-esi ike, ma ya fodu mmadu inweta ya ato (p. 40).

(If it were men that Obi ordered to go, if they did not respect him they would respect his manliness. If they did not respect his manliness, they would respect the stars on his shoulders, because to get one star was very difficult, let alone somebody getting three).

But Obi's girlfriend stands where she is and dares Obi for instructing Nduka to insult her. Ubesie also shows Ada as rude and stubborn through Chike's words to Ada when Ada refuses to change: "*Omume i na-eme ugbu a abughi nke nwanyi ji aza, 'Omaara obi di ya'. I na-enupuru di gi isi. I na-echi di gi onu n'ala. I na-anọ n'ihu di gi, duru ndi enyi gi bata n'ulo di gi. Di gi jee ikwu, i si ya na i ga-akwanye ya isi na soja*" (p. 149). (Your recent behaviour does not portray you as a woman 'who knows her husband's desires'. You are disobedient to your husband. You are maltreating your husband. You bring your male-friends in the presence of your husband and take them into his house. If your husband wants to talk, you threaten to conscript him into the army). Ada is a discourteous woman. She refuses to change her bad behaviour and attacks her husband like a wild dog whenever he advises her: "*Gi bu mmadu lechaara anya je tinye nkita ara aka n'onu ka i mara ma o ga-atakwa gi. O teela m ji gbowa uja. O ruola mgbe m ga-ata ata, gwa gi na eze di nkita n'onu. Chee aka ghoro m*" (p. 150). (You, a human being sees a mad dog and put your hand in its mouth to know if it will bite you. It is long I have been barking. It is time for me to bite, and tell you that there are teeth in the dog's mouth. Wait and see). Ubesie, through Ada, shows women to be very insolent and obstinate.

Ubesie illustrates through Chike that Ada violates the tradition of Igbo society, especially during the war. The Igbo believe that certain parts of livestock (like a goat or chicken) are exclusively for men and so women are not entitled to eat them, but, women denied them to their husbands during the war. When Ada serves Chike food in her house at Nanka, Chike discovers that Ada has prepared the food with a whole chicken, but offers him only the two chicken legs instead of the juicy parts and he feels sad. He actually feels insulted because he knows very well that chicken gizzard, buttocks, its two laps, its breast, and some other juicy parts are in Ada's pot of soup, but she does not want to give him any of these. He wonders who she keeps them for: "*Ike kwe, o nwere ndi o na-edewere ha, maka n' omenala Igbo, nwanyi anaghi ata eke okuko ma di ya noro ya*" (p. 126) (Maybe, she kept them for some people, because in Igbo tradition, a woman does not eat chicken gizzard if her husband is around). Ubesie shows that women do not eat certain parts of chicken in Igbo society. However, Chike requests for the juicy chicken parts meant for men and Ada refuses. On inquiring, Ada replies that she reserves them for those (men) who are taking care of her. That Ada reserves the choice chicken parts for her male friends shows that Igbo women have not only acquiesced to this tradition but are in bondage to it. Even though Ada abandons Chike as her husband, she still could not eat the chicken parts herself, but reserves them for her male friends. The suggestion here is that Igbo society treats women as bad women, if they refuse to accept the tradition. Ubesie shows that war causes both men and women to abandon Igbo tradition: "*Ma ogu emeela, otutu mmadu hapu omenala, mewe omenelu!*" (p. 126). (But war had made many people abandon the tradition, and do something else). Ada is shown as a bad woman, who

abandons the tradition of the Igbo society. She denies her husband (Chike) his entitlement and does what she likes.

Ubesie points out that, in Igbo traditional society, women are not expected to slaughter chicken or eat a certain part of it when a man is around. Ubesie reveals it through Chike's warning to Ada concerning the way she feeds him:

Kwa ubochi, Ada na-egbu okuko o ji were na-ete ofe. Chike ji anya ya ahụ ma o na-egbu okuko ndi a. O naghị akpọ nwoke nọ nso ka o bịa gbuoro ya okuko di ka umu nwanyi ndi Igbo si eme. O na-eji aka ya egbu ya.... Chike na-anu utọ okuko ahụ n'ofe, ma o dibeghi ubochi o tara anu okuko... (p. 134).

(Every day, Ada slaughters the chicken she used to cook soup. Chike saw her slaughtering these chickens. She does not ask any man who was around to slaughter them for her as Igbo women do. She slaughters it herself.... Chike tastes its flavour in the soup, but had never eaten it).

In Igbo traditional society, women are not expected to slaughter chickens when men are around. This may be due to their feminine quality. Chike feels that Ada is very arrogant by slaughtering chickens in his presence, without calling him to do it as it is done in Igbo traditional society. Ada also eats the chicken alone without giving her husband, Chike, which is not typical of Igbo women. Ada's behaviour portrays women as bad-mannered and stubborn.

3.4.3 Male and Female as Deceitful

The male writer, Nzeako, presents men as deceitful, while the female writer, Meniru, portrays women as deceitful. But Nzeako shows men's deceit as a normal strategy men use to send their wives away; therefore, using it to qualify men does not have any negative connotation. Nzeako in *Nkọli* presents men as deceitful through Ojeuga and

Okoye. Ojeuga and Okoye devise a means to deceive Nne Ekwutosi and send her back to her parents' house:

Ọ gwa ya na ihe ọ ga-eme n'uzo aghugho, bu ka ọ hapu ihe nile ruo n'echi ya. Ọ gwa ya gaa ahia zuta anu na azu wee metuo ya anya ala, ka nwanyi ahụ chee echiche na ihe nile adichaala mma. Mgbe ahụ, ka ọ ga-ejikere iga n'ulo ha..., Mgbe o kwetere isoro gaa n'ulo ha, I were ya nyeghachi ndi muru ya” (p. 41).

(He told him that what he would do deceitfully was to leave everything till tomorrow. He told him to go to market and buy meat and fish to deceive her, so that the woman would think that everything was all right. That time he would prepare to visit her parents' house.... When she agrees to follow you to her parents' house, you would then hand her over to her parents).

Ogbalu (n.d.: 14) asserts that “in Igbo society, a man who is a witness in the marriage should settle or assist in settling any dispute between the wife and the husband.” But, Okoye assists in sending Nne Ekwutosi away in order to show the high level of her wickedness.

Meniru's *Nwaeze* illustrates how women boldly deceive men to get what they want. Celia asks Nwaeze for a dance in their school party in order for Nwaeze to escort her home because it is already late in the night. Nwaeze, who is very shy to ask a white lady for a dance, because of the fear of being turned down as a result of his dark complexion, is very happy when Celia approaches him. Nwaeze immediately obliges, thinking that Celia has interest in him, without knowing that Celia wants to use him. He takes Celia home after the dance and is surprised that they never discussed anything relating to friendship.

He feels sad when he realises that Celia has deceived him. He decides not to go back to the party so that another woman will not use him like Celia.

3.4.4 Male as Domineering

The male writers show that men have the right to control and subdue their wives more than the female writers. For instance, Nzeako's *Nkọli* depicts men as proud when they have wives under their control. Obiogbodu, a medicine-man, shows, in his explanation to Ojeuga, an air of pride that he has six wives and twenty-two children, of whom thirteen are boys, and nine girls. He proudly tells Ojeuga: "*I gaghị amata na ha eruola isii, naanị ma mmadụ ọ gwara gi, n'ihì na ọ bụ nanị abụọ ndị mbụ ka ị hụrụ. Ndị ọzọ, m lụlara ha malite n'afọ anọ gara aga. Chere kaha bịa, ị ga-ahu ha ugbua*" (p. 19). (You will not know they are up to six, except somebody told you, because it is only the first two that you saw... I married others last four years. Wait let them come, you will see them now). Having many wives boosts Obiogbodu's ego and he claims that having many wives is not his making. He compares life to being in the market place where the nature of the market depends on what one buys and sells in it. In essence, how rich a man is, depends on how many women he marries and controls. To Obiogbodu: "*Ọ bụ aha mmadụ nyere nkịta ya ka ọ na-aza*" (p. 19). (It is what a person names his dog that it bears). The above words implies that in order to curb women's excesses, they should be controlled with rules and regulations which they must obey. Obiogbodu's expression portrays women as mere property, possession or animal whose owner controls and treats as he wishes.

Obiogbodu further emphasises that, when a man successfully subjects his wives to his whims and caprices, he marries more of them: "*...na ji awanyị dị ụtọ nke ukwu, onye na-esi ya abachawanye ji*" (p. 19). (If yam porridge is sweet, the cook adds more yam). The

yam porridge symbolises women whom men enjoy when they are docile, passive and dependent. Gender relation is all about power. It is the ability of one group to dominate the other. Obiogbodu's relationship with his wives is that of master-slave relationship. He shows with excitement how he controls his wives in such a way that no one knows he has six wives. He calls them out to greet Ojeuga and tells him (Ojeuga) their names. Men speak on behalf of their wives as Obiogbodu shows. His domineering attitude towards his wives reflects in his advice to Ojeuga about Nne Ekwutosi: "*Enyi m nwoke, nani okwu m nwere ike igwa gi bu nke a, i ga-ejisie ike ihu na udo di n'etiti ndi nwunye gi, ma kama usu ga-atagbu gi, usu ahụ felaga*" (p. 20). (My friend, the only thing I will tell you is this, you will try to make peace between your wives, but instead of a bat to bite you to death, let that bat fly away). Obiogbodu further suggests to Ojeuga to scold his wife in order to instil fear in her so that she will desist from her nasty behaviour: "*Ee, baara ya mba, nke ga-eme ka ujo bia ya n' ahụ ma gi emeghi otu a, nwanyi ahụ ga-eme gi ihe anya huru wee gbaa obara*" (p. 21). (Yes, scold her in order to instil fear into her, if not she will go haywire). Men view women as children who need scolding and rebuking when they do wrong.

3.4.5 Female as Materialistic

Ubesie delineates only women as materialistic while men are contented. Meniru also shows how men visualized women as materialistic. Ubesie illustrates how women's materialistic, possessive and selfish tendencies upset order in a home. For example, in Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Ada is portrayed as preferring to secure her box of clothes to securing her life and her children's lives during the war:

... Onye na-akworo ya (Chike) moto bukororo otutu ihe di Chike mkpa, donye na moto Chike, si Ada banye n'ime ugbo ahụ.

Mgbe Ada banyere n'ime moto, o lere anya, hu na e buteghi nnukwu igbe ya, si nwoke ahụ ya chere.... Ka o bute igbe ya, a hughị ebe a ga-adọwa igbe ahụ n'ime moto ahụ. Ada wee rituo, buru igbe ya donye ebe ya na umu ya no, si nwoke ahụ jee ngwa. Mgbe o biara ozọ, o buru ya na umu ya. (p. 24)

(Chike's driver put so many things which are important to Chike into the car, told Ada to enter into that car. When Ada entered, she observed that he did not bring her big box, told the man to wait.... When she brought her box, there was no space to keep that box in that car. Ada came down, put her box on the seat which was meant for her and her children, and told the man to go fast. When he comes back, he will carry her and the children).

Ubesie shows that Ada's selfish behaviour disorientates their family because as soon as the driver leaves with the car, a bomb shell falls in front of Chike's house and everybody runs helter-skelter, to the extent that Chukwuma gets missing. Ubesie shows women as materialistic while men are not.

In *Nwaeze, Meniru* represents Nwaeze's sisters, Nwanyinkwo and Okwuoyibo, as materialistic. Nwanyinkwo and Okwuoyibo arrive in their parents' house to welcome Nwaeze. They express their happiness that Nwaeze is a medical doctor and will be treating them free of charge. Their cousin, Mgbechi, amusingly looks at Okorocho and says that what delights women are free things: "*Umu nwanji! Ihe na-adị ha uto agwula nke ha nwetara n'efu*" (p. 2). (Women! What delights them is what they get free of charge). Mgbechi's remarks picture women as materialistic.

Meniru demonstrates that women are seen as property in marriage. Girls are referred to as kids, flowers which men want to buy: "... e wee buru mmai gaa n'ulo Okwuoha si na o di nwa ewu ha huru n'ulo ya, na ha biara ile ma o bu ahia" (p. 3). (... they carried palm

wine and went to Okwuoha's house and told him that they saw a kid in his house, and they came to know if it is for sale). In traditional Igbo society, women are assumed not to be for sale that is why something else, like a kid, is used to represent women instead of referring to them by their names, when men come to marry them. But for the fact that the kid, which the men want to buy, is representing the person the man wants to marry, women are for sale as property. In traditional Igbo society, as in modern times, men see and treat their wives as their property, which they buy with their money. Burn (2005: 23) argues that when people are thought of as commodities or property, they are diminished and dehumanized and do not have the power to make their own life choices. According to Burn, in many cultures, a female is property, first of her father and then of her husband. These men decide her fate and she is expected to obey. The portrayal of the female gender as property is not acceptable to womanists because it contributes to women's denigration in the society.

3.4.6 Female as Diabolical

The male writers present women as naturally diabolical while men are not. In *Nkọli*, Nzeako shows women as diabolical. Through the words of Obiogbodu, (the medicine-man) to Nne Ekwutosi when she attempts to use diabolical means to hypnotize their husband to love her and hate Ogechi, her co-wife, Nzeako shows Nne Ekwutosi's behaviour as diabolical and a threat to Ogechi's and Ojeuga's lives: "*Nwunye di gi bu ezi mmadu. O dighi otu ihe ojo o na-eme gi ...Olee otu i siri chee na m ga-agworo gi ogwu, nke ga-eme ka di gi hu gi n'anya wee kpoo onye nke ozọ asi. Ihe ahụ o bu ezi ihe n'anya gi? Biko...Laa n'udo*" (p. 9). (Your co-wife is a good person. She does not offend you in any way... How do you expect me to prepare you a charm that will make your husband

love you and hate the other woman? Is that good to you? Please... Go in peace). Nzeako, through Ogechi's words, portrays women as a "deadly spear" that kills instantly (p. 5).

In this novel, there is another character, an old woman, whose name coincidentally is Ugoye as Nne Ekwutosi. Nzeako, through the words of Okapue to Ojeuga, equally portrays her (Ugoye) as a wicked woman who is capable of murdering children and friends (women) through poison: "*Anuru m na o kwuru na Mgbeke Okwuego (enyi ya nwanyi) nwuru n'afọ gara aga, bu ya gburu ya Lee o sara asisa ozọ wee kwuo na umuntakiri ya gburu n'obodo anyi di ka aja di n'ala*" (p. 84). (I heard that she said that she was the one that killed Mgbeke Okwuego (her friend) who died last year See she also confessed to having killed an uncountable number of children in our community). The above confession by Ugoye suggests that women are their own worst enemy, which does not show sisterhood. Ugoye's evil activities, as depicted by Nzeako, are also evident in her confession where she claims to be responsible for all the terrible ordeals Ojeuga's family and villagers have gone through. Women's diabolical activities to the extent of killing children, whom they are supposed to nurture and protect is not acceptable to Womanists because women are lovers of children. Nzeako displays women as those with abominable character, while men are the ones making peace in the community. Ugoye's (old woman's) confession reveals that for the male novelist, Nzeako, a woman's bad behaviour in her family can be caused by another woman's diabolical activities. Womanists urge women to embrace sisterhood for their upliftment and not as a means to antagonise and destroy their fellow women.

Apart from portraying women as diabolical, the male writers characterise only women as witches, while men are good-natured. The witches are seen as mainly women who possess magical powers which make them abandon their bodies at night in order to meet with their partners (other witches) to “suck” blood and/or “eat away” the life of their victims (Ekwealo, 2010, p. 1). Women are shown to resort to witchcraft for the purpose of fighting real or imagined enemies. Nzeako’s *Nkọli* portrays women as witches on different occasions, through Obiogbodu’s advice to Ojeuga concerning Nne Ekwutosi whom he says, is now practicing witchcraft in order to kill his co-wife’s daughter, Nkọli. Nzeako shows Nne Ekwutosi as a witch: “*Ma nke kachasi ihe nile o na-eme ya njo, bu otu o siri ... na-ata ya na nwa ya amusu*” (p. 32). (But the worst of all the things she does to her is how she (Nne Ekwutosi) starts ... bewitching her and her daughter). The depiction of women as witches is critical to the attempt made by the male authors to portray women negatively. Witches are evil humans who have sold their souls to the devil. Witches operate in the night and their modus operandi is to suck the blood of their helpless victims as shown by Ogechi’s testimony. Thus, women are categorised as agents of Satan who can go to any length to perpetrate evil without a pang of conscience. Nzeako further depicts women as witches through Ugoye who confesses how she persistently bewitched Ojeugs’s family in order to exterminate it (p. 88). Ugoye’s determination to bewitch Ojeuga’s family is to wipe it out of the surface of the earth, which is totally against the Womanist ideal of sisterhood or motherhood. A mother is the one who cares and protects her family as well as her neighbours’, because, in traditional Igbo society, a woman is a mother to all children in her neighbourhood, whether biological or non-biological.

In Ubesie's *Isi Akwụ Dara N'ala*, women are described as diabolical when there is a change in fortune. Ada is diabolical and one who has the tendency to poison her husband, Chike, because she resents Chike's poverty. Ubesie also shows that women can poison their husbands because of their prostitution. Ada wants to poison Chike because she feels Chike is preventing her from visiting her male-friends: "*Otutu ihe malitere gbawa ya (Ada) n'uche. Nke mbu bu inyegbu Chike na nsi....*" (p. 174). (So many things started coming into her mind. The first was to poison Chike....). However, it should be noted that women go to such extremes when they are in a desperate situation. This is contradictory to the Womanist ideal of complementarity between men and women.

3.4.8 Female as Irresponsible

Only the male writers portray women as irresponsible and men as responsible. In Nzeako's *Nkọli*, Nne Ekwutosi is presented as irresponsible and uncaring wife. This is evidenced when she denies her husband (Ojeuga) food: "*Mgbe ahụ ka nne Nkọli dọtara ya (Ojeuga) ihe oriri, o wee rie ya ka oke nkita, ma nne Ekwutosi ajughị ya ma ọ ga-eri ihe, ma ọ bu na ọ gaghi eri*" (p. 45). (It was that time that Nkọli's mother brought food for him (Ojeuga) and he ate it like a male dog, but Ekwutosi's mother did not ask him whether he will eat or not). Women are shown as irresponsible. Nzeako uses simile to compare the way Ojeuga ate Nne Nkọli's food as 'oke nkita' (a male dog) to show that Ojeuga is very hungry but Nne Ekwutosi does not bother to feed him. Ordinarily, this usually happens in a polygamous home, where women quarrel most of the time. Nne Ekwutosi does not care about feeding her husband, because she feels he supports her co-wife, Ogechi, when she (Nne Ekwutosi) had a fight with her. Womanists are against

women's' irresponsibility in the family, especially as it concerns their husbands. The womanists urge women to coexist peacefully for the unity and progress of their families.

Ubesie's *Isi Akwụ Dara N'ala*, on the other hand, portrays Ada as an irresponsible mother and wife, notwithstanding her hard work. Ada has a successful salt business in Nanka. She makes a lot of money and uses it only to maintain herself. She does not care about the well-fare of her husband (Chike) and children. In fact, she abandons her family. When Chike has no means of sustaining their children, after he fails in his attempt to carry goods in the market to get money, he decides to beg Ada for help. But Ada refuses to assist Chike, even after counting a box of money in his presence: "*Chike wee gbudo otu ikpere n'ala na-ariọ Ada... Ada dị mma, ọ buru na i nwee ego a nile, umu abuo i mutara nwuo n'aguu, gini ka i ga-akorọ Chi gi?* (p. 123). (Chike then knelt on one leg and begged Ada... my dear Ada, if you have all this money and your two children die of hunger, what will you tell your God?) But Ada replies: "*Aguu a na-egbu ha, nna ha anoghi ndu?*" (p. 12). (Are they starving, is their father not alive?). The above excerpts show women as irresponsible mothers and men as responsible. Ada's irresponsibility is taken to the extreme, to the extent of not caring for her children. Ubesie shows that Ada does not give Chike the money in her house because she thinks that Chike will not use it for her children's welfare. Instead she goes to their house and gives Chike the money in her children's presence. However, women rarely allow their children to suffer even if they abandon their family.

Ada's irresponsibility is also shown where Chike is cooking for her children, after Ada comes back to Chike's house from Nanka. The fact that Chike is cooking presents Ada as

an irresponsible mother, because men are not expected to cook when they have wives. In Igbo society, men do not normally cook because cooking is women's work. But, Ikpe (2009), as earlier mentioned, shows that:

There is nothing biological in the ability to cook. This means that a man is biologically capable of cooking but due to social expectations, he does not cook. Thus, cooking has been socially constructed for the female gender. But men would willingly cook, when cooking becomes an employment from which one could earn a living. (p. 6)

Women's cooking at home has no monetary value because it is ascribed to their gender. If a woman fails to cook, it amounts to irresponsibility. The portrayal of women as irresponsible, especially in terms of cooking, is against the womanists' stand because men can help in cooking if their wives are indisposed. Womanists reject women's lack of responsibility in the family. Their suggestion for the women is to contribute financially in the family, which will earn them respect, recognition and inclusion in family decision taking.

Ubesie shows the enormity of Ada's irresponsibility by describing how a pregnant woman whose husband is conscripted along with Chike, takes good care of her husband. He shows the pregnant woman persistently following her husband and feeding him on his way from Ekwulobia to Igbo-Ukwu until he finishes the food before she goes back in tears. She gives her husband money and promises to be visiting him daily. But Ada does not care about Chike's plight when Chike's misfortune multiplies during the war. She refuses to give Chike money even when he begs her for assistance. The depiction of women as irrational and uncaring, especially to their husbands, is not acceptable to womanists because it dehumanises women in the society. It also does not show maternal

instinct which is typical of women, especially Igbo women. Nwaozuzu (2007), as earlier mentioned, affirms that “Igbo traditional women rank among the best in the world in terms of playing the dual roles of a very caring wife and mother” (p.27). A real Womanist should show love and care for her husband, family, community and the society at large.

3.4.9 Male and Female as Gossipy/Flippant and Dishonest

The male writer, Nzeako, and the female writer, Onwuchekwa, portray women as gossipy, while Ubesie, the male writer, shows men as dishonest. In Nzeako’s *Nkọlị*, women are shown as flippant through Oduenyi’s words to her brother, Ojeuga, concerning the problem in his house: “*The mere m ji agwa gi okwu a, bu na i gaa n’uzo ahia na n’uzo iyi, o bu ihe banyere ulo gi ka ndinyom ji ekwu okwu wee na-akwa ndi ulo gi emo*” (p. 25). (The reason why I talk to you is that if you go along the road leading to the market and stream, it is what goes on in your house that women are talking about and are making mockery of your family). Ojeuga’s words to his wives, after they had a fight, also confirm that women gossip: “*The unu mere m bu ihe ojoo, nke putara na akuko banyere m, ka ndinyom n’obodo anyi na-ako n’uzo ahia na n’uzo iyi*” (p. 37). (What you did to me is bad, which means that women in our town are talking about me on their way to market and stream).

In *Isi Akwu Dara N’ala*, Ubesie buttresses the fact that some men are dishonest. Nna Azuka’s friends criticised him (Nna Azuka) when he was arrested by the army officers: “*Ka o na-akorọ ndi mmadu udi akuko ugha niile juru ya onu maka nna Azuka, Chike jeruru ya nso, si ya ‘Nwoke m, o bu ezi okwu?’*” (p. 71). (While he was telling people lies about Azuka’s father, Chike closed up on him and asked him, my friend, is it

true?). This man is shown to have received foodstuffs from Nna Azuka the previous day before Nna Azuka is arrested, but tells lies against him out of jealousy. Ubesie reveals that men can be dishonest out of jealousy. However, men are liars and jealous as women.

Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom* portrays women as gossipy through Nweke who is described as a person who delights in gossiping: "... *O korọ na-aga na oriaku Chinedum atụola ime n'azu di ya*" (p. 10). (... she went on to say that Chinedum's wife had had illicit pregnancy). Nweke's attitude depicts women as naturally flippant.

3.4.10 Male as Aggressive and Violent

Nzeako and Ubesie demonstrate that women are the cause of men's violence against them, while Onwuchekwa shows men as naturally violent. Ojeuga in Nzeako's *Nkọli* beats Nne Ekwutosi when she assaults her co-wife, Ogechi, in his presence in the attempt to reconcile them. Ojeuga summons his wives (Nne Ekwutosi and Ogechi) to a meeting to ascertain the reason behind their misunderstanding. Ogechi is narrating the cause of the fight when Nne Ekwutosi slaps her without any regard for their husband: "*Mgbe o na-akorọ di ha ihe ndi a, nne Ekwutosi bilie wee gwa ya na o bughị ya, ka o ga-enye mkpari ma ututu, ma ehie. O wee gakwuru ya wee maa ya ura n'ihu di ha* (p. 37). (When she was relating the story to their husband, Ekwutosi's mother got up and told her that she was not the one she would insult, both in the morning, and evening. She went to her (Nkọli's mother) and slapped her in front of their husband). Ojeuga could no longer hold his temper. He beats the hell out of Nne Ekwutosi: "*Ojeuga wee jiri iwe ihe nile na-eme wee dakwasị ya wee tie ya ka o bu nwata, gbaa ya ukwu wee maa ya ube ura abuo, nke were ka obo-okụ nwuo ya karakata n'ihu, oke ajụ buo ya wee butuo ya n'ala. Nwanyị ...*

hapu onu ya aka” (p. 37). (Out of annoyance, because of the things that have been happening, Ojeuga fell on her and beat her as a child, kicked and slapped light out of her eyes, and she was so dazed and dizzy that she fell to the ground. She shouted in agony). Ojeuga’s comment indicates that women with discourteous character are associated with their mothers.

In Ubesie’s *Isi Akwu Dara N’ala*, Chike is very aggressive towards Ada when her male friends start visiting his house, without minding his presence. This shows that there is a limit to a man’s endurance even when he is powerless:

Ma, o nwere ka o na-abu e meruo nwoke ihe, onwu akara ya mma. Ihe a na-edi edi nwere nke mmadu di ndu agaghị edinwu. Chike na-edi ihe nile nwunye ya na-eme; ma onu Ada na-asọ ya, ma ije o na-eje na be ndi ami, ma aguụ o na-akwụwa ya oge ufodu. Ma, mgbe ndi enyi Ada chooro Ada biawa na be Chike bu mgbe Chike ji si na o ruola mgbe a ga-agbara ya bu uzọ owere mgba, ka a mara ma o ga-echi (pp.79-80).

(But sometimes a man would prefer to die than accept certain things. There are limits to the human capacity to endure. Chike endured his wife’s excesses, his wife’s nagging, her sojourns to soldiers’ houses, the starvation to which she subjected him. But when Ada’s male friends started visiting her in Chike’s house was when Chike resolved that these things had to stop).

Ada’s immorality drives Chike to frustration and desperation. He could no longer endure the embarrassment and Ada’s audacious notoriety. He decides to confront the soldiers but is dissuaded by the fatal implication to his family. Chike summons and interrogates Ada over her illicit association with the soldiers. But when Ada could not proffer a satisfactory reason, Chike beats her mercilessly to the satisfaction of the neighbours and on-lookers:

Ihu o kpudoro n'ala ugbu a nyeere Chike aka, n'ihì na Ada amaghì mgbe aka Chike ji see ka amuma, makpoo ya anya abuo n'ura. Ada na-eti mkpu, na-akpo ndi di ndu na ndi nwuru anwu ka ha bia nyere ya aka, ma o hughì isi ya. Mgbe o di Chike ka o nuru nzò ukwu ndi mmadu, o jee si n'ime kpochie uzò ahụ, we laghachi azu, choo igbunye Ada onwu n'ahụ. N'ime ndi nile nuru akwa Ada na-ebe, o dighi onye biara kuo aka n'uzo.... n'eziokwu, obi di ndi mmadu mma maka ihe Chike na-eti ya (p. 81).

(Chike was fortunate that she was looking down because Ada did not know when Chike's hand flashed like lighting and slapped hail out of her eyes. Ada started screaming, calling the living and the dead to come and help her, to no avail. When Chike felt that he heard peoples' footsteps, he bolted the door from within, and continued to beat Ada. Of all the people that heard Ada's wailing none came to knock at the door.... Sincerely, people were happy that Chike was beating her).

Women's rudeness and stubbornness is shown to be the cause of men's violence against them.

In Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom*, Chijioke (Chinedum's father) is naturally aggressive. He beats his wife, Uloaku, because she is not in support of his belief that Chinagoro is wayward: *"The a o na-ekwu wee na-asu di ya kutu kutu n'obi.... M nukwa olu gi ozò n'ebe a mu akugbuo gi. Unu bu umu nwanyi nile bu otu... 'Di m lee m n'ala.... Tupu o na-ekwuchala ihe a nuru bu kagbim n'azu Uloaku. Di ya wee kugbuwe ya ka o na-akugbu ewu"* (p. 16). (What she was saying annoyed her husband so much.... If I hear your voice again I will kill you here. You women are the same.... My husband please pardon me.... Before she finished, her husband started beating her as if he was beating a goat). Chijioke beats his wife because of her truthfulness, even when she begs for forgiveness. Brannon (1996, p. 215) shows that hormone levels are a key to men's aggression. According to

Brannon, testosterone and assertiveness are related. When an individual's testosterone level rises, that person is more willing to compete in contests for higher status. He further shows that aggression is a response to a frustrating stimulus. Both men and women are equally aggressive to the offender. But, men are more aggressive than women, and they use aggression to exerting power, forcing another to behave according to their wishes. 'Violence' connotes an aggressive tendency to act out destructive behaviour (Okafor, 2008, p. 222). Womanists are against men's violence against women because of the physical or psychological trauma which women are subjected to. Pickup, Williams, and Sweetman (2001: 11) state that "male partners hit women when they are sober ... when there is no reason for jealousy or for questioning authority ... and women in these cases are left baffled by the inequality in their relationships". According to Pickup et al.:

Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that result in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (p. 12).

Violence against women, therefore, encompasses physical, sexual, psychological, coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty. Burn (2005: 24) also argues that violence against women is often "gendered" because women experienced domestic violence disproportionately. Burn maintains that "violence against women is used to reinforce men's power over women, to keep women in their place, to remind them that men are 'bosses'" (p. 24). He concludes that the fact that violence against women is common, accepted (or at least ignored), and that police and legal systems frequently fail to intervene, is an indication of women's lower status and power. However, Pickup et al. show different strategies women can use to challenge men's violent behaviour:

- **Avoidance:** leaving the abuser and returning to one's natal kin;
- **Self-Protection:** inviting relatives to come and stay; complaining to the abuser's relations or employer; concentrating on household tasks that can be performed outside or near the door to enable running away;
- **Shaming:** for example, publicly denouncing the abuser, or flaunting a relationship with a lover;
- **Retaliation:** with violence; drugging or poisoning the abuser; withholding consent to sexual relations; carrying out domestic task to a lower standard; invoking supernatural revenge.

In Onwuchekwa's *Chinagorom*, Uloaku leaves her husband's house with her belongings and goes to Lagos to stay with her daughter-in-law, Chinagoro, in order to avoid further abuse from her husband, Chijioke. Pickup et al. believe that challenges to violence against women are much more likely to have a lasting effect when community members intervene and condemn the violence. Womanists do not accept retaliation as a means for women to end violence. The womanist advocate the use of peaceful negotiation in settling issues concerning violence in the family. Kimmel & Aronson (2004: 140) suggest that women and men can alter the system of gender relations through peaceful bargain for privileges and resources in the family.

3.4.11 Male and Female as Incomplete

A critical area in Igbo culture where the inferiority of the female is evident is in marriage. The male writers, Nzeako and Ubesie, present women as incomplete without men, while the female writer, Onwuchekwa, portrays men as incomplete without women. Nzeako's

Nkọlị portrays the superiority of men in marriage through showing women as incomplete without men. Ubesie portrays Nne Ekwutọsị's life in her parents' house, when her husband sends her away, as hopeless and unpleasant. She is depicted as looking as haggard and shabby as Ekwutọsị (her daughter). Ekwutọsị is also described as a person suffering from kwashiorkor because her husband abandons her:

Nwa ya bụ Ekwutọsị, bụ onye ntutu dị ya n'isi malitere ichaghari. Ntutu nwata ahụ ghooro ihe ndi mmadu ji ama atụ mgbe mbụ, wee malite idapụ otu otu, wee ruo mgbe isi ya dika isi udele, ma o bụ ike enwe. O buru na mmadu elee ya anya n'ahụ, ahụ nwata ahụ na-eji ghuna ghuna mgbe mbụ wee jiri nwayọ chagharia wee na-acha buru buru ka udara chara acha nke oma. Mkpuru anya ya abuo dakpuo n'ime, nti ya abuo dopu ka ha chorọ idapụ adapu. Nani ebe nwata ahụ doro ahụ bụ n'afọ ya, n'ihi na obi ya di ka n'ebe onye na-ese ihe sere ihe osise, nke putara na mmadu nwere ike iguta mkpisi akuku ya onu.... Ma nke kachasi ihe nile bụ na nwata ahụ enweghi ike ikwu okwu.... O nweghikwa ike ibe akwa.... Ihe uwa were siere ha nile ike nke ukwu (p. 77).

(Her daughter's, (Ekwutọsị's) hair had started to change colour. Her hair which people used to admire had started to fall off one after another, till her head looked like that of a vulture, or monkey's buttocks. If somebody looked at her body, her body which was ebony black before had gradually changed to look like a very ripe fruit. Her two eyes were sunk, her two ears drooped as if they want to fall off. The only place where the girl was healthy was her stomach, because her chest was like where a person drew something, which meant that somebody can count her ribs.... But the worst of all was that that girl had no strength to speak.... She could not even cry.... Things were difficult for them so much).

Nne Ekwutọsị and her children are in a very bad condition in her parents' house. Nzeako states that the only person who will save them from their predicament is Ojeuga, her husband. Nne Ekwutọsị, therefore, wishes her husband would forgive her and bring her

back to his house: “*Ugoye (Nne Ekwutosi) wee chee echiche, otu o ga-esi mee ka obi di ya di nro n’ahu ya, nke ga-eme ka o kwere ka ya laghachi azu n’ulo ha. O wee zigara otu enyi ya nwanyi ... ozi... (p. 77).* (Ugoye (Nne Ekwutosi) thought how she could make her husband have pity on her, so that he would agree to take her back.... She thus sent message across to one of her female friends). Nne Ekwutosi’s decision to use her female friend to get across to her husband shows that she has the spirit of sisterhood. She prefers to use her fellow woman (than man) to gain back her husband’s love, which is what exists in Igbo traditional society. Women suffer when they are separated from their husbands because their husbands are their means of livelihood. African women advocate women’s empowerment in order to be independent of their husbands so that they can sustain themselves if there is a separation or divorce.

In *Isi Akwu Dara N’ala*, Ubesie is aware of women’s incompleteness in Igbo society and depicts how women are worthless without men, in order to show the importance of men in women’s lives. Ubesie shows that two things await women in life: a well-paid job and a husband. And if a woman gets a well-paid job and does not like it, she has the right to reject it and change to another one. But if she gets a husband, she must stay with him even if the man beats and treats her badly. This is because Igbo society frowns on a woman who abandons her family and husband to another place. Ubesie showed this below:

O di ihe abuo chere Ada n’ihu n’oge mbu, nke mbu bu inweta oru, nke abuo bu inweta ezigbo nwoke ga-alu ya. Onye nweta oru, o buru na oru ahụ adighi ya mma, o chorọ oru ozo. Agaghị agbara ya asiriMa, onye jee di, o di mma, o di njo, ila azu adighi ya. Onye si na be di ya gbaa oso, o nweghi mgbe o ji abụ ezi ihe. O masi ya, ya buru di nwanyi ahụ na-emegbu

ya ndị mmadụ anaghị ele onye ọbula si na be di ya laa be nna ya ezigbo anya (p. 1).

(Two things awaited Ada in the beginning, first was to get a job, second was to get a good man that would marry her. If one got a job, and did not like it, she would look for another one. Nobody would talk about it.... But, if the person married, if it was good or bad, she would not leave. If someone runs away from her husband's house, there is no time it is a good thing. Even if, that woman's husband maltreats her; people do not respect a woman who leaves her husband's house for her father's house).

Ubesie illustrates the predicament of Igbo women in the marriage institution. He suggests that once a woman is married, it is final. Whether the marriage is good or bad, the woman must remain in order to have respect. Hence the Igbo adage: '*Di bụ ugwu nwanyị*' (A woman is respected on account of her husband) and '*Mma nwanyị bụ di ya*' (A woman's pride/beauty is her husband). However, Ubesie demonstrates through Ada that a working-class woman without a man in her life is unhappy. She is so dejected that if she sees her friends talking about their husbands, she leaves them and goes outside:

Ka ọ pụrụ ezi ọ maghị ebe ọ na –eje eje. Ọ nataghị onyeisi ha ike wee puo. Nke ahụ abughị mkpa ya ugbu a. Ọ masị ha, sị chụọ ya. Ihe ahụ ya choro ugbu a bụ, ka o jee n'otu akụkụ, zuoro onwe ya ike. Ebe ahụ ọ ga-eje, Ada amaghị. Nani ihe ọ maara bụ na o sila n'ọche ya bilie. Ọ tatụ chi ya ụta, ọ tatụ onwe ya ụta. Ọ na-aga n'ụzọ, ya na ndị ọ hughị anya ana-abara onwe ha mba. Ike ụwa agwula ya (p. 4).

(When she went out, she did not know where she was going. She did not get the consent of her boss before leaving. That was not her concern now. If they wanted, let them sack her. What she wanted now was to go to a corner and rest. Exactly where she wanted to go, she did not know. The only thing she knew was that she had risen from her chair. She would blame

her personal god and blame herself. When she was walking on the road she would be thinking aloud. She was tired of life)

The above comment shows that women can be traumatized by the absence of men in their lives. Ada is in a complete daze of not knowing where she is going and resorts to self-recrimination and soliloquy. This is a suggestion that women value marriage above career. Ada is so desperate that, given the option, she would exchange her job for a husband. She feels tired of living a solitary life and desires to commit suicide because of not having a man in her life until she meets a man:

Otu obi na-asị ya jee gbuo onwe ya, zuoro ụwa a ike.... Nne, ọ bụ gini? Ada wee tugharia, hu nwa okorobia oma na-eso ya n'azu.... Ka nwa okorobia a si dewe olu wee kpoo Ada, kwesiri imetu nwa agboghọ obula na-alubeghi di n'ahu.... 'Nne, ezigbo nwa ada di ka gi ekweshighi idi na-ewe iwe, n'ihi na i maghi mmadu ole na-abu ha lee gi anya, anya nkiti ha lere gi enye ha obi anuri.' Nke a bu nke mbu nwa okorobia na-agwa Ada udi okwu a.... Ya bu na o nwere umu okorobia m mara mma n'anya! Ya bu na o nwere ndi m na-agba ara! (pp. 4-5).

(She was considering killing herself so as to go and rest.... Baby, what is it? Ada turned and saw a handsome young man following her.... The tone with which the young man addressed Ada could have touched any unmarried lady.... 'Baby, a lovely young lady like you should not be getting annoyed because you don't know the number of people who get joyous by mere looking at you.' This was the first time a young man would address Ada with words like this. That means there are young men who consider me beautiful. That means there are people who are mad for me).

To Ubesie, a woman is ugly without a man. Ada on hearing a man's voice becomes excited because this is the first time a man talks to her. She is surprised that a man admires her beauty and that she is beautiful enough to attract a man's attention. She feels it is a dream and what she is experiencing is not real. She pinches herself to confirm if

indeed it is true that a man speaks to her. Obiọra's romantic words sound like a bell in her ears, since that day Ada feels happy and fulfilled. Ada is so excited that she would have jumped up like a child whose parents promised a gift. Ubesie portrays men as the saviour of women, without whom women are unhappy. Consequently, the presence of men in women's lives makes women happy, proud, responsible and fulfilled. Ada, who is angry and frustrated because of the absence of a man in her life, becomes happy and fulfilled immediately Obiọra professes his love to her. Ada is glad that, at least, if Obiọra does not marry her, he has shown that she is beautiful and also exists in a male's world.

When Ada and Obiọra separate, Ubesie shows Ada to have lost everything in the world, especially the pride of a woman:

*Ihe o ji eme ebube agaala. Otu ihe o ji etu ọnu efulahula ya....
Ndu ọ di agwula ya ike. O nweghi ihe umu nwanyi ibe ya ji
eme ebube. N'anya ya, ọ dighi ihe o nwere nke ọ ga-asị na ọ bu
maka ihe ahụ ka ya ji na-adị ndu.... Nani ihe puru ya n'onu ya
bu, 'Uwa bu ihe efu!' (pp. 11-12).*

(What she used to boast about had passed. The only thing she used to boast about had been lost. She was tired of life. She did not have that for which her fellow women gloried in. In her own perspective she did not have anything to hold on to in life. The only thing she said was, life is vanity).

Ada sees her world as worthless without a husband. Chike also maintains that a woman is nothing without a husband: "... di nwanyi bu aka Ogori na-ehi n'isi. Nwanyi hapu di ya, isi eruo ya ala. Ndu nwanyi enweghi isi ma o nweghi nwoke o ji etu ọnu" (p. 135). (... a woman's husband is her pride. If a woman leaves her husband, she will terribly suffer. A woman's life is worthless if she has no man she boasts of). Chike further shows that a woman will never change her gender no matter the amount of money she has: "Ada Ọ

dị gị ka ego a ọ dị gị ka i nwere ga-eme gị ka ị hapụ nwanyị ị bụ bụrụ nwoke?” (p. 151). (Ada... Do you think the money you think you have will make you a man and no longer a woman?). This type of belief about gender is termed ‘gender constancy or ‘sex category constancy’ (Yoder, 2003, p. 49). A woman is shown to remain incomplete throughout her life time no matter her contribution to the society. However, African womanists reject this type of portrayal because it constitutes a dehumanisation of women in society and also makes them lack the zeal to struggle, and view marriage as the only option for them to have a meaningful existence. The womanists prefer women to be free to choose what they desire in life, and be respected for it.

In Onwuchekwa’s *Chinaagorom*, men are shown to be incomplete without their wives. Ihekammanandu and Chijioke are restless since their wives, Uloaku and Dibugwu, respectively, travelled to Lagos to stay with Chinagoro: “*Umụ nwoke abụọ ndị a nọ na-asute ụwa ha maka na ha anughị o chuo, nughikwanụ ọ chaa kemgbe ndinyom ha gara Legosị. Obi korole ha n’elu*” (p. 64). (These two men were bemoaning their fate because they did not receive any news since their wives travelled to Lagos. They were in suspense). Men are shown to feel the absence of their wives at home, to the point of frustration. This is a suggestion that in the absence of a woman, there is a void or emptiness in the man which nothing else can fill except the woman.

3.4.12 Female as Bad, Evil and Quarrelsome

The male writers portray women as virulent and quarrelsome, while men are not. The stereotypical description of women as more evil and quarrelsome than men is seen in the selected Igbo novels written by men. The male writers use women’s appearance and their

relationships with others to characterize them as wicked and quarrelsome people. In *Nkọli*, Nzeako uses his protagonist's cantankerous character to present women who engage in co-wives rivalry in a polygamous family. He uses denigrating language that portrays women as those who disrupt family harmony. Nzeako blames Ogechi's marital problems on the return of her estranged co-wife, Nne Ekwutosi (Ugoye), to their husband's house, and not on their husband's insincerity. Nzeako, therefore, exonerates Ojeuga, the man, for the problems in the family, thereby showing women as the architects of family squabbles. Furthermore Nzeako poignantly states that women are naturally disposed to violence.

On the other hand, Nzeako shows Ojeuga to be a man of peace. He does not see anything wrong with Ojeuga's insincere behaviour because he sees the actions of men as natural and infallible; notwithstanding that Ojeuga contributes to Ogechi's problem with her co-wife. Ogechi who complains about her husband's and co-wife's unpleasant treatment to her, exempts her husband that caused the problem and blames her co-wife, in order to show that any negative action men perform must have been prompted by women. This is shown in Ogechi's words to her daughter: *"Nwa m, ikpe amaghị nna gi, n' ihi na mgbe niile o na-agba mbọ ka o mee ka ihe ise okwu ghara iputa. Otutu mgbe, nna gi na-abanye n' ime ihe di iche iche, nke na-adighi enye ya obi ume ala, na obi ocha"* (p. 3). (My daughter, your father is not to blame because he tries all the time to prevent a quarrel. Many times, your father gets into several things that do not give him peace of mind and happiness). Nzeako shows through Ogechi's words that women in general have questionable characters, and that women are behind men's irrational actions against women.

In *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala*, Ubesie portrays Ada as a quarrelsome woman. Ada comes back from a night party and insults Chike for not greeting her: “*Ada gbowa ya uja ka ebe nkita na-agbo ndi ohi. Chike, i sila m, 'nno'*.... *O bara mba gbagoo n'elu, o bara gbadata n'ala. O kpoo Chike iyi, o kpoo nne Chike iyi... o kpoo nna ya nwuru anwu iyi nke ya*” (145). (Ada barked at him like the way a dog barks at thieves. Chike, have you greeted me, ‘welcome’.... She scolded him, pacing up and down. She insulted Chike, she insulted Chike’s mother... she insulted his dead father). Ada’s behaviour portrays women as those who are quarrelsome and do not have respect, even for the dead. Chike advises Ada against her rudeness and she takes it as an offence and warns Chike for daring a mad dog. Ada’s comparison of herself with a wild dog shows women to be very quarrelsome.

3.4.13 Female as Wicked and Satanic

Nzeako’s *Nkoli* also depicts Nne Ekwutosi as quarrelsome and wicked, especially in her behaviour towards Ogechi. *Nkoli* confirms this after her mother, Ogechi informs her of all the atrocities Ekwutosi’s mother has committed: “... *Olee ihe mere na nne Ekwutosi joro njo di otu a n’obi?* (p. 5). (...Why is it that Ekwutosi’s mother is so wicked?). The extent of her wickedness makes her appearance scraggy as described by Ogechi’s friend, Adaora: “*Lee nne Ekwutosi ahụ anya, ahụ a dighi ya mma. Mgbe nile, o na-adị ka onye mmadu na-adighi enye ihe oriri, o putaghị na o dighi eri ihe oriri di ukwu, kama o bu ajo obi o nwere mere ka mgbe nile, o dika azu okporoko*” (p. 11). (Look at Ekwutosi’s mother, she does not look healthy. Every time you see her, she looks malnourished. This does not mean that she does not eat enough food but because of her evil heart which makes her look desiccated). This impression created above is that evil-doers are usually restless; therefore, they appear shabby and unkempt. This is the case with Nne Ekwutosi

whose odious behaviour makes her look scraggy, skinny and dry like stockfish as described by Adaora. Her wickedness is so apparent that even a medicine-man, her husband and her sister-in-law emphasize it. Nzeako also suggests that women's troublesome nature makes the home too hot for habitation. Obiogbodu's (medicine-man's) words reveal this:

Enyi m nwoke,..., nani ihe nwoke ga-ekpere chi ya, bu ka o nye ya ndi nwunye obi ruru ala. O buru na mmadu aluru nwanyi obi ruru ala, onye ahụ agaghị amata na ndinyom di njọ, ma mgbe mmadu lutara ekwensu wee dote n'ulo, onye ahụ agaghị erute n'ulo ya ozo. Mgbe ahụ, nwoke achoo n'ebe o ga-anọ n'ehie wee zuo ike, n'ihia na ulọ ya adighi n'udo (p. 20).

(My friend... the only thing a man should ask from his God is to give him a humble wife. A person who marries a humble wife will not understand how bad women are but when the person marries a devil and put in the house, he will never come back home again. That time, the man will look for a place to rest in the afternoon, because his house is not peaceful).

Furthermore, Ogechi's explanation to her husband concerning a fight she had with Nne Ekwutosi depicts the latter as being devilish and cantankerous and as one given to abusive language, fighting, insults and mouthing profanities (p. 36). Nne Ekwutosi's frenzied and outrageous behaviour prompt her sister-in-law, Oduenyi, to suggest some palliative measures to her brother Ojeuga. After confronting Nne Ekwutosi, Oduenyi insists that Ojeuga must send her out of his house in order to save his life. Oduenyi's demeaning speech about Nne Ekwutosi portrays her as a mad dog and emaciated bat (pp. 24-25). The metaphorical characterization of Nne Ekwutosi as 'a dog' (*nkita*), 'a mad dog' (*nkita ara*) and 'emaciated bat' (*agiriga usu*) is indeed dehumanizing and the insistence of Oduenyi that Nne Ekwutosi must leave her father's house reveals the level of insignificance, indignity and humiliation women can suffer in a male-dominated

society. Nzeako uses Oduenyi to portray that women are denigrated even by their fellow women. Though, Ubesie puts most dehumanising words in the mouth of a female character, Oduenyi, these demeaning utterances directed to Nne Ekwutosi, remain the words of a male writer, Nzeako, who is the omniscient narrator of his novel, *Nkọli*. The role Oduenyi plays in sending Nne Ekwutosi (Ugoye) out of her brother's (Ojeuga's) house shows the power Igbo tradition gives to *Umụada*, the daughters of the clan. Women are shown to have the right in their father's house to make peace. The right of women in their paternal families is explained by Ogundipe-Leslie (cited in Davies, 2008: 5) that "the woman as daughter or sister has greater status and more rights in her lineage. Married, she becomes a possession, voiceless and often rightless in her husband's family, except for what accrues to her through her children". But *Umụada* have the authority to discipline their brothers, but this is not the same with their husbands. According to Ndulue (1995) 'umụ-ada' play very important social functions in their families:

They enforce strict discipline among their members and in a sort of remote control sense ensure that their members are not maltreated by either their husbands, wives or their children... if for instance, a woman married to any of their brothers is particularly naggy, of immoral behavior, and fails to take good care of her husband (the umụ-ada' brother), they could decide and suspend the woman to save the life of their brother...the woman may not be allowed to return to her matrimonial home unless ... she has changed her ways and fully repented for her past mis-deeds (pp. 53-54).

Nne Ekwutosi is sent out of her matrimonial home at Oduenyi's instigation. This is because Igbo tradition empowers '*Umụ-ada*' (The daughters of the clan) to intervene in any matter or crisis, which may arise in their paternal family. Oduenyi expresses her joy to Ogechi, Nkọli's mother, on how God has sent away "the devil" who said that nobody

would have peace of mind in their family.: “*Nwunye anyi, otuto diri onye kere mmadu n’ihi na Chineke ewepula ekwensu juru na mmadu agaghị ekuru mmiri n’ulo a*” (p. 55). (Our wife, thanks be to God who created human beings because God has sent away the devil who refused peace to reign in our family). Again, in Oduenyi’s statement, a woman is characterized as a devil (*ekwensu*).

In Ubesie’s *Isi Akwu Dara N’ala*, Ada is a wicked and cantankerous woman who always finds fault with Chike’s character: “*Chike mee ihe oma, Ada achoo uzọ, o ga-esi kochaa ya.... Ebe o bu na Chike lutara ajo nwanji, o marala ka o si eze ya*” (pp. 136-137). (If Chike does good things, Ada finds a way to criticise him.... Since Chike married a wicked woman, he has known how to avoid her). Ada’s behaviour is used to portray women as wicked people who oppress men, even when they do good things for them. Ada is also shown to be wicked as observed by her son, Chukwuma: “*Chukwuma huru ka ajo nwanji a bu nne ya si na-abara nna ya mba, hihie n’isi, puwa ezi*” (p. 146). (Chukwuma saw how this wicked woman who was his mother insulted his father, shook his head and went outside). Ada’s wickedness towards her husband, Chike, makes people, including women, avoid her, because they see her as evil. They refuse to associate with her, let alone offer her accommodation when the army officers send her out of her house at Nanka. This is because of her wicked and devilish behaviour. The portrayal of women as devilish is not acceptable to Womanists because of its psychological implications on women. Ada’s wickedness hinders the spirit of sisterhood which Womanists advocate for the survival of women.

3.4.14 Female as Greedy

The male writer, Nzeako, shows women as greedy, while men are not. Nzeako's *Nkọlị* shows women as greedy and that as a result of greed, women divide a home. Ogechi's interaction with her daughter reveals how Ugoye makes their husband share things unequally between them:

Otutu mgbe ka nna gi na-aga ahia wee zukotara anyi ihe. O buru na nna gi enye ya ihe o nyere m, obi agaghị adi ya ocha, naanị ma o nyechara ya ihe nile, ma o bu na nna gi nyere m nke nta, ma nye ya nke ukwu. Nke kachasi ihe nile bu na nna gi nye ya nke ukwu, ma nye m nke nta, obi adighi adi ya ocha. Nke a putara na o dighi ihe o na-eme wee mee ka udo di n'etiti anyi bu ndi nwunye ya (p. 4).

(Many times your father went to the market and bought things for us. If your father gave her the same thing he gave me she was never happy, only when he gave her everything, or your father gave me the small one and gave her the big one. This means that there is nothing he does that brings peace between us, his wives).

Through Ogechi's comment, Nzeako depicts men as peaceful people, while women are portrayed through Nne Ekwutosi's character as greedy, which gives rise to division in the family. Nzeako portrays Nne Ekwutosi's character as something that goes beyond gender issue because she is characteristically depicted as an incorrigible woman whose idiosyncrasies can be repulsive even to a man with strong feminist bent. Nne Ekwutosi is not only pictured as one who is bent on inflicting pain on her husband and co-wife, Ogechi, but also as one who brings disorder in their home.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is evident that the novels analysed above, in one way or another, depict women as inferior to men. Notably, the low status of women shown in these novels is not

a result of behavioural tendencies, but as natural tendencies. As womanists, some Igbo women in these novels are not competing with their husbands or trying to usurp the position of their husbands. Instead they are content with their natural state and therefore give respect to their husbands during greetings, making requests, live in subsidiary houses, cede power to their husbands to make decisions, accept co-wives, and yield authority to man to propose marriage, as seen in Ogechi's and Chinagoro's behaviour in the male-authored Igbo novel, Nzeako's *Nkọli*, and the female-authored Igbo novel, Onwuchekwa's *Chinaagorom*, respectively. The men and society should see these roles as complementary and not to perceive them as demeaning roles and exploit them to maltreat women, which womanists oppose.

The early male Igbo writers, Nzeako and Ubesie reflect the position of the male and female genders in Igbo traditional society and during the Nigerian Civil War which present an imbalance in their portrayal. Nzeako and Ubesie present the female characters more negatively than the early female Igbo writers, Meniru and Onwuchekwa. The male Igbo writers present their male and female characters positively as peaceful, industrious, loving and caring, religious, patient and enduring in their novels, but the male characters are depicted more positively. They also portray only their male characters positively as important, strong and superior, rich and successful, responsible, benevolent and generous, powerful and authoritative, honourable, brave and courageous, handsome, faithful and strong-willed, while the female characters are presented as submissive, respectful, good advisers/friends and maternal. Contrariwise, they depict the negative attributes of both the male and female characters as promiscuous and diabolical, but the female characters are portrayed more negatively. Whereas the male characters are presented as deceitful

and violent, the female characters are presented as valuable, incomplete, evil and quarrelsome, greedy and envious, rude, secretive, wicked and stubborn, materialistic, irresponsible, seductive and gossipy. Incidentally, the negative images used by the male writers to qualify the male characters were posited as the effects of the evil tendencies of the female characters.

On the other hand, the early post-war female writers, Meniru and Onwuchekwa, re-represent what seems to be the real position of the female and male genders in their novels. They present their female characters mainly positively than their male characters. From the themes of their novels, both their male and female characters are depicted positively as peaceful, industrious, loving and caring, educated and intelligent, conventional, domestic, sociable, patient and enduring, generous, faithful and entertaining-dancers. However, the female writers proceed further to portray their female characters as important, humble and respectful, beautiful, submissive, good advisers/friends, religious, maternal, thrifty, logical, assertive, trustworthy, role model, remorseful, sensitive and emotional, strong-willed, proud and prestigious, chaste, bold and confident, while the male characters are presented as appreciative, gentle and neat, handsome, possessive and protective. The female Igbo writers also show the negative stereotypes used to qualify females in traditional Igbo society as valuable, children, irresponsible, bad, gossipy and seductive, while the male characters are perceived as naïve, timid, diabolical, seductive, aggressive and violent.

The early female writers have a more balanced depiction of characters (male and female) with respect to character and mannerism. Generally, the male writers depict women as

naturally evil and incorrigible, while the female writers characterise women as those who are amenable to change. Womanists oppose this type of negative portrayal because it shows women as more of evil than good.

The later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels will be analysed in the next section to know if their portrayal is similar to that of early male Igbo novels.

CHAPTER FOUR

PORTRAYAL OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS IN LATER POST-WAR MALE AND FEMALE –AUTHORED IGBO NOVELS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the portrayal of male and female characters in later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels selected for the study. It examines the different ways the male and female Igbo writers depict gender relations in their novels. It analyses the activities and interactions between men and women, including the children, as depicted in the novels. This is with a view to ascertaining the writers' areas of similarities

and differences in the gender reconstruction and subversion of gender stereotypes in the novels. The chapter also gives account of the writers' portrayal of the changing roles and conditions of women and men in contemporary Igbo society where social change in attitudes is constant. This will help to evaluate how the later post-war male and female Igbo writers recreate the modern image of the Igbo women and men in order to highlight whether they introduce change in the way they portray gender relations in their novels or maintain the trend of gender portrayal in the early post-war male and female-authored Igbo works. The following section analyses the similarities and differences in the positive and negative portrayal of male and female characters to discern the extent of the later post-war male and female writers' gender reconstruction and redefinition.

4.1 SIMILARITIES IN THE POSITIVE PORTRAYAL OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS IN LATER POST-WAR MALE AND FEMALE-AUTHORED IGBO NOVELS

4.1.1 Male and Female as Diligent

The later male and female writers, Nwadike and Kammelu, depict both male and female characters as diligent and committed to their work. In *Adaeze*, Nwadike portrays his male character, Uchechukwu (Uzamma's husband), as a very diligent man despite his unwholesome attitude. He is not lackadaisical towards his job. He goes to work early and does his duty as an office assistant. According to Nwadike: "*Ọ na-abịa ọrụ n'oge, zachaa ebe niile, hichachaa oche nke oma... ọ ga-esi n'otu ụlọ ọrụ fee n'ọzọ ịmara ebe ọ ga-egbo mkpa. Ọ rara ahụ a hụ ya ebe ya na ndị mmadụ na-akọrị nkọrị n'oge ọrụ...*" (p. 21). (He came to work early, swept all the rooms, and cleaned the chairs very well... he

moved from one office to another looking for problems to solve. It was difficult to see him among others whiling away time during official hours....). Nwadike's female character, Uzumma (Uchechukwu's wife), is also a very diligent and responsible woman. She has a large farmland and a chain of businesses. She is a very zealous woman who is utterly devoted to farming and trading in order to feed her family despite her husband's uncaring attitude:

Dị ka nwaanyị gbasiri ike oru, dikwa uchu n'izu ahia, o nyeghi umu ya ohere ka ha chewe maka onodu ha na nna ha. Uwe, akwa, akpukpo ukwu na umu ihe ndi ozọ di ha mkpa, o nweghi nke o na-ekwe ka o kọọ ha. Ego nri di ya na-enye ya anaghi ezu, ma o dighi mgbe o na-ekwe ka aguu nara ya umu ya (p. 23).

(As a hard-working and industrious woman, she did not allow her children to be distressed about the strained relationship between them and their father. She never allowed them to lack clothes, shoes and other basic essentials. Although the money provided by her husband was scarcely enough to sustain the family, she had never allowed her children to be hungry).

Uzumma is shown to cultivate different types of crops like cassava, yam, cocoyam, corn and different types of fruits and vegetables. She travels to the North to buy beans, melon, onions and dried fish in commercial quantity for sale. Apart from these, she fries bean cakes and buns, especially on Sundays, to raise money for her family welfare. Nwadike shows that Uzumma is her family breadwinner and yet she does not boast or disrespect her husband about it:

Uzumma bu ya bu ngwuru ji ulo n'ebe ihe oriri na ihe ya na umu ya na-asu n'ahu di, ma o nweghi mgbe o ji ebu ya isi... o naghị echetara di ya ma ha kowa onu na e wepu ya n'uso, nta aguu egbuola umu ha... ebe o buła di ya si ya nodu ka o na-anọ. O bu okwere nke di kara (pp. 24 – 25).

(Although Uzumma was a pillar in the house, when it came to food and clothing for her and her children, but she never became pompous as a result... when they quarreled, she never reminded her husband, that, had it not been for her, hunger would have killed their children... she stayed wherever her husband wanted her. She was one who adhered to what her husband says).

Uzumma feeds her family and still obeys her husband. Even when her husband refuses to train Adaeze in school, Uzumma accepts the responsibility of paying Adaeze's school fees in good faith. Uzumma is able to continue paying Adaeze's school fees when her husband dies as a result of her diligence and resilience. She maintains her family because she had been working hard when her husband was alive and, therefore, carrying absolute financial burden in her family would not constitute any problem. From the Womanist point of view, Uzumma is a real womanist. She does different things to take care of her family responsibility without disobeying or quarrelling with her husband who does not care about his family. She ensures peace in her family notwithstanding her husband's irresponsibility. Therefore, women's hard work and independence, especially financially, is very important for the sustainability of the family. It assists women to make decisions on issues pertaining to their family and also assert their rights as human beings. Uzumma's financial independence helps in her decision to train Adaeze in school when her husband refuses to do so. Ogun-dipe-Leslie's Stiwanism supports women's financial independence in order for the women to be able to make decisions concerning the progress of their family.

In addition to Uzumma, Nwadike's other female character, Adaeze (Uzumma's daughter), is a diligent student. She is the best in her school assignment and manual

labour. She cheerfully does whatever work her teachers send her to do in a twinkle of an eye:

N'ulo akwukwo, a maara Adaeze nke oma maka irube isi. O ji ndi nkuzi n'onu ikwupu ihe o ga-eme, n'otu ntabi anya ahụ, ya emee ya, juokwa ma o foro ozọ. Ozi niile e ziri ya bu nke e ziri anwuru oku nke an-adighi ntufu oge n'iru igwe nti. O bughidi na o na-eme ha, ihu aburu ya naani ochi na mmasi. O bu ginị ka i ga-eme Adaeze ihu agbaa ya ochichiri? (p. 30).

(In the school, Adaeze is known as an obedient girl. Teachers are the ones that delay to tell her what to do; in a twinkle of an eye, she has done what they asked her to do, and still expects more. All the errands they send her are like smoke sent to heaven which gets there within a short time. It is not only that she does these things, but she is cheerful and willing. What will you do to Adaeze that will make her sad?)

Adaeze surpasses all her peers in school work. Whenever their school demands water and wood from students, Adaeze brings the biggest one. Women are shown to work diligently on any task they are assigned to do.

In *Makuchukwu*, Kammelu demonstrates that women are strong and diligent in performing their duties irrespective of their condition. Kammelu's female character, Chikwuorum (Makuchukwu's mother), sells foodstuffs in their village. She works in any event, especially those concerning her relations. She helps her relations who are getting married to sweep, wash and clean everywhere, even when she is pregnant, as shown in the following excerpt:

Otu n'ime ndi ezi Chikwuorum na-alu nwunye. Chikwuorum wee gaa n'ih na o bu onye di ike oru, o were isi bukoru ozi dum. O saa asaa, o hichaa ehichaa. Otu Okenye, aha ya bu Adaaku wee jiri nwaayo... si ya ka o kwusi ije oke ozi; ka o jiri nwaayo na-erulata ala n'ih na... o di ahụ abuo (p. 3).

(One of Chikwuorom's kinsmen was getting married. Chikwuorom went there because she was hardworking, and took charge of every work. She washed and cleaned. An elderly woman, called Adaaku then cautioned her against working so hard and bending down because of her pregnancy).

Another female character, Adaaku, is shown as a woman of great wisdom who recognises Chikwuorum's zealously. Chikwuorum also works so hard to offset the debt she incurs during her husband's burial. Apart from selling foodstuffs, she does menial jobs anywhere to make money:

Chikwuorum na-agaghari ezi na uzọ na-arụ ọrụ di icheiche tinyere ahia ihe ofe o na-ere ka o wee hu na ya kwuru ugwo ya ji.... O nwee ebe a na-arụ ulọ, i ga-ahụ Chikwuorum na umu ya ufodu... ka ha nọ ebe ahụ na-ebunye ndi ọrụ bulooku maobu okwute maobu aja, nke obula daputara, ha na-arụ ya (p. 7).

(Chikwuorum was going around doing all manner of work in addition to her foodstuffs business so as to pay her debts.... Anywhere a house was being constructed, you would see Chikwuorum and some of her children... giving blocks, stones or sand to the workers, which ever work that came first, they would do it).

Women multitask to take care of their family and also avoid humiliation in the face of difficulty.

Kammelu also depicts Makuchukwu (Chikwuorum's daughter) as very diligent in school. Makuchukwu's school employs her because of her excellent performance in her West African School Certificate examination and she works hard to help her mother defray her father's burial cost incurred by his kinsmen as Kammelu shows: "*O bu aka weta, aka weta, ka nne Makuchukwu jiri nweta ego wee kwuo ndi umunna di ya ugwo ha jiri wee mee akwamozu di ya...*" (p. 8). (It was through their collective contribution

that Makụachukwu's mother realised the money she used to offset the bills her husband's kindred incurred in her husband's burial). In Igbo society, especially the contemporary society, women, as daughters, contribute and support their families financially. Ogunḍipe-Leslie in her theory, Stiwanism, strongly believes that women's financial contributions in the family will ensure peace and family co-existence.

Kammelu shows the height of Makụachukwu's industry by mentioning briefly that Chiziteerem (Makụachukwu's husband) like Makụachukwu trains himself in the University after his father's death. Makụachukwu is shown as a role model due to her hard work, humility and generosity. She is very humane and industrious during her National Youth Service Corp in Kano. She listens and humbly attends to her patients despite the fact that she does not understand Hausa. She is well-known as a hard-working doctor who cares for the general well-being of the children and those around her. Her uniqueness and professionalism show that women's place is not only at home, but also in the public place:

Gọọmenti Kano ji nke a mata na nwaanyi bu ihe n'ih i na ha no n'ikpuchi nwunye ha n'ime ulo mgbe o bu la, mana nke a turu ha n'onu tukwuo ha n'anya n'ih i na ihe niile bu onyinye Chukwu nyere Makụachukwu, o tinyere ha dum n'oru (p. 87).

(The Kano state government now realised that women are important as opposed to their culture of confining their women in the house all the time. This is because they were totally surprised that Makuachukwu put into practice her God-given talents).

Apart from being a medical doctor, Makụachukwu is a business woman. She sells laces and Jorges to her customers through phone contacts (p. 88). The womanists support women's hard work and determination to excel in their career because it will accord them

(women) respect and recognition in society. It will also contribute to changing people's negative perception and mind-set about women.

Kammelu's female character, Ezinwanne, is a very diligent young girl. She starts feeding her family at the age of sixteen after the death of their father. Her mother has been sick for two years since their father died and her relations abandon them. She goes around plaiting hair in order to raise money for her family up-keep and also paying her young siblings' school fees as Kammelu shows in the following excerpt:

O nweghi onye na-enyere ha aka. O bu ya bu nwa na-agaghari na-achuta ihe oriri nke umunne ya abuo ndi nta na nne ya no n'oria ga-eri. O gwara Dokita Makuchukwu na ya anaghi ezu ike, na ya chorọ ka umunne ya ahụ guo akwukwo.... O gwara nne ya ka ya ga chorọ ndi ya ga-eke isi wee keta egonri ubochi. N'ezie oria na-arĩa ya, mana o bu n'obi ka ya gaa keta isi ole na ole maka nri ezinaulo ga-eri (p. 48).

Nobody was helping them. She worked hard to feed her sick mother and her two younger siblings. She told Doctor Makuchukwu that she did not rest, that she wanted her siblings to go to school.... She told her mother she was going to plait hair to raise money for their food that day. Truly, she was sick, but she meant to plait a number of hairs for the family up-keep).

Most women in Igbo society take care of their family responsibilities at a young age, especially when their fathers are dead and they do not have elder brothers who are capable of taking care of the family. Women work relentlessly to feed their families despite their unhealthy condition. Ezinwanne has two younger brothers who stay with their mother at home while she goes out to work to be able to feed them and pay their school fees. Once again, Kammelu demonstrates that women, as daughters, support their families financially. African womanists encourage women's hard work and resilience to

guarantee a healthy family living. It will also ensure progress in the family, especially in terms of education of the young ones (boys and girls alike).

4.1.2 Male as Protective

Nwadike and Kammelu depict male characters as those who are protective of their wives. Nwadike shows that men's presence in the family protect their wives from internal (family) attacks whereas Kammelu reveals that men also protect their wives from external assault. In *Adaeze*, Nwadike projects men as protectors of the women folk. He reveals that no matter how successful, responsible and courageous women are in the family, they are protected by their husbands. Nwadike demonstrates that Uchechukwu's presence protects Uzumma, notwithstanding that he abdicates his family responsibilities. Nwadike shows through *Adaeze* that:

Mgbe Uchechukwu dị ndụ, ọ dighị ụmụnna ha ụjọ kwere ka ha tinye aka n'ala ha ma ọ bụ n'ihe nnanna ha, bụ ndị o jiri aka ya gbaputa. Ma ugbu a e lere ya, a hughij, ọ bụ ha batawa otu otu, nne Adaeze kwuo, ha achọọ otu ihe gwa ya (p. 108).

(When Uchechukwu was alive, his kinsmen did not have the effrontery to encroach on their land or their grandfather's allotment which he secured. But now he was dead, they would be coming one after the other. If *Adaeze's* mother complained, they would find something to tell her).

The above excerpt reveals how men protect their family, especially their wives in the Igbo society. It also shows the predicament of widows in the society. Men are important in women's lives because they secure them from external attacks. A woman whose husband is dead is dehumanized in society, especially in her husband's family. Her husband's family can attack and insult her without anybody defending her, let alone questioning them.

In *Makuchukwu*, Kammelu also presents men as protectors of their wives. Kammelu's male character, Chiziteerem, slaps the policeman who slaps his wife (Makuchukwu) when the policemen come to their house to arrest them against an allegation of assault on Ezinwanne's mother: "*Onu Makuchukwu weputara igwa Ezinwanne lee ka i ga-esi mee... otu n'ime ndi ahụ mara Makuchukwu ụra si ya na o kwuo ozo, o sowe onye o tigburu. Ka nke a na-eme, Chiziteerem seere ụra maa onye mara nwunye ya ụra, ogu ebirila oku* (p. 61). (In the attempt by Makuachukwu to tell Ezinwanne what to do ... one of those people (policemen) slapped Makuachukwu and warned her that if she uttered another word, she would follow the person she killed. As this happened, Chiziteerem slapped the one who slapped his wife, and a fight ensued). One of the policemen shoots Chiziteerem in the leg and in the pool of his blood he still insists that his wife is innocent. Chiziteerem struggles to protect and defend his wife even when they are in the cell. Men protect their wives no matter the situation. Chiziteerem does not rest until the policemen discover their innocence and arrest the culprits, Ezinwanne's mother's brothers-in-law, Udemba, Egbuchula and Ekwueme.

4.1.3 Female as Assertive

Both Nwadike and Kammelu depict their female characters as assertive and determined. In *Adaeze*, Nwadike portrays his female character, Uzumma (Adaeze's mother) as assertive about Adaeze's education. She firmly informs her husband (Uchekukwu) about her intention to train Adaeze in school since he refuses to do so. Uchekukwu does not support women's education and does not view it as a profitable venture: "*Uchekukwu bu otu onye na ndi kwenyere na onye na-azu nwata nwanyi n'ulo akwukwo na-akwo aka o*

ga-eji etiri okuku aku” (p. 25). (Uchechukwu is one of those who believe that training women in school is a total waste of money). Uzumma does not accept Uchechukwu’s belief that: “... *onye na-azu nwata nwaanyi n’ulo akwukwo na-akwo aka o ga-eji etiri okuku aku*” (p. 25). (... a person who trains a girl in school is wasting his money), and that women’s education is a waste of scarce resources. Uchechukwu maintains his opinion based on the experiences of other families who after spending their money on their daughters, they (their daughters) disappointed them by not marrying their parents’ choice of husbands. In Uchechukwu’s view, some of the girls, “... *na-agbakwuru ndi nwoke n’emeghi ka ndi muru ha rachaa aka*” (p. 25). (... elope with men without letting their parents reaping any benefit for training them). Most Igbo men harbour this belief in their mind. For them to achieve their aim, their daughters must marry the husbands they have chosen for them, especially after they have spent good money in their education. But some girls refuse to be guided by this precept, because they prefer to marry men of their choice. If not, they abscond with them. This situation compels Uchechukwu to strongly maintain his position that it is useless to train a girl in school as educated women are uncontrollable and arrogant. This men’s belief retards and stultifies women’s growth in education. However, Uchechukwu maintains that: “... *kama nwamkpi ya ga-efu, ya eree ya mgbe o na-agbabeghi afo*” (p. 26). (... instead of losing his he-goat, he would sell it when it had not reached a year old). This proverb explains how women are denied education and forced into marriage at an early age in order for the fathers to enrich themselves. In Igbo traditional society, men believe that women are their wealth, whether they are trained in school or not. This explains some names Igbo men call their daughters:

'Akunna' (father's wealth), 'Adaaku' (Daughter of wealth) and so on. If their daughters are educated, they are expected to fetch more money than those not trained.

Uzamma refuses to concur with Uchechukwu's opinion about educated women. She uses negotiation as a device to get her husband's support to train Adaeze in school. She invites her husband's sisters into the matter without her husband's consent. She informs them about her husband's refusal concerning Adaeze's education as Nwadike shows in the following excerpt:

Ndi di m, unu anwula. E ji m obi oma kpoo unu oku a, unu azakwa m ya otu ihu. Ndewonu. E nweghi ihe ozoo m jiri kpoo unu karikwaa na m choroo ikoroo unu na nwanne unu nwoke ebidokwala ozoo. N'ezikwu, ebe okwugburu onwe ya no, omegburu onwe ya nokwa ya. Oge niile ya adi ka mu na di m o na-esekari okwu, ma o bu na m na-ekwugbu ya na-ekwurekwu kari, ihe merenu bu na mgbe o kpapuru m uka n'onu, anaghi m ahapu ya. Ihe a bu izu uka abuo m bidoro rjowa ya ka ada unu nwaanyi bu Adaeze bido akwukwo, ma o kweghi ka onu rute" (p. 27).

(My husbands, I greet you. I summoned you to this meeting in good faith and you responded promptly. I greet you. There is no other reason for beckoning on you except to tell you that your brother has started again. In truth, where you find one who talks too much, you also find one who acts too much. Every time, it seems that my husband and I are quarreling or that I am always nagging. The truth is that whenever he provokes me, I react accordingly. This is two weeks I have been pleading with him for your daughter, Adaeze to start school, but he refuses).

Uchechukwu views Uzamma's action as abnormal because she did not inform him before inviting his sisters. He then complains to her sisters: "'Di' na-alu m kpokoro unu nga a n'ututu a n'emeghi ka m mara na unu na-abia" (p. 27). (The one who is my husband

gathered you people this morning without telling me that you were coming). Uzumma's assertiveness makes Uchechukwu regard her as his 'husband'. In Igbo society, (*di*) 'husband' is an exalted and indispensable position (Okafor, 2005) and he is lord in the family. Husbands are assertive and make decisions on family matters. Therefore, Uchechukwu sees Uzumma's assertiveness as an attempt to usurp his authority. Uchechukwu informs his sisters about his decision concerning Adaeze's education as Nwadike shows through Uchechukwu's words:

Agwala m Uzumma na-anaghi m azu ahia uru na-adighi... anya m adighi n'akwukwo umunwaanyi... umunwanyị gara akwukwo... anaghi... ege nti n'okwu ndi muru ha; ha na-ebute atumatu kariji ha, nke ka nke, o dighi omenala anyi ha na-achọ idowe... ihe m na-ekwu bu na kobo m agaghi abanye n'izu nwaanyi n'ezi na ulọ a, hooaa. Uzumma si na ya ga-azu, nke ahụ di ya n'aka (pp. 27 – 28).

(I have told Uzumma that I don't do unprofitable business... I don't have interest in women's education... educated women do not obey their parents; they prove to possess superior ideas, especially, they do not respect tradition... what I am saying is that my kobo will not be spent in training a woman in this house, that's all. If Uzumma wants to embark on her training, that's her concern).

Uchechukwu's insistence makes his sister, Ugodiya, wonder how he (Uchechukwu) developed this skewed concept about women's education, despite the fact that he is a civil servant. She reminds Uchechukwu that things have changed concerning women's education, and he does not know whether Adaeze will eventually become the pillar of his family.

Nwadike also depicts women's assertiveness through Adaeze (Ụzụmma's daughter), who decides to be a Reverend Sister without her mother's consent. Her relationship with the Reverend Sisters at the convent (in the state where she is serving as a youth corps member) makes her decide to serve God. When Adaeze finishes her Youth Service, many men come to marry her but she turns them down. As soon as she is ready to go to the convent, she informs her mother one morning about her unfortunate relationship with Nnanna and her decision to be a Rev. Sister: *"Akpoghị m ilu di asị, kama achoro m iga were Kraist ka o buru di m. Ilu di na nwunye bu ihe di mma... ma site n'okpukpo a kporo m, ekpebiela m na agaghị m alu di, kama, aga m aba konventi ebe mkpuru obi m ga-enwe ezumike"* (p. 140). (I do not hate marriage, but I want to take Christ as my husband. Marriage is good... but because of my calling, I have decided not to marry, but, I will enroll in a convent where my spirit will have peace). Women's assertiveness is always criticised very strictly by both men and women. The male character, Ofowuike, Adaeze's paternal uncle, views Adaeze's decision as an abomination and aberration. One of Adaeze's mother's co-wives sees educated and assertive women, especially contemporary ones, as wild and shameless, because they embrace Western culture and abandon their African tradition. Womanists reject negative criticism against women based on their assertiveness. Womanists support women's rights to life, opportunities and decision making on issues that concern them.

In *Makuchukwu*, Kammelu presents her female protagonist, Makuchukwu, as a very assertive girl. She refuses to accept Dr. Ekweaga's love advances and reports him to Dr.

Onyebiri when she fails his two medical courses in two different semesters. She strongly affirms that she performed very well in his tests and the examinations and was failed:

Mgbe Makụachukwu kọsachaara Dọkịta Onyebiri ihe dum ya na-agabiga n'aka Dọkịta Ekweaga, obimwute ekweghị Dọkịta Onyebiri kwuo okwu ozugbo ahụ. Ihe wutekarịchara ya bụ na uzọ arumaru abụọ Makụachukwu mechara nke oma ka Dọkịta Ekweaga si na ya ahughị akwukwọ obula ma nke mbụ ma nke abụọ (p. 17).

(When Makụachukwu narrated her ordeal in the hands of Doctor Ekweaga to Doctor Onyebiri, Doctor Onyebiri was so sad that he could not utter any word immediately. What saddened him most was that Makụachukwu passed the two assignments Doctor Ekweaga claimed he did not see).

Dr. Onyebiri angrily reports the matter to the school authority and after the investigation, Dr Ekweaga is sacked from the University. Opara (1990: 159) shows that “the new woman appears on the literary pages either as an assertive traditional woman breaking out of the supportive stereotype or as a westernized woman tintured with traditionalism. She, beyond question, lacks the radicalism of Western feminists” as seen in Ubesie’s portrayal of Ada in *Isi Akwụ Dara N’Ala*. But Nwadike and Kammelu are able to demonstrate in *Adaeze* and *Makụachukwu* respectively that the Igbo new woman is capable to assert her rights and achieve success. This is because the African new women know what they want in life and strive to achieve it. (cf. Ajikobi, 1999).

4.1.4 Female as Self-determined and Strong-willed

Nwadike and Kammelu depict their female characters as those who are very determined and strong-willed in their quest to achieve their aim. In Nwadike’s *Adaeze*, Adaeze’s

decision to be a Rev. Sister was not acceptable to her family, especially her mother (Uzumba). Her mother expresses shock over Adaeze's decision because she expects Adaeze to marry and assist in catering for their family. She feels disappointed and shouts at her: *"Adaeze, i si ginị? I si i na-eje ichi ginị? Kwuo ka m nu... o bu ihe i gara muo ebe o bu unu guru akwukwo ukwu? ... Bja gaanu. Ajo nwa siri owere baa nne ya afo. Tufiakwa!"* (pp. 140-141). (Adaeze, what did you say? Did you say you want to be ordained as what? Talk, I am listening... is it what you learnt from the University? ... Start going. An evil child that entered the mother's womb through the backyard. God forbid!). Women are seen as unreasonable and evil when they are determined to achieve their potentials. Adaeze's mother feels that Adaeze is a disappointment and regrets ever spending her money in training her in school. She drops on the floor and screams to alert her neighbours. Adaeze's paternal uncle, Ofowuike, expresses surprise at Uzumba's bitterness and subjects Adaeze to several interrogations. However, all the entreaties fail to make Adaeze rescind her decision. One of Uzumba's co-wives also strongly feels that Adaeze has been brainwashed in the University to reject marriage: *"I chere na ha echebeghi ya ogwu 'onye alukwala di' n'ebe ha na-agu akwukwo"* (p. 143) (Did you think that they had not been fed with 'nobody should marry' concoction in their school).

Adaeze's paternal aunt, Ugodiya, also rebukes Adaeze and reminds her of her position in her father's house: *"... i maghi na taa, na o bu gi bu di na-alu nne gi? Nna gi anwuola... I chorọ ka nne gi nwuo... i makwa, na gi luọ di taa, na ndu ohuru ga-abatara nne gi n'ahu... ihere emekwala gi. I na-echi loolo, o bughị sista. Ta, zuzupu m n'ihu"* (p. 149) (... don't you realise that today, you are your mother's husband? Your father is dead... do you want your mother to die? ... do you know that if you marry today, your mother will

have a new lease of life... don't bring shame on yourself. You will be ordained a Lọlọ, not a Rev. Sister. Come on, get out of my sight). In Igbo society, girls are expected to marry, especially when their fathers are dead, in order for their husbands to assist in relieving family responsibility from their mothers. Ugodiya suggests to her father's kinsmen to force Adaeze into marriage and Uzumma threatens to commit suicide if Adaeze insists on becoming a Rev. Sister. Ugodiya and Uzumma's attitude towards Adaeze shows how women constitute a stumbling block to their own liberation. Adaeze is sobered and confused, especially because of her mother's threat. She thinks of what will befall her if she is forced to marry against her wish. She does not want to renege on her vow to serve God. Therefore, she absconds from her family to a convent at Amachara which is far from their town, Ndikpo. Adaeze's drastic action forces her mother to change her mind and tells her co-wife, who comes to console her, that it is better for Adaeze to be a Reverend Sister than to run away, because other people who are Reverend Sisters were born by women.

When Adaeze later comes back home, her mother is very happy. But Adaeze warns her mother that she is determined to be a Rev. Sister and that: "*... ọ bughị nłota ka ya lọtara, kama, ya bįara ịgwa ya na ọpupu ya choro ipu ugbu a, na nloghachi azu adighi na ya, na ọ ga-akara ya mma inwu anwu karĩa ime ihe na-abughị uche ya*" (p. 154). (... she had not really come back, but she came to tell her that this time, she would never come back, that it was better for her to die than do what she does not want). Uzumma immediately accepts her wish rather than lose her. She (Uzumma) quickly takes her husband's brother, Ofowuike, to see their Parish Reverend Father and they appear as witnesses to Adaeze's entrance into the convent.

In *Makụachukwu*, Kammelu presents women as those who are determined to achieve their aim no matter the condition. Throughout the novel, Makụachukwu is self-determined as a single girl and a married woman. She is determined to be a medical doctor from her secondary school. When her father dies, she does not lose hope, but is determined to continue her education up to the university level: “*Udiri ozuzu Makụachukwu nwetara... tupu nna ya agho ozu mere ka obi sie ya ike. Otu mkpebi Makụachukwu kpebiri bu na ya erughi ebe ya choro iru; ike agaghi agwu ya*” (p. 6). (The type of training Makụachukwu received ... before her father died made her strong-willed. One of her decisions in life was that until she realised her ambition she would not be tired). When she receives admission to study medicine in the University of Ibadan, she desperately travels to Ibadan to locate the University. Makụachukwu does not know where Ibadan is located or anyone who lives in Ibadan where she is going to stay for eight year as a medical student, but she takes all her belongings and proceeds to Ibadan without any help. Kammelu uses the Igbo saying, “*Onye erughi ebe o na-eje, ike ije anaghi agwu ya*” (p. 6). (Until a person reaches his destination, he does not get tired), to show the extent of Makụachukwu’s determination to become a medical doctor. Makụachukwu is steadfast and resilient in her studies, despite the hardship in the University. She is very studious and rarely eats, especially in her final year in the medical school. Makụachukwu is strongly determined to be the best graduating medical student. She dismisses Chiziteerem when he first approaches her for marriage, because she does not want any distractions or lose focus in her studies: “*N’obi ya, Chiziteerem galawagodi n’ije a ka mkparitauka o bula ghara ime ka obi ya hapu ihe o na-eche, chewe ihe ozu*” (p. 31). (In her mind, Chiziteerem should forget this issue (marriage) now so

that the discussion would not divert her focus). Makuachukwu at the end, achieves her aim as a medical doctor and marries Chiziteerem. From the womanist point of view, women should be fiercely determined and strong-willed in their decision to achieve their potentials.

4.1.5 Female as Friendly

Cicero (cited in Opara, 1990: 159) describes friendship as “‘a mingling of souls’ as almost to create one person out of two”. Both Nwadike and Kammelu portray female characters as willing to assist their fellow women in all ramifications. Opara (1990: 159) reveals that “it is in the woman’s search for sexual and national freedom that female solidarity becomes imperative. Such unions proffer women the opportunity to extend their strength constructively”. However, friendship is seen by Opara (1990: 159) as “a vehicle of self-definition for women”. Nwadike depicts women as friendly and props in *Adaeze*. Ołachi helps Adaeze when the office of National Youth Service Corps fails to pay her stipend. Adaeze feels devastated because it is December time and she needs money to buy Christmas clothes and other things for her younger ones and her grandmother who requested a gift from her. Adaeze is confused and goes out of the bank disheartened. When she is going back to her house, she remembers her friend, Ołachi and decides to approach her for assistance: “*Ołachi bipuuru ya omiko, kasie ya obi. O kewara ego ya abuo nye Ada otu uzọ: ha chirita ochi...* (p. 115). (Ołachi sympathised with her and consoled her. She shared her own stipend into two, gave Adaeze half of it and they rejoiced). Nwadike shows women as comforters and helpers. He emphasises the importance of sisterhood through Ołachi’s assistance. He sees a good friend as one who assists and supports her friend when she is in a difficult situation and not one who only

eats and enjoys with her, in good times. Nwadike also portrays women as good advisers through Mọnịka, Ụzụmma’s friend. Mọnịka’s advice shows sisterhood because it helps to encourage Ụzụmma to support Adaeze’s decision to be a Rev. Sister.

Kammelu in *Makụachukwu* portrays women as helpers and supporters of their fellow women. Makụachukwu identifies herself as a good friend. She helps Ezinwanne who slumps where she is plaiting her customer’s hair. Makụachukwu buys Ezinwanne food and drink when she was brought into the hospital. She gives Ezinwanne drugs and puts her on the hospital bed to rest and recuperate, before taking her home. Makụachukwu also visits and gives Nne Ezinwanne blood tonic when she discovers that Nne Ezinwanne’s blood level is very low. She gives her money to buy vegetables and provisions, to replenish her blood and promises to visit her often, until she recovers (pp. 50-51). Makụachukwu also advises Adaọra (who has married a Hausa man and has not contacted her family since the death of their father) to be taking care of her mother and siblings. She (Makụachukwu) offers her phone number to an Igbo woman who claims to know Adaọra at Obudu, in order to connect Adaọra and her mother (Nne Ezinwanne) (p. 82). Nne Ezinwanne is very happy when she hears from her daughter. Kammelu shows women as the saviour of their fellow women through Nne Ezinwanne’s words to Adaọra: *“Nne ya gwara ya ka ha gaa na nke Dokịta Makụachukwu na mgbede ahụ n’ihi na ọ bụ ya bụ Chi ya nke abụọ”* (p. 84). (Her mother told her that they would visit Dr. Makụachukwu that evening because she was her second God). Womanists view sisterhood as very important to women. This is because it can assist in reducing women’s burden and contribute to their (women’s) happiness in life.

4.1.6 Female as Chaste

Nwadike's and Kammelu's constructions of women in their novels, *Adaeze* and *Makụachukwu*, respectively, depicts women as capable of taking a stand for chastity. Adaeze in Nwadike's *Adaeze*, chooses to preserve her virginity instead of conforming to the libertine norms in the society. Nwadike shows through Adaeze that women have good morals. Adaeze strongly declines to befriend any of the men who want her friendship: "*Umụ nwoke na-awụ petem petem ka mmiri, na-abia ka ha na Adaeze buru enyi, ma o na-agba isi akwara*" (p. 97). (Many men were rushing like water to befriend Adaeze, but she stubbornly refused). Her roommate, Olachi and her boyfriend, Ikechi, try but fail to make her trade her chastity. She preserves her dignity and integrity and refuses to deviate from the path of morality. She resists the temptation to involve herself with the opposite sex which seems to be the order of the day in the University. Nwadike shows that: "*Aguu butere a juchaa a nara. Obi Ada siri ike n'ikwapu ihe onwunwa a mana ihe nramahu aghaghị ichuputa ya ukwu n'ama*" (p. 98). (Hunger makes one accept with s/he rejected. Ada had made up her mind to resist temptation but difficulties posed a big challenge to her). But still, Adaeze resists all attempts made by her friends, Olachi and Titi to get her conform. Even when she meets Nnanna, their relationship is entirely platonic. Nwadike shows through Adaeze's relationship with Nnanna that women can decide to preserve their chastity until marriage.

Kammelu portrays Makụachukwu as chaste. Makụachukwu refuses to befriend her lecturer, Dr. Ekweaga, and prefers to leave the University instead of losing her chastity: "*Nwoke mere elu mee ala, Makụachukwu juru kpamkpam, kwuo na o kaara ya mma na ya hapuru Mahadum kama ya ga-emeru onwe ya*" (p. 17). (The man tried all he could but

Makuchukwu stubbornly refused preferring to leave the school to soiling herself). Makuchukwu, like Adaeze in Nwadike, suffers in the University due to lack of money, but she refuses to soil herself no matter the suffering: “*Aguu na-anu nwata a ikpakwu ma n’ihi udiri ozuzu o nwetara n’aka ndi muru ya, o nweghi ihe ga-eme ya bu puusu rie ihe nwuru anwu. O dewere onwe ya nso, na-ekpesiri Chi ya ike*” (p. 29). (This child was extremely hungry but due to the type of training she received from her parents, nothing would prompt her, the cat, to eat something that was rotten. She kept herself chaste, devout in prayer). Kammelu demonstrates that women can be pure and steadfast in every difficult situation.

4.1.7 Male and Female as Morally Upright

Nwadike presents only men as morally upright while Kammelu proves that both men and women are morally upright. In Nwadike’s *Adaeze*, Uchechukwu is shown to be morally upright. His manager tempts him several times by leaving money clearly visible in his office but each time he does it, Uchechukwu shows him the money immediately he enters his office (p. 24). Mr. Uchechukwu’s honesty makes his manager trust him and it also earns him a bicycle from his company.

Kammelu presents Makuchukwu and her husband, Chiziteerem, as morally upright. They are shown to be honest and to detest corruption. Makuchukwu honestly explains what transpires between her and Dr. Ekweaga to the school panel, despite the false accusation levelled against her by Dr. Ekweaga (p. 19). Chiziteerem refuses to offer a bribe in order for his wife, Makuchukwu, to get employment in a government hospital (p. 41).

4.1.8 Female as Motherly

Nwadike and Kammelu present women as good mothers. In *Adaeze*, Nwadike portrays Uzumma as a good mother through her daughter's (Adaeze's) words to her (Uzumma). Adaeze finishes her University education and stays at home due to job scarcity and Uzumma continues to cater for her without any complaint. Adaeze joyfully tells her:

Nne.... Ekelela m gi na mgbalị gi niile n'ihu na ma gururu akwukwo ebe m ruru taa. I lee anya kamgbe onwa ato m si Koloko lota, anọ m n'ulo n'enweghi ihe m bidorola ime. Ibe m, ndi mu na ha putara ebidochaala oru, na-enye aka egbo mkpa n'ulo ha di iche iche, ma o nweghi ubochi i tamuru ntamu maka ya. Nke a gosiri nnukwu ihunanya i nwere n'ebe m no (p. 140).

(Mother.... I thank you for your effort in seeing that my education advanced to the stage it is now. Since three months I came back from Koloko, I have been in the house without doing any job. My class mates have all started work and are helping in their homes, but you have never complained about it. This shows the great love you have for me).

The above illustration shows that women patiently struggle for the well-being of their children. Uzumma continues to take care of her family, even though her husband is dead, without feeling that Adaeze who has just graduated from the University ought to have gotten a job to support her in feeding the family.

In Kammelu's *Makuchukwu*, Makuchukwu's relationship with people presents her as a caring doctor and mother. In this novel, women, boys and girls perceive Makuchukwu as their small god, a healer of body and soul, a peacemaker, a generous person and a good mother:

N'ebe ụmụagbọghọ nọ, n'ebe ndị nne na ụmụokorobia nọ, Chukwu bụ onye nke mbụ na ndụ ha, ebe Dọkita Makụachukwu na-eso. Ụfọdụ na-akpọ ya ọ gwọ ọrịa anụ ahụ ma nke mmụọ, ụfọdụ na akpọ ya odozi ezinaụlọ, ebe ndị ọzọ na-akpọ ya nne obioma, o me mma na ihe ndị ọzọ (p. 90).

(To young girls, mothers and young men, God was first while Doctor Makụachukwu followed. Some called her healer of body and soul, some called her the keeper of the family, while others called her good-hearted mother, a good person and other things).

Makụachukwu is a good mother who seeks the well-being of people around her, other than her family. She is perceived as a role model to others who work as mothers in their profession. This is the kind of attitude promoted by Womanists. As mentioned earlier, Wollstonecraft (cited in Oakley, 1986: 127) urges women to be good mothers in order to ensure peace in the family and society at large.

4.1.9 Female as Beautiful

Nwadike and Kammelu demonstrate that women's beauty is adorned in Igbo society. In *Adaeze*, Nwadike acknowledges women's beauty. He shows that men love beautiful women and spend money on them. He describes how Uchechukwu abandons his wife, and spends money on beautiful women without knowing that the money he spends on them makes them look more beautiful than his wife: "*Ka iberibe siri saa ya ahụ bụ na o chefuru na ego ya na-enye ndị enyi ya n'ihu na ha mara mma, na-enyere ha aka ịzụtakwu ngwa e ji achọ mma iji mara mma na-aga n'ihu*" (p. 19). (He was so stupid that he forgot that the money he gave to his (girl) friends because they are beautiful would help them to buy more make-ups which they would use to continue enhancing their beauty). However, Nwadike views women's beauty as the effect of the money they spend on themselves. He

then compares women's beauty with that of good soup: "... *ofe tọrọ uto bu ego;... nwada mara mma bu ego*" (p. 20). (... sweet soup is money... a beautiful damsel is money). He concludes that if Uchechukwu spends money on his wife the way he spends on other women, his wife will be more beautiful than those women. Womanists detest men who abandon their families, especially their wives, for frivolous activities. Womanists urge men to take up their responsibilities and take care of their wives and children for the good of the family.

Nwadike also describes Adaeze as an embodiment of beauty. Her beauty is shown as unusual and mysterious: "*O bu ezie na uto ya, mma ya, omume na ihe niile gbasara ya puru ichi di ka nke ogbanje...*" (p. 30). (It was true that her taste, beauty, character and everything about her was different like an *ogbanje*...). Nwadike believes in the supernatural beauty of women. He qualifies Adaeze's beauty with *ogbanje* (water goddess) to symbolise that Adaeze is extremely beautiful. In Igbo society, *ogbanje* is associated with beauty. Any child who is extraordinarily beautiful is referred to as *ogbanje*. Adaeze's beauty is also shown through the words of a young man who feels that beautiful women are meant for marriage: "*Lee di nwa oma gaje ichi sista. Lee onye ga-abu a si o luru di, ya etikaputachaa ihe yiri ya*" (p. 155). (Look at a very beautiful girl that wants to be a Reverend Sister. Look at somebody who would have married and reproduced children like her). The young man feels that Adaeze's beauty is a waste since she will not marry and have children who will be like her. Nwadike also portrays Chioma, Adaeze's primary schoolmate, as a very beautiful girl: "*Chioma bituru mma aka. Mma ya bu nke nwoke o bu la huru ya ma o tugharighi guzoro lewa ya, mata na onye ahụ esila na nwoke puo. Onye ahụ aburula apiriapi!*" (p. 32). (Chioma was an epitome

of beauty. Her beauty was such that any man who saw her without turning to stare at her, might not be a man indeed. The fellow has become castrated). Nwadike suggests that Chioma's beauty attracts a stream of men to the point that any man who does not appreciate her beauty is castrated. Chioma's physical appearance is also seen as unique because of the nature of her movement, body texture and make-up although the writer, Nwadike, sees it as a fallout of the money she gets from men. Women's beauty is shown to lure men into irrational behaviour. Chioma's beauty makes Opiwe lust after her and unconsciously manipulates their school result in her (Chioma's) favour without minding the implications.

In *Makuchukwu*, Kammelu presents women as beautiful right from birth. Makuchukwu is beautiful from the day she is born. She grows as a tall, plump and pretty lady: "*O toro ogo, dapu dimkpa nwaanyi, maa mma ile anya. Oji ya na-asu mmanu*" (p. 29). (She is tall, big, beautiful to behold. Her black complexion is very radiant). Makuchukwu's beauty lures her lecturer, Dr. Ekweaga, to lust after her. Chiziteerem marries Makuchukwu because of her beauty and humane character. The womanists approve of women's celebration of their beauty and femininity but not to the point of using it negatively to seduce men, or for men to lure women to bed, thereby destroying the family institution.

4.1.10 Female as Thrifty

Nwadike and Kammelu portray women as those who live frugally. In *Adaeze*, Nwadike shows that Adaeze is not an extravagant girl in her university notwithstanding that Nnanna (her fiancé) spends money on her. Nnanna gives lots of money to Adaeze very

often but she does not waste it, as Nwadike shows: “*Ọ bụ eziokwu na ego si n’aka Nnanna abịara ya (Adaeze) yirim yirim, ma ọ bughị nwammefu akụ*” (p. 106). (It was true that Nnanna lavished money on her, but she was not extravagant). Adaeze does not waste money on frivolous things, which shows women as thrifty.

In *Makụachukwu*, Kammelu illustrates that Makụachukwu is a young girl who starts working in her school after her father’s death; she does not spend her salary on frivolous things, but saves it for her University education: “*N’oge niile Makụachukwu na-arụ ọrụ, ọ jụrụ ekike elu, jụ ekike ala, na-edokọ ego ya ọ ga-eji ga Mahadum*” (p. 14). (In all the time Makụachukwu was working, she said no to fashion, but saved her money for her University education). Women are capable of saving money for a rainy day.

4.1.11 Male and Female as Intelligent

Nwadike and Kammelu demonstrate that both men and women are studious and intelligent. Nwadike displays Adaeze as extremely intelligent: “*N’akwụkwọ, Adaeze bụ azụ eru ala. Ụbụrụ ya bụ eso nke na-atugide ụmụ nnụnụ. Mgbe ọ bụla e lechara ule, ọ bughị na ọ ga-abụ onye nke mbụ, kama, ihe ọ ga-eji agafe onye na-eso ya n’azụ ga-adị egwu*” (pp. 30-31). (In academics, Adaeze was unbeatable. Her brain was very sharp and retentive. After every examination, she would not only take first position, but she would also give a very wide gap to the second person). Nwadike shows that even Ezetaụwa, a male student, who speaks impeccable English, does not match Adaeze in their class. Adaeze’s unique intelligence is shown when a male teacher, Mr. Opigwe, falsely awards her girlfriend, Chioma, the first position in their class without knowing that the school authority will find out. This is because no student, including Chioma, can compete with

Adaeze in the class. Adaeze eventually becomes the best student in their school's Common Entrance Examination and also performs extremely well in the Entrance Examination of the three colleges she chooses. It is due to her academic excellence that Adaeze eventually becomes the senior prefect of her school. The students express their happiness over Adaeze's leadership: *"Obi oma kpara umu akwukwo ha niile n'ebe ochichi dabara ya (Adaeze) n'aka maka na onye o bu la maara na ochichi ya ga-eweta udo, onu na agamnihu. N'ezikwu, ochichi ya puru iche site n'ako na uche ya"* (p. 59). (All the students were happy about her (Adaeze's) appointment as a leader because they all knew her leadership would bring peace, happiness and progress). Adaeze's intelligence helps her to be a good students' leader.

Kammelu presents Makuchukwu as an intelligent student right from her primary school. Her outstanding performance in her West African School Certificate Examination prompts her school to employ her to teach in the school. She is the best student in her year three in the medical school and it earns her a gift of money from a big company: *"Otu ulo oru... wetara ego... di puku nari naira abuo si ka e keere umuakwukwo mekarichara nke oma n'afu nke ato na nke ikpeazu na ngalaba omumu Medisinu... Nnukwu ego a wee dabara Makuchukwu"* (p. 23). (One company ... brought money ... two hundred thousand naira to share among the best year three students in medicine This big sum of money came to Makuchukwu). Makuchukwu's intelligence assists her to be successful as a medical doctor. Consequently, the Igbo women's group in Kano invites her to educate them on the issue of women's health and menopause. Makuchukwu instructs and explains to the women how to take care of themselves during and after childbirth, especially during menopause. Makuchukwu clearly explains

the emotional and physical changes women undergo during menopause. Her intelligent explication earns her a fridge and television from a woman who appreciates her (Makwachukwu's) teaching about different menopausal signs women experience. This is because the woman realises that her house-boy, who has lived with her for more than eight years, is innocent. This realization comes after she has accused him of being diabolical and the cause of her affliction and sends him away empty handed without knowing she is in her menopausal stage. She cries to Makwachukwu concerning her constant sickness and restlessness since she sent the boy out of her house. Makwachukwu advises her to apologise to the boy and bring him back to her house which the woman does and peace is restored in her life. Kammelu portrays sisterhood among women in matters relating to their health and general well-being. Womanists advocate female bonding because women experience similar problems. However, women can be lifted from their predicament through sharing their experiences as women.

4.2 DISCREPANCIES IN THE POSITIVE PORTRAYAL OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS IN LATER POST-WAR MALE AND FEMALE-AUTHORED IGBO NOVELS

4.2.1 Male and Female as Kind-hearted

Nwadike portrays male characters as those who demonstrate love and kindness to their female counterparts whereas Kammelu describes both male and female characters as those capable of loving and caring for each other. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, Nnanna (Adaeze's friend) is a very kind man. He makes Adaeze have a new lease of life by sending money and valuable items to her when she is suffering in the University: "*Obibia Nnanna nyere Adaeze ndu ohuru, ya adi ka e butuola ibu aru o bu*" (pp.104- 146).

(Nnanna's visit rejuvenated Adaeze; it looked like her burden had been relieved). Nwadike describes kind men essentially as godsent to women in general. Nnanna's relationship with Adaeze rejuvenates her. He visits Adaeze often, takes her out, buys so many things for her and gives her a big amount of money for her up-keep. Nnanna lavishes money on Adaeze because he loves her and has the intention to marry her, which eventually does not materialise because of Adaeze's decision to become a Reverend Sister.

In Kammelu's *Makwachukwu*, Chibuuzo loves and cares for his wife, Chikwuorum. He lives in peace with her despite her inability to conceive since their ten years of marriage. He takes his wife everywhere to look for the fruit of the womb. But when their boat nearly capsized on their visit to a native doctor, he decides to leave everything to God rather than to risk their lives: "*Chineke ekwela ka m jiri maka icho nwa tufuo ndu mu na nwunye m, aga m eji nwayo n'ih na onye buru Chi ya uzọ, o gbagbuo onwe ya n'oso*" (p. 1). (God forbid that I should waste the life of my wife as well as mine in quest for a child; I will take things easy because anyone who runs ahead of his god will kill himself). Chikwuorum also cares for her husband's life. Immediately the wind stops swaying the boat, Chikwuorum humbly begs her husband to stop taking her around, because if he loses his life in the process she will be accused of killing him (p. 1) as many people are surprised he still loves and cares for her despite her inability to bear him children. Kammelu shows that women care for their husbands' lives and would not want to be accused of killing their husbands, which is often the case in society, especially Igbo.

4.2.2 Male and Female as Patient and Enduring

Nwadike portrays men as those with a capacity to endure, while Kammelu presents both men and women as patient and enduring. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, men's enduring attitude is seen through the words of Adaeze to Nnanna when she sends a letter to him concerning her decision to be a Rev. Sister. Adaeze remembers everything Nnanna did for her and begs him to forgive her for disappointing him and endure it like a man: "... *ana m ariḡ ḡi ka i die ha dī ka nwoke i bụ*" (p. 131). (I am begging you to endure it as a man you are). Nnanna endures it although his friend, Ibedinjḡ (friends are bad) as his name applies, persuades him to retaliate but he is reluctant to do so.

In Kammelu's *Makḡachukwu*, both male and female characters are shown to be patient and enduring. Chibuḡḡḡ and his wife, Chikwuorum, are patient about their inability to have children after ten years of marriage despite the advice Chibuḡḡḡ's kinsmen gave him to marry another woman. In a similar vein, Chikwuorum refuses to accept her family's advice to bear children by sleeping with another man. They patiently endure the situation and put their hope in God: "*Okwu siri n'aka nri, si n'aka ekpe na-ada ma Chibuḡḡḡ na nwunye ya gbara nkḡiḡ, na-aga n'ḡlḡ Chineke na-ekpere Chukwu ka o kwuoro ha ḡnḡ ha site n'inye ha nwa...*" (p. 2). (Comments were coming from left and right but Chibuḡḡḡ and his wife kept silent, but continued to go to church to pray so that God would vindicate them by giving them a child). Kammelu demonstrates that men and women should be united in their decision to avoid intruders whose business is to destabilise a peaceful home.

4.2.3 Female as Self-reliant and Independent

In Kammelu's *Makụachukwu*, women are shown as those who rely on self-effort without depending on other people. Makụachukwu independently pays her school fees throughout her university education. She does not want her mother to suffer because of her education: "*Makụachukwu gwara nne ya ka o dowe ego nke ya n'ih i na ego ya rụtara n'orụ n'otu afọ na nke o metere na lesin... ga-ezuru ya ịzụ onwe ya afọ abụọ*" (p. 14). (Makụachukwu told her mother to reserve her own money because the salary she received, including the extra money she earned from her tutorial classes ... were sufficient to pay her school fees for two years).

4.2.4 Male and Female as Benevolent

Kammelu depicts female characters as more generous than male characters and Nwadike does not. In Kammelu's *Makụachukwu*, Chiziteerem and his wife, Makụachukwu, train Makụachukwu's siblings in school. They also start up a business for Nne Ezinwanne to be selling foodstuffs: "*Nne Ezinwanne site n'enyemaka Makụachukwu na di ya ebidola ahia ihe nri. O nweghi onye huru ya ugbua ga-ekweta na o bu nwaanyi na-achobu onwu*" (p. 79). (Through the assistance of Makụachukwu and her husband, Ezinwanne's mother started foodstuff business. Nobody would see her now and believe that she was the same woman who was half-dead). Makụachukwu also decides to train her house-helps, Obinna and Ezinwanne, (Nne Ezinwanne's children) in school up to university level: "*O kpebiri na ya ga-azu ha na mahadum n'ih i na umuaka a ebiela be ya, nke onye o bu la na-akpoz i ha umu ya*" (p. 80). (She determined to train them in the university because these children had lived with her to the extent that everybody referred to them as her children). Makụachukwu's comment depicts women as motherly and generous to their fellow women and it also shows female bonding. Adaora (Nne Ezinwanne's daughter) builds a

new house for her mother when she discovers that her parent's house has become dilapidated. She sends two million naira to Makuchukwu and her husband to help her mother, Nne Ezinwanne, in building a house on their father's land in Kano. Nne Ezinwanne also travels to Ogbudu to collect money from Adaora when necessary, and at times Adaora sends money to her through the bank (pp. 87-88).

4.2.5 Female and Male as Religious

Kammelu shows women as religious more than Nwadike, though Nwadike portrays his protagonist, Adaeze, as a Reverend Sister. In Kammelu's *Makuchukwu*, all her female characters are more religious than males. However, the females are religious mostly when they are in difficulty. Chibuozo (God first) and his wife, Chikwuorum (God speak for me), always pray together and hope in the Lord for the gift of a child. Chikwuorum prays morning and night with her children when Obegolu, her late husband's cousin and friend, wants to take her husband's farm land from her (p. 10). Makuchukwu's admission into the University of Ibadan depicts women as deeply religious through the way a woman, Ihuomachukwu, joins them in thanking God and prays for God's mercy and assistance throughout Makuchukwu's studentship in the university (p. 13). Makuchukwu is known in the university as very religious, to the extent that radical boys termed her '*Ukochukwu Nwaanyi*' (Female priest) (p. 15). Womanists reject 'language determinism' in the description of the male and the female genders because it promotes sexism. It describes the world as a male domain. The term 'male' is not associated with male profession because most professions are designed only for the male gender. Mills (1995)

views sexism as inherent in the labels the language speakers use to describe the male and female genders. However, the use of affixes (gender-specific terms) like ‘-ess’, ‘-ette’, ‘-enne’, ‘-trix’, and so on to refer to females is derogatory and have trivializing connotations. According to Mills (1995), many of the affixes are diminutive forms of the male term; for instance, ‘-ess- or –ette’ can be seen to mean ‘smaller than’ or ‘less than’. Mills (1995) asserts that the use of affixes to refer to women leads to a view of women as a deviation from a male universal norm and unseriousness on the part of women. Hence, the female term, ‘*Ukọchukwu Nwaanyi*’ (Female Priest) shows lack of seriousness about women, especially when it is compared with the male term, ‘Priest’ (*Ukọchukwu*). The womanists advocate the use of a ‘gender-free or anti-sexist language’, and reject using a ‘gender-specific term’, to refer to both the male and the female genders of the same group.

Makụachukwu (Embrace God) as her name implies, often prays and believes that the truth must prevail in her case with Dr. Ekweaga who levels series of accusations against her: “*Otu ihe Makụachukwu kwenyere bụ na eziokwu ga-apụta ihe otu ụbọchị n’ihi na o nweghi ihe gbagoro elu, agaghị arịdata ala*” (p. 67). (One thing Makụachukwu believed was that one day the truth would prevail because whatever goes up must come down). The truth surely prevails and Dr. Ekweaga’s appointment as a lecturer is terminated. Makụachukwu’s younger brother, Echezonachukwu, prays optimistically for their daily sustenance when they could not have dinner one night: “*Chineke, ekele dịrị gị na i nyere anyị nri ụtutu na nke ehihie. O bụ ezie na anyị enweghị ihe anyị ga-eri n’abalị a, mana anyị ka nwere olileanya na ị ga-echeta anyị n’ihi na abalị eteka...*” (p. 25). (God, we thank you for giving us breakfast and lunch. It is true that we do not have what to eat

tonight, but we hope that you will remember us because the night is long). Echezonachukwu (Do not forget God), as his name implies, believes in God's supernatural powers to provide for his children whenever they call on him, and it works, for Makuchukwu comes back home, from the university that night with different types of foodstuffs. Echezonachukwu immediately enters the kitchen that night and cooks dinner for their family. In essence, Kammelu shows that cooking is not only women's responsibility because men can equally cook. Another female character, Nne Ezinwanne, is hopeful that one day her daughter, who has abandoned them after marrying a Hausa man, will remember them (*p. 80*). Nne Ezinwanne later meets her daughter, Adaora, through the help of Makuchukwu and one of her female customers. Womanists urge women to embrace religion as a coping mechanism in the face of difficulties rather than being confrontational as this may lead them to diabolism. Shaw & Lee (2007: 670-673) reveals that religion empowers women despite religion's long history of oppressing women. The women have experienced profound support, encouragement, and satisfaction in religion. Shaw and Lee describe different ways religion empowers women. First, religion provides women an environment in which they experience real community with other women, as Kammelu shows in *Makuchukwu* where Makuchukwu's church members assist in taking care of her (Makuchukwu's) family when they (Makuchukwu and her husband, Chiziteerem) are arrested in connection with Nne Ezinwanne's assault. Second, religion may provide women with opportunities for building and exercising leadership skills within religious organizations. Third, leadership within the church or religious organization may facilitate women's power within their local or regional communities as well as encourage their participation in

various forms of social activism, which may probably make women to be healers instead of destroyers. Finally, religion provides women a place in which they find a sense of worth as a valued person.

4.2.6 Male and Female as Helpful

In *Makụachukwu*, Kammelu shows that men and women can help each other in the family, whereas Nwadike does not. Chiziteerem (God sent to me) helps his wife, Makụachukwu, to buy foodstuffs for the family, but whenever he travels, Makụachukwu does the buying. Makụachukwu also assists Chiziteerem in providing food for their family when his office stops his salary, as a result of the false accusation levelled against them concerning Nne Ezinwanne's death: "*Ọ bụ ndị ụlọ ọrụ nwunye ya ndị nke na-akwu nwunye ya ntakịrị ego onye na-eje ala nna ya na-anata ka e ji azụ ezinaụlọ*" (p. 66). (It is the National Youth Service stipend she received from her office that she used to take care of her family). The above comment shows the importance of a woman's job in the family. Chiziteerem helps Makụachukwu to cook food for the family when her work delays her from coming back home early:

Oge Dokịta Makụachukwu ga-eji la ọrụ eruela ma onye ka ọ ga-ahapụrụ Ezinwanne nọ n'ụra lawa? ... Ọ kpọrọ di ya na foonu gwa ya na ya agaghị alata n'oge na ọrụ karịrị akarị.... Mgbe ha laruru, ọ kpọrọ di ya ihe niile mere. Di ya gwara ya gaa ghụọ ahụ rie ihe na ya esiela nri. Makụachukwu richara nri, lakpuo ụra (pp. 49-51).

(It was time for Doctor Makụachukwu to close for the day but what was she going to do about Ezinwanne who was sleeping? ... She called her husband on phone and told him that she would not come home early due to much work.... When they arrived home, she told her husband all that happened. Her husband told her to go and take her bath and eat because he had cooked. Makụachukwu ate and went to bed).

Kammelu shows in her novel that men can help women at home if the woman shows a sense of responsibility. Makuchukwu contacted her husband when she could not carry out her responsibility and her husband helped out. Makuchukwu's humble and responsible attitude is one of the strategies women should adopt to involve their husbands in housework.

4.2.7 Male and Female as Emotional

Male and female characters are shown as emotional by Kammelu while only female characters are emotional in Nwadike's novel. Uzumma and her daughter, Adaeze, in Nwadike's *Adaeze*, are emotional. Adaeze discloses her intention to be a Rev. Sister to her mother (Uzumma). She (Uzumma) cannot understand what has led to Adaeze's decision. She feels that her suffering to train Adaeze in school has been in vain and what her husband said about women's education is true. She falls down, cries and shouts loudly: "*Adaeze egbuolanu mu o! Adaeze egbuolanu mu o! Anwuo mu o! Efu o mu o! Onye si ya nuru udi a o? ... Uchechukwu di m, bia o! Ihe I kwuru ekwu emeela!*" (p. 141). (Adaeze has killed me o! Adaeze has killed me o! I am finished o! Who says s/he has heard this type o! ... My husband, Uchechukwu, come o! What you said has happened! ...). Uzumma's voice attracts many people in her compound including her husband's brother, Ofowuike, their kinsmen and their wives. Adaeze is confused and cannot understand why her mother is shouting. Ofowuike in a confused state calls Adaeze to inquire the cause of her mother's mood, she is unable to reply and starts crying. Adaeze is emotional but she does not lose sight of what she wants in life. She still maintains her decision. When the women who were consoling Uzumma left her house, Ofowuike took three of his kinsmen to Uzumma's house to ascertain the cause of her cry.

Uzamma receives them with gratitude but she starts crying when she is narrating her encounter with Adaeze. Uzamma can hardly suppress her feelings when she tells them how Adaeze has refused to marry Nnanna and other men who propose marriage to her because of her decision to be a Reverend Sister. Women are shown as the upholder of the tradition which oppresses them. Uzamma's socialisation on the traditional role of women in the family blinds her reasoning. She ignorantly believes that a girl must marry in order to help her family without knowing that this is not the case. Nwadike shows that, barely two years after Adaeze became a Reverend Sister, she built a house in her father's compound and helped her mother in training her siblings in school. From the Womanist point of view, women should endeavour to reason with their children, especially the females, without being overcome by emotion. The women should endeavor to encourage their children, especially girls, to aspire to self-actualisation apart from marriage.

In Kammelu's *Makuchukwu*, both male and female characters are emotional, but the females display their emotions more than the males as a result of the injustice they suffer. Chikwuorum cries bitterly when Obegolu, her late husband's cousin and also a friend, threatens to take her husband's farmland: "*Ariri na-egbu Chikwuorum... abughi na mmadu na-azoro ha ala, ajuju bu: Onye na-azoro ha ala? Obegolu nwanne ma burukwa enyi nna Makuchukwu*" (p. 9). (Chikwuorum was worried ... not because somebody was contesting their land; the question is: who was contesting the land? Obegolu, the brother and friend of Makuchukwu's father). Makuchukwu also cries profusely when she misses a year in the medical school because of the injustice she suffers in the hands of Dr. Ekweaga: "*O bu ezie na Makuchukwu bere akwa elu, bee akwa ala, nwee mwute di egwu ma site na ndumodu ndi mmadu, o bidoro kasiwe onwe ya obi na ya ga-aburiri*

Dokita bekee...” (p. 20). (Indeed, Makuchukwu cried so much and was highly sorrowful, but through the advice of people, she encouraged herself and vowed to become a medical doctor ...). Ezinwanne cries when Dr. Makuchukwu wants to hospitalize her. She thinks if she stays in the hospital, her mother and younger siblings will die of hunger because her paternal uncles have abandoned them. Ezinwanne and her brother, Obinna, also cry daily and soak their bed in tears as a result of their mother’s assault and the abduction of their younger brother, Chisom, by their paternal uncles in their bid to inherit their father’s property (p. 65). Nne Ezinwanne is saved by the policemen who took her to the hospital. She meets Makuchukwu in court when she comes to identify her brothers-in-law who assaulted her. Nne Ezinwanne on sighting Makuchukwu runs towards her and holds her, two of them cry happily on each other’s shoulders. Female bonding is very important in women’s lives. It encourages women to be strong in the face of difficulty. Nne Ezinwanne is courageous enough to speak out against the injustice done to her by her brothers-in-law which gets them sentenced to ten (10) years imprisonment with hard labour.

4.2.8 Female as Respectful and Humble

Nwadike and Kammelu depict their female characters as respectful and submissive. Nwadike in *Adaeze* presents Uzumma (Uchechukwu’s wife) as a woman who does not like anything that will bring shame and disgrace to her family, despite her husband’s irrational behaviour. She politely talks to her husband in the mornings to stop his irresponsible behaviour for the good of their family: “*Uzumma bu nwanji nwere ugwu, na-anaghi achọ ihe ihere. Mgbe ọ bula mgbe, ọ na-ejiri nwayọọ kpọọ di ya n’isi ututu, mee ka ọ ghọta nke oma ihe ndi ọ na-eme na-ekwesighiri onye di ka ya*” (p. 17).

(Uzamma is a woman who has dignity, and who detests embarrassment. From time to time, she will politely speak to her husband early in the morning, and make him fully understand the wrong things he does which do not speak good of him). Uzamma wants to preserve her dignity by humbly pleading with her husband to change his bad character, but her husband remains adamant to her pleas. Uzamma still respects her husband (Uchechukwu) notwithstanding his careless attitude towards her and the children.

According to Nwadike:

Uchechukwu lutara onye ume ruru ala, ezigbo okwere nke di kara. O tughị sị na Uchechukwu na-eme nwunye ya na umu ya ihe ojoo, Uzamma huru ya n'anya. O bu eziokwu na di ya na-eme ya ihe mgba anya mmiri, mana o naghị achọ isi n'aka onye o bula nata nkwo n'ebe di ya no (p. 22).

(Uchechukwu married a good woman, who abides by what her husband says. Despite that Uchechukwu treated his wife and children badly, Uzamma loved him. It is true that her husband broke her heart, but she never allowed anybody to criticise him).

Uzamma hates anybody who gossips about her husband. She fights a woman in the market because she overhears two women discussing her husband, Uchechukwu. Uzamma respects and defends her husband even in public, despite her husband's shortcomings. Womanists encourage women to respect and protect their husbands, notwithstanding their husbands' unfavourable treatment of them in order to preserve peace and unity in the family.

In Kammelu's novel, Makuchukwu is very humane and respectful as a medical doctor, especially during her National Youth Service Corp in Kano state. She humbly greets everybody in the hospital, both her seniors and juniors. She listens and humbly attends to

her patients, despite the fact that she does not understand Hausa. Her humility and respectful behaviour inspired her medical directors to retain her as one of their medical doctors in the Government Hospital in Kano: “*Makuachukwu bu dokita nwere obi umeala, na-arusi oru ike, ndi isi jiri aka ha dee akwukwo na ha ga-ewe ya ma o fechaa ala nna ya*” (p. 77). (Makuachukwu was a very humane and hard working doctor. The directors personally signed that they would employ her after her youth service). This type of attitude is what womanists advocate, so that women can achieve their dreams in life.

4.3 SIMILARITIES IN THE STEREOTYPED (NEGATIVE) PORTRAYAL OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS IN LATER POST-WAR MALE AND FEMALE-AUTHORED IGBO NOVELS

4.3.1 Male as Deceitful

Nwadike and Kammelu depict mainly men as deceitful. Nwadike’s *Adaeze* demonstrates how men lie and deceive women in order to lure them into a relationship. He shows how university boys go to the girls’ hostels looking for year one female students to befriend. These boys use money and romantic words to trap girls: “*Ha na-eweputa ego na olu oma iji nweta ndi ha na-agbara onya. O dighi udi nkwa ha anaghi ekwe, ma nke kachasi ibe ya, burukwa nke umu nwaada na-acho inu bu: 'Aga m alu gi'*” (p. 92). (They used money and alluring tone to ensnare those they wanted to trap. They made every conceivable promise, but the greatest of them all, which was also the one the women liked to hear was: ‘I will marry you’). They make empty promises, including marriage.

In *Makụachukwu*, Kammelu portrays men as deceitful as seen in Dr. Ekweaga and Nne Ezinwanne's brothers-in-law. Dr. Ekweaga lies to the school authority that he only advised Makụachukwu against her prostitution and Makụachukwu vowed to send him out of the university system:

Makụachukwu chọputara na otu n'ime ebubo Dọkita Ekweaga boro ya bụ na iwe na-ewe Makụachukwu n'ihi na ya duru ya odu ka o hapu iji okwuchukwu na-arafu ndi mmadu. Ya ekpokozila ndi enyi nwoke otu mgbe. Makụachukwu wee si ya na ya ga-ahu na o churu ya n'oru n'ihi na otu ya si ebi ndu agbasaghi ya bu Dr. Ekweaga (p. 19).

(Makụachukwu found out that one of the false allegations levelled against her by Doctor Ekweaga was that she was angry because she was advised to stop deceiving people with her preaching. She should desist from associating with too many boys. Makụachukwu then told him she would make sure he was sacked from work because her personal life was none of his (Doctor Ekweaga's) business).

Some men are deceitful in order to protect themselves from their irrational behaviour against women. This attitude is not acceptable to Womanists because it can destroy women's reputation. One of Nne Ezinwanne's brothers-in-law deceives the police officers by claiming that Makụachukwu and her husband killed Nne Ezinwanne: "*Otu onye n'ime ha were ekwentị kpoo ndi uwe ojii were asị tetoo Chiziteerem na nwunye ya*" (p. 61). (One of them called the police officers and lied against Chiziteerem and his wife). Nne Ezinwanne's brothers-in-law's intention is to destroy the family that is preventing them from eliminating Nne Ezinwanne and her children in order to inherit their brother's property. Kammelu demonstrates that some men are deceitful in their attempt to achieve their selfish gain.

4.3.2 Male as Diabolical

Nwadike and Kammelu, unlike Nzeako and Ubesie, portray only male characters as diabolical. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, men are shown as diabolical; however, he gives the impression that men engage in diabolical activities because of women's attitude towards them. This means that women are the cause of men's diabolical aggression against them. Adaeze's suitor, Nnanna, visits a medicine-man because Adaeze whom he has helped in the University and spent money on during her Youth Service corps, with the hope of marrying her, abandons him to become a Rev. Sister. Nnanna's visit to a medicine-man is on the advice of his male friend, Ibedinjo (Friends are bad) as his name implies, who is still angry with Adaeze for refusing to befriend him when they were in the university. He wants to use the opportunity of what Adaeze has done to Nnanna to punish her and is, therefore, bent on convincing and coercing Nnanna (who refused to harm Adaeze) to visit a medicine-man in order to maim her. Ibedinjo takes it upon himself to see that Adaeze is punished by taking Nnanna to a medicine-man, Okuhapuite. However, they tell the native doctor not to kill Adaeze but to maim her for life:

Tupu Nnanna ga-emeghe onu ya, Ibedinjo anagharala ya okwu, kochara dibia etu enyi ya nwoke siri kwuo aka tiere okuko aku. N'ikpeazu, ya agwa ya na ha achoghi ka nwaada a nwuo anwuo, kama, ka o dobe ya (Adaeze) n'udi odi ndu, onwu ka mma (p. 133).

(Before Nnanna could speak, Ibedinjo interrupted him. He told the medicine-man how his male friend wasted his money on Adaeze. At last, he (Ibedinjo) told him (medicine-man) that they did not want this girl to die, but to be put in a deplorable condition).

Nwadike illustrates through Ibedinjọ's words that men's diabolical acts are not meant to kill other people. Ibedinjọ agrees to bring all the items the medicine-man requests when Nnanna refuses to do so. Nnanna's refusal shows that some men do not like to use evil means to solve their problems. But Ibedinjọ makes sure that Nnanna does what the medicine-man wants when they have presented the items to him. At last, when it is time to maim Adaeze, Nnanna calls Adaeze's name seven times to appear in the mirror as instructed by the medicine-man; he tells Nnanna to begin mentioning everything Adaeze did to him but he is afraid to do so. The medicine-man becomes angry and rushes out to call Ibedinjọ but to his chagrin, he is nowhere to be found. Both Nnanna and Ibedinjọ's cowardly behaviour seems to show that men do not have the mind to act diabolically, rather men are shown to be considerate and empathetic.

But in *Makwachukwu*, Kammelu shows that men are capable of maiming people for life. She presents the male characters, Obegolu, Dr. Ekweaga and Udemba as diabolical due to their covetous attitude. Obegolu buries charms in Chikwuorum's late husband's farmland in order to strike Chikwuorum with stroke so that he will inherit the farmland: "*Obegolu here banye n'ubi ahụ gaa lie ọgwụ ga-eme ka nne Makwachukwu daa n'ọrịa ọkara ahụ*" (p. 10). (Obegolu sneaked into the farm and buried a charm to afflict Makwachukwu's mother with stroke). Dr. Ekweaga uses charms to hypnotize the lecturers in the panel in order for them to disregard Makwachukwu's report concerning his sexual advances towards her:

... mgbe ọbula Dọkita Ekweaga ga-abia ikpe, ọ ga-iji ihe dibia afa nyere ya, fechara ya n'ahụ ya nke ga-eme ka ndị ikpe ghara imakwa onwe ha ma okwu na-aga n'ihu. Dibia afa nyekwara ya nke ọ ga-akpụ n'ọnụ ma ọ na-ekwu okwu, nke ga-eme ka ire

ya na-atọ uto nke ukwu nke na ndi no n'ikpe ga-ekweta ihe obula o kwuru" (p. 19).

(... Whenever Doctor Ekweaga came to court he would come with the charms given to him by the witch doctor and sprinkle it on his body so that the judges would be confused. The witch doctor also gave him a charm to hold in his mouth while talking so that his words would be so appealing that the judges would believe him).

Udemba (Adaora's father's brother) hypnotizes Adaora to abandon her mother and siblings to die of hunger in order to inherit her father's property. Udemba gives Adaora food in her dream and this makes her detest hearing about her mother whenever her husband wants them to visit her family. Kammelu shows through Adaora's words to her mother that she later discovers that Udemba hypnotized her after she has accepted Jesus Christ in her life: "*N'ikpeazu, ka a choputara na o bu ogwu ka Udemba mere ya (Adaora) ka o ghara ima nne ya, ka o ghara inokata echiche gbasara ulo nna ya maobu nne ya abata ya n'obi" (p. 85).* (At the end, she found out that Udemba hypnotized her (Adaeze) to forget her mother or think of her family). Women should be religious in order to protect themselves from evil people.

4.4 DISCREPANCIES IN THE NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS IN LATER POST-WAR MALE AND FEMALE-AUTHORED IGBO NOVELS

4.4.1 Male as Irresponsible

Nwadike, unlike Nzeako and Ubesie, demonstrates that men are the cause of family squabbles because of their irresponsible behaviour while Kammelu does not. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, Maazi Uchechukwu quarrels with his wife because of his drunkenness and waywardness: "*E-ee, Uchechukwu bu kujuo na akujula di na nsogbu ezi na ulo ya. O bu onye anuruma. O bu onye iberibe n'anya otutu ndi mmadu n'ala ya. O bu*

anya ahughị ụmụnwaanyi ụmụnwoke ibe ya” (p. 17). (Yes, Uchechukwu was the cause of problem in his family. He was a drunkard. Many people in his town saw him as a foolish man. He befriended married women). Uchechukwu always drinks himself into a stupor and comes back late at night. Uchechukwu spends his salary in the beer parlour instead of his family. Uchechukwu also reacts aggressively to his wife whenever he receives his salary. He is always in enmity with his wife and children concerning feeding money. He does not feed or buy clothes for his family because he sees it as his wife’s responsibility, as shown below:

Mgbe ọ bụla ọ natara ụgwọ ọnwá ya, ya na nwunye ya na ụmụ ya adịrị n’okwu. Iwepụta ego nri na-abụ okwu na ụka; ọzọ kwa, site n’afọ ruo n’afọ, ọ dighị nwa ya ọ na-azuru uwe. Ma ha na-agba ọtọ ma ha na-asụ uwe, nke ahụ agbasaghị ya; nsogbu niile a bụ ihe diiri nwunye ya ihu etu a ga-esi gboo ha (p. 18).

(Any time he received his salary, he would be at logger-heads with his family. There was always trouble when it came to food expenditure; additionally, from year to year he never bought clothes for any of his children. Whether they were clothed or naked was none of his business. All these problems were left for his wife to solve).

Men abdicating their responsibilities in the family is not acceptable to Womanists. In Igbo society, the onus is on the man as the head of the family to cater for his wife and children. Anything short of the man performing his role in the family posits the man as irresponsible. Though women are encouraged to help financially in the family, men should not abandon the whole responsibility to their wives in order not to overwork them and also to maintain peace and unity in the family.

4.4.2 Male and Female as Extravagant

Nwadike presents both men and women as extravagant but shows mainly men as those who waste money on frivolous things. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, Uchechukwu started working when the economy was good but did not have anything to show for it:

O bidoro oru Bekee mgbe ala gba otu ma o dighi ihe bara ezigbo uru o meputara. Nna ya luru ya nwaanyi...ulo o bi n'ime ya bu ulu nna ya.... Uchechukwu na-eri ezigbo ugwo onwa, ma o rara ya ahụ ichekwa ego maka ihe ndi di mkpa na maka odinihu. O bu nke a kpatara okwu ji aputara ya na nwunye ya uka ugboro ugboro (p. 17).

(He started civil service job early enough but there was nothing useful he had been able to do. His father married a wife for him... the house he lived in belonged to his father. Uchechukwu was receiving a good salary but it was difficult for him to make some savings to safeguard the future. This always brought quarrels between him and his wife).

Uchechukwu receives a salary every month and wastes it on frivolous things to the extent that he does not have enough to save for the future. Uchechukwu's carefree attitude causes quarrels between him and his wife, who normally warns him against his extravagant spending. Nwadike also portrays women as greedy and extravagant as seen in the character of Olachi. Olachi sees the way Nnanna lavishes money on Adaeze and dreams of having Nnanna so that she would live a luxurious life: "*Mgbe Olachi jiri hu na omanachi manyerela enyi ya nwaanyi bu ntala chi, ya adi ya ka ya buru Adaeze, wee were nwayo kpuo Nnanna isi...*" (p. 106). (When Olachi saw that God had blessed her friend, she felt like becoming Adaeze so that she could squander Nnanna's wealth ...). Olachi only wishes to be in Adaeze's position in order to squander Nnanna's money.

4. 4.3 Male and Female as Promiscuous

Nwadike presents both men and women as promiscuous. Though he uses women's promiscuity to show the extent of Adaeze's chastity while Kammelu presents only men as promiscuous. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, Uchechukwu (Uzamma's husband) is a womaniser. He uses his salary to womanise. He does not buy things for his wife and children but spends money on other women:

Ọ naghị azurụ onye ụlọ ya akwa... ma ya hụ ụmụnwanyị nwoke ibe ya... akpịrị etowe ya. Nke a tinyere ya n'ajọ omume: isogharị ụmụnwanyị n'ike na inye ha ego aghara aghara, chefuo na ya tufuchaa ego niile a n'ahụ ha, ihe o ketara bụ ihoro akwụ na nhorọ, na o mekataghị ka ya buru isi akwụ n'ogbe (p. 19).

(He did not buy clothes for his wife... but if he saw other men's wives... he desired them. This led him into bad behaviour: befriending women and giving them money without reasoning, forgetting that after wasting money on them, what he only got was pleasure which is not permanent).

Nwadike also shows men's promiscuity and flirtatious attitude through Opigwe, a primary school teacher. Opigwe is shown as a womaniser who impregnated four girls in his previous school before being posted to Adaeze's school. Nwadike refers to Opigwe as: "... egbe na-ebu okuko" (p. 32). (... a kite that swoops chicks). Nwadike illustrates how one of the pregnant girls would have lost her life because of Opigwe's attempt to abort the baby. Opigwe is not married but has many children from different women. He uses his salary to beautify himself in order to attract girls. Nwadike also shows that girls flock around Opigwe because of his money: "... ụmụ agboghọ na-echu be ya ka a na-echu iyi. Nke a mere ka ndị mmadụ na-ekwu na ọ gworo ogwu a na-akpo 'Ariọajughị' ma nkowa ya bụ nke a: ebe ozu dara ka udele na-efega" (pp. 32 – 33). (... girls visit his house as a place where they are fetching water. This makes people think he uses a charm

called ‘i will not refuse if begged’ but what it means is that: where there is a corpse is where the vulture goes). The above excerpt shows that men don’t use charm to lure women, but women prefer to associate themselves with handsome and extravagant men. The proverb “*ebe ozu dara ka udele na-efega*” (Where a corpse lies is where vultures go), suggests that women only visit men who lavish money on them. Nwadike also portrays men as promiscuous through the behaviour of male students in the university where Adaeze studied. He shows how male students abandon their studies to be visiting female hostels where they squander their parents’ money. Nwadike tells the story of a male student who impregnated a female student and in the attempt to abort the pregnancy the girl died. Nwadike’s portrayal of male and female characters in this story is very critical. He juxtaposes women’s immorality and men’s. He calls the two undergraduates ‘*ewu abụọ*’ (two goats) to suggest that both the impregnator and the impregnatee are fools, for resorting to abortion. He refers to the girl as ‘*anụ mpam*’ (useless animal) to show that her stupidity fell prey to the predator (the man). He also calls the young man ‘*nwa mkpi*’ (he goat) to underscore his undisciplined and uncontrolled libido. Thus, in his opinion, Nwadike presents a fairly balanced judgement on the male and female characters in this episode.

Nwadike also shows women as naturally wayward. Olachi and Adaeze resolve never to accept any man as their friend in the university. But when Olachi later accepts Ikechi, Nwadike shows that it is difficult for Olachi to resist men because of her lasciviousness: *Olachi dị mbụ nwee anya egbe ji ebu ọkụkọ mana mgbe ọ nọ n’ụlọ ha, ọ dighị ezigbo ọnwụnwụwa o nwetara iji soro ndị ọzọ hịa egwu ukwu n’uju ya”* (p. 94). (Olachi initially had eyes which the eagle uses to hunt for chicken because when she was in their house,

she had not been truly tempted to follow other people to have illicit affairs). This shows that the fact that women are not wayward is because they have not experienced serious temptation. Ikechi, who is studying Engineering, approaches Olachi with unrealistic promises: “*O kwere Olachi nkwa okookpa na-ekwe nnekwu*” (p. 94). (He promised Olachi the type of promise a cock makes to a hen). She then dreams of how she will answer an ‘engineer’s wife’ and quickly accepts him as her boyfriend: “*osọ osọ ya adaara Ikechi ka ebe akụ daara awọ*” (p. 94). (She quickly fell for Ikechi like where flying termite falls for toad). Nwadike uses the above figurative speech to depict women’s tendency to submit to men in a very cheap way.

Nwadike shows that women are promiscuous through Titi’s advice to Adaeze when she (Adaeze) discloses the hardship she faces in school: “*Nwanne m nwanyi, o bu na i maghi na i bu osisi na-amị ego? I na-achọ igwa m na i nweghi onye o bu gi na ya? Onye Chọochi! Ngwanu, noro na mmiri ka ncha baa gi n’anya. Bidokwa ugbu a chi di chowa ewu ojii*” (p. 99). (My sister, does it mean that you don’t know you are a tree that bears money? Are you trying to tell me that you don’t have a person you are befriending? A Christian! All right, you should stay inside the water and let soap enter your eyes. Start now there is daylight to look for a black goat). Titi’s comment depicts women as prostitutes and those who use their body to make money. Her advice also shows that women can lead their fellow women into prostitution, which negates the ideals of sisterhood. Definitely, this type of sisterhood is not acceptable to Womaninists who believe that women’s success must not come from promiscuity but through resilience and hard work. Adaeze who is confused about Titi’s advice demands more explanation from her. Titi retorts:

I bụ nwata a na-agwa saa ahụ, ya ana-asa n'afọ n'afọ? I na-achọ ịgwa m na i nwetabeghi enyi nwoke kamgbe ị batara na yunivasiti a? I na-elekwa ibe gi anya? I naghị ahụ ka ha na ndị enyi ha nwoke na-esoghari mgbe niile? O bụ ndị enyi ha ndị a na-egboro ha mkpa di iche iche di ka inye ha ego na igoro ha ihe. Otu aka ahụ kwa, ndị enyi ha nwaanyi ana-akwu ugwo n'uzo nke ha. Ebe a abughi ebe mmadu na-ahapu onwe ya aka n'enweghi onye o ga-adabere n'ahu. Oke ekpemchochi erughi na ya. Onye bia ebe a, ya ebufee chochi n'azu, mgbe o puru, chochi ya efetakwa ya n'ihu (pp. 101-102).

(Are you a child, who is told to bathe, and s/he only bathes the stomach? Are you telling me that you have not got a male friend since you entered the university? Can't you look at your mates? Don't you see how they go about with their boyfriends all the time? It is their friends who solve their problems like giving them money and buying things for them. In the same vein, their girlfriends would pay back in their own way. This is not a place you can stay alone without leaning on someone. Religion is out of it. When you are here, you put religion behind you, when you leave, you continue with your religion).

Women are shown to be promiscuous in the university because of material gains. They depend on men for money and other good things of life. They cannot work hard to sustain themselves in school. Nwadike also shows that even women's Christianity does not prevent them from promiscuity.

In Kammelu's *Makuchukwu*, Dr. Ekweaga, who is a university lecturer, is promiscuous. He is known as a womanizer in school. Many female students have suffered because of his promiscuity. Some of them have abandoned their university education because of their constant failures in his courses as a result of their refusal to accept his sexual advances as Kammelu shows below:

A choputara na o teela umuakwukwo umunwaanyi jiri ata ahuhu n'aka ya. Anya Doka Ekweaga bu anya ahula nwaanyi

mara mma ile anya... ufodu umuaka nwaanyi apuola na ngalaba omumu ha site na kwatu Dokita Ekweaga na-akwatughari ha n'emeghi ihe obu (p. 20).

(They found out that female students had suffered in his hands for a long time. Doctor Ekweaga is a womaniser ... some young girls had dropped out from their department as a result of Doctor Ekweaga's victimization).

Womanists oppose women's victimization as a result of their refusal to concur with men's sexual advances. Womanists support women's rights to reject sexual molestation without being victimized.

4.4.4 Male and Female as Wicked and Heartless

Nwadike shows only the male characters as wicked whereas Kammelu demonstrates that both male and female characters are wicked and heartless. Uchechukwu in Nwadike's *Adaeze* is wicked even to his two sons when he refuses to train them in college, business or skilled work: "*Obi kpokatarara Uchechukwu nku, kporuo ya n'ebe umu ya abuo ndi nwoke: diokpara na osoje diokpara, ndi guchara akwukwo nke isii, burukwa ndi uburu ha ghere oghe, o dighi nke o zuru na koleji*" (p. 18). (Uchechukwu was so heartless to the point that he refused to train his first and second sons in secondary school, although they were very brilliant). Uchechukwu is not willing to train his sons in any particular trade despite the fact that he stopped their formal education. His reason is that his father did not train him in school. He struggled to train himself. Therefore his children should do the same. This archaic belief by some men is not acceptable to Womanists because it limits children's opportunity to develop educationally and economically and thereby constitutes a problem in the family.

In *Makụachukwu*, Kammelu portrays mainly her male characters, Obegolu, Dr. Ekweaga, Udemba, Egbuchula and Ekwueme as extremely wicked, though she also shows a female character, Nne Ezinwanne's paternal uncle's wife as wicked. Obegolu plans to take his friend's (Chibuuzo's) farmland from his wife immediately he (Chibuuzo) died: *"Ugbu a Chibuuzo nwuru, ihe otu onye aghoala ihe oha... mkpu puru Makụachukwu n'onu bu na 'Uto bu na ndu' Obegolu gara gabichaa umunna ka ha kwunyere ya n'okwu ahụ..."* (p. 8). (Now Chibuuzo is dead, what a person owed has belong to other people... Makụachukwu's exclaim is that 'friendship is in life' Obegolu bribes his kinsmen to support him in the case...). Dr. Ekweaga fails Makụachukwu in his courses without minding his reputation as a lecturer: *"Onye nkuzi a kwaturu Makụachukwu na kọọsụ abụọ o kuziiri na simesita gara aga. A nọ na-ekwu nke a, nwoke a wee gaa n'ihu kachie obi kwatue Makụachukwu n'otu kọọsụ ozo na simesita nke abụọ"* (p. 17). (The lecturer failed Makụachukwu in the two courses he taught in the last semester. They have not finished talking about it, he further hardened his heart and failed Makụachukwu in another course in second semester). Nne Eziwanne's brothers-in-law, Udemba, Egbuchula and Ekwueme are not happy with Makụachukwu's family for helping Nne Ezinwanne and her children whom they expect to die in penury. As a result, they kidnap Nne Ezinwanne's last son, Chisom, and beat Nne Ezinwanne to the point of death and accuse Makụachukwu and her husband of committing a criminal offence.

Kammelu also portrays one of her female characters, Nne Ezinwanne's paternal uncle's wife, as a wicked woman. This woman is wicked to Nne Ezinwanne when she (Nne Ezinwanne) lived with them. Nne Ezinwanne's paternal uncle claims that he did not train Nne Ezinwanne in school because his wife did not approve of it: *"Nke ka njo, o buru na*

nwanne nna ya chorọ ịzu ya, nwunye ya agaghị ekwe n'ihị na ọ gbara ajo mmadu. Ọ na-afodu nwanyi a ka ya were nne Ezinwanne mere boolu a na-agba n'ukwu ma nwata a jehie ntakiri uzọ.... Nke a mere o jiri were egwu toputa mmadu” (p. 58). (The worst thing is that, if her paternal uncle wants to train her, his wife will not agree because she is wicked. She scolds Nne Ezinwanne whenever she makes any little mistake.... This is why she is fearful). Women are shown to be wicked to their house-maids and deny them education. This attitude by women is not acceptable by Womanists because it contributes to women's docility, low self-esteem, unassertiveness and lack of courage to pursue their dreams. Womanists reject women's antagonistic attitude and advocate female bonding as a way of assisting women to achieve their potentials.

4.4.5 Female as Jealous

Nwadike depicts women as jealous of one another while Kammelu does not. In *Adaeze*, Nwadike portrays women's jealousy through Ọlachi, who is jealous of Adaeze because of the way Nnanna spends money on her (Adaeze): “*O mekatara bido fuwara Adaeze ufuanya...*” (p. 106). (After sometime she began to be envious of Adaeze....). Ọlachi's attitude shows that women are jealous of their fellow women's fortune. Ọlachi stops relating with Adaeze as a friend because she is jealous that Adaeze enjoys Nnanna's money. Nwadike shows jealousy as part of some women's attitude: “*Nke a bu ndu umu nwaanyi ufodu, ndi, mgbe ha na-eri, ha echefuo na uwa na-agba ntughari, mgbe osughara na-eme n'uwa biara, ya adi ha ka onwu bia taa bia echi*” (p. 106). (This is the attitude of some women, those, who when they are enjoying forget that nothing is permanent; when things change, they wish death to come today or tomorrow). Ọlachi is enjoying when Ikechi is taking good care of her. But when Adaeze seems to get a man

who lavishes money on her, Olachi becomes jealous to the extent that if Nnanna comes but does not meet Adaeze, and leaves a message with her, she will not inform Adaeze. Olachi's attitude depicts women as naturally jealous of their fellow women's success.

Nwadike also shows that the rector of the school where Adaeze is serving is jealous of Adaeze because of her intelligence and hard work. Adaeze is dedicated to her duty as a teacher and she helps the rector of her school in different ways for the improvement and success of the school. She tells her (the rector) about unnecessary things that go on in the school, without knowing that the woman does not appreciate her effort. Nwadike states: *“Onye isi a ewerela mgbazi Ada na-enye ya ka mwamanya na igosị ya na ya (Adaeze) si ebe mepere emepe. Onye isi ebido itara ya ikikere eze. Gịni kwanụ ka nwaada a mere ya? Naanị ikpọ asị n’ihi na Ada si akụkụ Alaọcha ọzọ”* (p. 114). (The rector took Ada's advice as a sign of arrogance of being wise and showing off that she (Adaeze) is from the city. The rector started hating her. What did this lady do to her? She did nothing, but was hated because she was from another part of Alaọcha). The woman feels that Adaeze is proving to be more intelligent and wiser than she because she (Adaeze) comes from the city. Women are seen as jealous and those who do not appreciate their fellow women. The rector also shows her jealousy when she refuses to meet the principal of the school where Adaeze wants to enroll her brother, as requested by the principal: *“Mgbe o (Adaeze) ruru ... nwanyị a ekweghị ọnụ rute. Ọ jwapụrụ isi ịga hụ onye ala ya na-akpọ ya ka ha mata etu ha ga-esi nyere onye mbiambịa aka”* (p. 124). (When she approached her...the woman did not want to listen to her. She refused bluntly to see the man from her state who was calling her in order for them to know how they could help a person who

came from another state). Nwadike indicates that women are jealous of any person they feel will be more successful than them, especially their fellow women.

4.4.6 Female and Male as Gossipy/Flippant

Unlike the early male and female writers, Nzeako and Onwuchekwa, who portray only their female characters as gossipy, the later male writer, Nwadike, proves that men gossip more than women. In *Adaeze*, Nwadike presents women as those who gossip, especially in the hair salon. Adaeze goes out to plait her hair after Olachi has gone out with her boyfriend, Ikechi. Nwadike views a place where the women plait hair as where they gossip: “*Ebe... umu nwaanyi na-agba asiri, na-ako udi di ha ga-aly*” (p. 96). (The place... where women gossip, discussing the type of husband they would like to marry). Nwadike shows in the above excerpt that women who discuss their private lives are gossiping. However, women’s salon is seen as a place where women talk about their men which is really not gossip.

Nwadike also reveals men as gossipy, especially during their meetings. He demonstrates this by showing that men gossip with the Reverend Fathers and Sisters after the news of Adaeze’s entrance into the convent spread in Umungwu. One of the men who are having a meeting under a tree, who belong to Cherubim and Saraphim church, says: “*I na-ana ha nti! Ndi fada na ndi sista! Kata ozọ. Oo kwa ndi a m na-ahụ na-ekonye nko aka? Mgbe nwoke na nwaanyi sowere ije, i chere ginị? I chere na ha gbara onwe ha nkiti? Na-agwa m okwu! Sista, o bughị nwunye fada?*” (pp. 156-157). (Are you listening to them! Reverend Fathers and Sisters! Talk about something else. Are they not these people I see that hold hands together? When a man and a woman walk together, what do you expect?)

Do you think they will ignore each other? Tell me something! Reverend Sister, is she not Reverend Father's wife?). One of them also tells them how a Reverend Father impregnated a girl and the baby resembles him completely. These men talk at length about Reverend Fathers and Sisters, Pastors and leaders in the church, and even married men and women who are promiscuous. While their conversation is going on, one of them, Ibegbulam rebukes them: "*O zuolanu.... Ndị anyị nọ ebe a na-ekowasiri isi, nọ n'ulo ha di iche iche ezuru onwe ha ike. Olee nke anyi ketara?*" (p. 159). (It is enough.... The people we are disturbing ourselves about, are in their different houses resting. What is our benefit?) and Uchebulam agrees to what he (Ibegbulam) says: "*O bu eziokwu. Ngwanu ka anyi mewe nzuko anyi biara. Anyi kwuo nke anyi maara, anyi ekwuo nke anyi na-amaghi*" (p. 159). (It is true. Let us continue our meeting. We discuss what we know and what we don't know). The men oblige and resume their meeting. Uchebulam's comments depict men as gossipy.

4.4.7 Male as Proud and Boastful

Nwadike portrays men as proud and boastful while Kammelu does not. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, Uchechukwu is proud and boastful. He gives himself a nick-name, '*Onye a ma ama*', (A well-known person), in order to be popular. As if it is not enough, he also answers different aliases, like '*Ogbu Agu*,' (Killer of Leopard) '*Nze na Ozọ*,' (Titled man) and '*Igwe ka Ala*' (The sky which is bigger than the earth). He is always boastful of having different things while he has only one old bicycle that makes a loud noise whenever he rides it. According to Nwadike: "*Uchechukwu bu... oji onu egbu oji.... O dighi ihe o naghị ekwu ya nwere, ndi ya zuru n'ulo akwukwo, n'ahia, na n'oru di iche iche. Ma onye na-ekwu ihe a niile, naani otu ihe di mkpa o kpa n'aka bu otu alikiriija*

igwe...” (p. 20). (Uchechukwu is...boastful.... There was nothing he didn't claim he had, those whom he trained in school, business, and different skilled work. But the person, who said all these, had only one old derelict bicycle). Uchechukwu in the novel has not trained his children in school, especially his sons in the college, let alone training other people as he claims.

4.4.8 Male as Corrupt

In *Makụachukwu*, Kammelu presents men as corrupt through the police officers who arrested Makụachukwu and her husband, Chiziteerem. The police officers know they are innocent but because of the bribe they collected from Nne Ezinwanne's brothers-in-law, they refuse to release them: “*o doola ha anya dika ndi a zuru nke oma n'oru ha na aka Makụachukwu na di ya di ocha n'okwu a mana onu rigo rigo ekweghi ha hu uzọ n'ihe ha na-eme*” (pp. 66-67). (They were aware as experienced police officers that Makụachukwu and her husband were innocent in this matter, but corruption had eaten deep into them that they had lost their sense of direction). Kammelu shows that men do not act rationally or professionally as seen in their corrupt practices.

4.4.9 Female as Indolent

Nwadike presents women as indolent whereas Kammelu does not. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, women are portrayed as those who are too lazy to work, especially in an establishment. *Adaeze's* principal shows women's laziness through her advice to the out-going class five students. She advises the students to be dedicated to any work they do in life. She gives them the example of two female workers in a school; how one of them abandons her official duty to beautify herself to the extent that she (the principal), who visits another

school, thinks she (the female worker of that school) is among those waiting to see the principal of the school. She (the principal) does not know that the woman (the female worker) is a secretary until the principal asks for a file and she reluctantly goes to look for the file. The other woman also is too reluctant to type a letter her principal requests from her and immediately she finishes typing it, she takes permission for a break, as Nwadike shows:

Nke ozo bu onye a gwara ka o deputa akwukwo m jiri maka ya bja. Ma kemgbe taa, kamgbe echi, nwata a otu mgbaghara ihu ya rere ka ji a huru n'oku no n'ima oso 'chom', chom'. N'ikpeazu, mgbe o ji kuputachaa akwukwo ahụ n'igwe, ya atuhapuru ya onye isi ga-etinye aha ya, nara ikikere, o buru ya opupu. Ka o na-apu, m nuru ka o na-agwa otu onye oru ha ka ya gaa mkpagharị n'ihì na ya arugbuola onwe ya n'oru (p. 70).

(The other one was told to type the letter which is the reason why I came there. But since then, this girl whom one part of her face was burnt like a roasted yam was missing intermitently. In the end, after she had finished typing, she dropped it for their boss, took excuse and went away. When she was going out, I heard her telling one of her co-workers that she was going out because she was tired of working).

Nwadike shows that some women abandon their official duty for frivolous things. They feel too lazy to work and go out when they like. This reflects women as those who are not dedicated to their duty, which is not what Womanists advocate.

4.4.10 Female as Materialistic

The later male writer, Nwadike, like the early male writer, Ubesie, views women as materialistic through Olachi and Ada respectively while the early and later female

writers, Meniru, Onwuchekwa and Kammelu, do not. Nwadike in *Adaeze* depicts women as materialistic through his female character, Olachi. He explains that men entice women with material things in order to gain their (women's) friendship. Ikechi takes Olachi out to see the big city and they visit Kingsway stores where Olachi brings a dress which costs Ikechi a lot of money and so Olachi believes Ikechi loves her. Ikechi has won Olachi's heart through the clothes he brings for her. He also assures Olachi of getting more of it. The above incidence between Ikechi and Olachi illustrates that women succumb to immorality as a result of their materialistic tendency. Women see men who spend money on them as those who love them. Therefore, men spend more than what they can afford in order to lure women into a relationship. Nwadike uses the Igbo proverb, "*Ura toba utọ, e kwobe ya ekwobe, ndi ala anyi kwuru*" (p. 97). (If sleep is sweet, the sleeper starts snoring), to prove that men know that women like material things and offer them the same in order to get them (women). Adaeze's words when she sees Olachi's clothes show that men do not give freely: "*Onye tara amu ebule ji ibi ugwo*" (p. 97). (One who eats a ram's scrotum is a debtor to hernia). This popular Igbo saying means that women who enjoy men's money will surely pay for it.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have examined gender portrayal in later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels: Nwadike's *Adaeze* and Kammelu's *Makwachukwu*. Nwadike and Kammelu, to a high degree, depict the female characters positively as diligent, assertive, self-determined and strong-willed, friendly, chaste, motherly, beautiful, thrifty, intelligent, self-reliant and independent, benevolent, religious, respectful and humble, emotional, while their male characters, to a little degree, are shown positively to be

protective and morally upright. However, Kammelu ascribes more positive attributes to her female characters than Nwadike, because she also presents to the same high degree the positive attributes of female and male characters as kind-hearted, patient and enduring, morally upright and helpful. Kammelu and Nwadike also, to a high degree, present the male characters negatively as deceitful, diabolical, extravagant, promiscuous, wicked and heartless, gossipy/flippant, corrupt, while the female characters are portrayed negatively, to a little degree, as wicked and gossipy. Nwadike proceeds further to depict the male characters as irresponsible, proud and boastful, and the female characters as jealous, indolent and materialistic. Nwadike and Kammelu in *Makụachukwu* and *Adaeze* respectively show concern for women's plight by giving serious attention in reconstructing the image of women in their novels. The two writers focus mainly on the domestic experiences of women, their education, work life, religion and their economic activities to recreate the image of women ignored in early male literature.

The analysis shows that, through gender awareness, the contemporary female writers are responding to the call by women scholars, writers and critics, to write using their own experiences in order to reconstruct the reality of the female gender, which the male writers misrepresent, in their works. The later post-war female Igbo writer, Kammelu in *Makụachukwu*, uses a female protagonist, Makụachukwu, to present women who are strong, courageous, industrious, self-reliant and self-fulfilled in the face of injustice and difficulty, while men are portrayed as wicked, corrupt, diabolical and promiscuous. Makụachukwu serves as a role model not only to women, but men and children. The later post-war male writer, Nwadike in *Adaeze*, uses a female protagonist, Adaeze, to present women who are humble, obedient, diligent/industrious, successful, intelligent, assertive,

self-reliant and self-fulfilled, whereas men are shown to be indolent, extravagant, gossipy, deceitful, promiscuous and diabolical. *Adaeze* is a role model to her fellow Rev. Sisters in the convent. The two novelists' presentation of the male and female characters indicates the way both genders are visualised in contemporary Igbo society. Unlike in the earlier novels of Nzeako, Ubesie, Meniru and Onwuchekwa, the male characters in the contemporary Igbo novels of Nwadike and Kammelu have both positive and negative attributes like the female characters, though some of the males' negative features are shown to be caused by the female character. The men's negative features such as diabolism are shown to be caused by women as a result of their deceit. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, for instance, Nnanna wants to use diabolical means to maim *Adaeze* because he feels that she deceived him after lavishing money on her.

Apart from exempting men from diabolism, men are still portrayed more negatively than women in the later post-war Igbo novels. This indicates that the contemporary male Igbo writers are beginning to change the lopsided depiction of gender in literature, which is evident especially in early Igbo novels. The female characters are portrayed more positively than the male characters in order to show the real features of women as maternal. They also show the changing situations of women through the portrayal of women as prestigious, assertive, industrious, helpful, intelligent and thrifty. *Adaeze's* assertiveness in Nwadike's *Adaeze* demonstrates that women can make choices that pertain to their lives. The recurrent stereotypes of women as wicked, jealous and promiscuous should be discouraged because of their negative effects on women in the family and the society in general. These vices are considered abhorrent in Igbo society, both in its traditional and contemporary manifestation, and unacceptable to womanists.

This is because womanists are the advocates of peace and unity of the family, which is essential for the co-existence of individuals in Igbo society. The use of negative stereotypes to depict women leads to their denigration in society, and thereby contributes to the disintegration of the Igbo family. Finally, it is essential for the novelists, especially the contemporary ones, to continue to positively reconstruct the position of women in their novels so that women can serve as role models to the society, particularly to women.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is the summary and conclusion of the thesis. Recommendations are also made based on the research findings. These are to recapitulate briefly the gender issues, especially in relation to literature and its portrayal of gender.

5.1 Summary of the Research Findings

This research concludes that the early post-war male and female Igbo writers, Nzeako, Ubesie, Meniru and Onwuchekwa, are different in the ways they portray gender in their novels in terms of their significance, social roles, physical appearance, personality, achievement, behaviour and relationship between men and women within and outside the home. The writers present both their male and female characters positively and negatively, but the early male writers depict the female characters more negatively. Incidentally, the negative images, such as being aggressive and violent, used by the early post-war male Igbo writers to qualify the male characters are presented as the effects of the evil tendencies of the female characters. But the early post-war female writer, Onwuchekwa, rejects the idea that women are to blame for men's inadequacies in male-authored works by depicting men (through Uloaku's husband, Chijioke) as naturally aggressive and violent. Another early female writer, Meniru, also counteracts the effects of negative portrayal of women in Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala* by representing men (through Nwaeze's marriage with his Western girlfriend, Celia) as those who abandon Igbo culture for the Western culture. These findings agree with the findings of many African literary critics, especially women, that early male writers portray the female gender negatively in their works, but disagree with the feminist/womanist belief that only the male writers present the female gender negatively in literature. The early female writers also portray women negatively in their novels, though the degree to which they

describe women negatively is lesser compared to that of the early male writers. As said earlier, the male writers are not to be blamed totally for their negative portrayal of the female gender in their novels because they portray the image of male and female genders exactly as they are as at the time of the setting of their novels. Nzeako and Ubesie who, for instance, show how women were perceived in Igbo traditional society and during the Nigerian Civil War respectively, use derogative names for their protagonists (Nne Ekwutosi and Ada) to dehumanize women, especially those tagged ‘bad women’ because of their assertiveness. To them, women should be mute, passive, docile and dependent on men, like Ogechi (Nne Nkoli) in Nzeako’s *Nkoli*.

The later post-war male and female Igbo writers, Nwadike and Kammelu, are similar in the depiction of gender in their novels. The writers reconstruct the negative stereotypical image of women portrayed in early male and female-authored Igbo novels. The early post-war female writers and the later post-war male and female writers have made a giant stride in an attempt to bridge the gender gap by reconstructing the lopsided portrayal of Igbo women in early post-war male-authored Igbo novels. In *Nwaeze*, Meniru provides a unique dimension that challenges the Igbo belief system that marriage bonds women forever. Ifeyinwa rejects the traditional Igbo belief about marriage which is seen as strings that hold women once they have married. Ifeyinwa’s attitude implies that women should not compromise their happiness. In Onwuchekwa’s *Chinaagorom*, women are shown to have the capacity to achieve their potentials despite their domestic roles. Chinagoro is a lawyer and works as a Secretary and Legal Adviser in an oil company in Ikoyi. Also, in Kammelu’s *Makuchukwu*, women are shown to be capable of achieving their potentials irrespective of the challenges they face in life. Makuchukwu becomes a

medical doctor despite her father's death and Dr. Ekweaga's victimization. In Nwadike's *Adaeze*, his presentation of the female characters testifies to the fact that male writers are making visible efforts to reconstruct the fragmented portrayal given to African women in their early texts. Nwadike corroborates by female writers in portraying the reality of African women in literature. Uzumma is a full and complete Igbo woman who is the family bread-winner and yet respects her husband despite his irresponsible behaviour.

Both the early post-war female writers and the later post-war male and female writers portray their female characters based on the African womanist advocacy for women to embrace tolerance, cooperation, negotiation and collaborate with men in their bid to achieve their potentials. Chinagoro uses a humble approach to negotiate with her husband (Chinedum) to further her education in the university and he supports her education. Makyachukwu also humbly negotiates with her husband (Chiziteerem) when she cannot carry out her family responsibilities and her husband assists her. Kammelu therefore proves that men are capable of assisting their wives in household chores. Additionally, she stresses that women's careers should not interfere with or undermine their family responsibility. Uzumma tolerates her husband's irresponsibility and negotiates with him (Uchechukwu) through her sisters-in-law to allow her to train Adaeze in school and he accepts her request. Uzumma's attitude shows that even women who are financially independent have no right to spend their money in the family without their husbands' consent. This is probably because of the erroneous belief that women who contribute financially in the family are not submissive to their husbands which is not the Womanist ideal. Unlike Ada in Ubesie's *Isi Akwu Dara N'ala* who insults her husband, Chike, because she provides for the family, Uzumma is a bread-winner and still respects her

husband. Ifeyinwa's radical rejection of her mother's advice and prevention of her father's intervention in the matter between her and her husband, Nwaeze, because she is financially empowered is not a womanist tenet. Womanists support women's empowerment and assertiveness but prefer women to negotiate their way towards achieving liberation and not abandoning their family. Meniru tries to show that financial empowerment strengthens women's rights and assertiveness. Ifeyinwa's action is a feminist reaction and not a womanist approach because womanists oppose the destruction of family and believe in the inclusion of men in their struggle for survival. Womanists believe that negotiation is the best solution in every situation and women should, therefore, embrace negotiation in their dealings with men.

Negotiation is shown in this research as an ideal that is not limited to women and their husbands; women can negotiate with their fellow women as well as their children to achieve peace in the family and guard against women's jealousy as seen between Ogechi and her co-wife, Nne Ekwutosi; Chinagoro and her friend, Ajughiekwu; Ifeyinwa and Nwaeze's Western girlfriend, Celia; Adaeze and the rector of her school; and Adaeze and her girlfriend, Olachi. Women's inability to negotiate with their children destabilizes peaceful co-existence in the family as seen between Adaeze and her mother, Uzumma. African women are shown to have a negotiating skill to plead their cause and achieve their goals in life as seen for instance in Chinagoro's relationship with her husband (Chinedum), her mother (Dibugwu) and her mother-in-law (Uloaku); Makuchukwu's relationship with her husband (Chiziteerem) and her mother (Chikwuorum); and Ogechi's relationship with her daughter (Nkoli). Negotiation is the engine of every relationship. Negotiation is beyond women exploiting their beauty, emotions and economic

empowerment to achieve their aims. Rather, it is their values, reflected in their good qualities which enhance relationship. Chike could not fund Ada's business and instead of Ada to reason along with Chike, she bursts into tears feeling that Chike has wronged her. Ada later refuses to listen to Chike's advice for peace to reign in their family because she feels that it is Chike's strategy to obtain money from her since she is more financially buoyant. Nne Ekwutosi also rejects her husband's (Ojeuga's) advice to maintain peace in their family because she feels that he favours her co-wife (Ogechi) more than her. Women's mind-set that beauty, emotion and economic empowerment are means of achieving their aims blurs their vision to use their good qualities to negotiate their way to the top. The good qualities of a woman are obedience, respect, tolerance, endurance, resilience, determination, compromise, cooperation, patience and readiness to negotiate. Imbibing these qualities will save women from the tide of negative portrayal in literature. These qualities can be skilfully used by women to achieve peace in the home, and women should transmit them to their children because the family is the building block of the nation. Womanists are fighting for the unity of the African family and one of the means of achieving this noble objective is for men and women to acknowledge each other's strengths and weaknesses for the purpose of moving the family forward.

5.2 Research Implications

The continuous criticism by female scholars and critics that women are negatively portrayed in literature, especially in novels, has sparked off several works by women, not only among feminist critics, but also in literary studies in general. The women aim to portray the reality of women which is distorted in literature. The women employ different theories to analyse gender in male-authored literature in order to buttress the reason

behind the subjection of women in these works. Virginia Woolf (1929), who is the precursor of feminist literary criticism, criticizes Professor Von X's monumental work: *The Mental, Moral and Physical Inferiority of The Female Sex* with strong women's sensibility. Woolf argues that men's domination of women in literature is due to the ideas of the patriarchal society which prevented women from realizing their creativity and true potentials. Professor Von X's phrase that 'women are naturally inferior to men' roused Virginia Woolf into anger. To Woolf, all books and articles that portray women negatively are worthless scientifically, although humanly, they are full of instruction, interest, boredom, and very queer. Woolf's action explains the anger women feel whenever they are portrayed negatively. According to Woolf, women have served as mirrors to men for centuries and men who dominate ideas of the patriarchal society prevent *women* from realizing their creativity and true potentials. In this sense, Woolf urges women to write because writing is the only way women can assert their individuality and autonomy and also destroy the stereotypical image of housewife and mother.

The implication of this study is that, we have through our comparative analysis of the gender portrayal in early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels proved that the female gender is negatively portrayed more than the male gender in literature as a result of different forms of ideological modes embedded in Igbo society. These modes border on patriarchy, gender role, prevailing attitudes and the perception of gender, and that the contemporary male and female Igbo writers are beginning to reflect the reality of women's experience in Igbo novels, which has filled the gap neglected in earlier

literature. This study hopes to spur other Igbo researchers to employ different literary genres to examine the extent of gender reconstruction in literature.

5.3 Contributions to Knowledge

1. The study has demonstrated that the early post-war male and female Igbo writers used more negative stereotypes: wicked, devilish, quarrelsome, greedy, envious, promiscuous, etc. to describe women than the later post-war male and female Igbo writers in Igbo novels.
2. The study established the tools to empower women to rise above subjugation. The tools are industry, tenacity, strong-will and self-reliance. When the women are financially empowered, either through education or industry, they stand a chance to contribute financially to the family or cooperate with their spouses.
3. The study provided that socio-cultural institutions and practices, such as marriage, legal system, education and workforce, could be used in correcting gender odds and imbalances.
4. The study established that creative Igbo writers, especially the female ones, are strong instrument for deconstructing socio-cultural stereotypes against the female gender.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

There are works on different forms of ideologies which necessitated gender inequality in literature. Further studies should examine the effects of such ideologies on women using literature as a case study. Since the study based on womanists perspectives has established different forms of ideologies, such as patriarchy, gender role, prevailing

attitudes and perception of gender, behind the negative portrayal of female gender in literature, future research should study the portrayal using other theoretical models. This will help to show different aspects of gender portrayal in literature. The present research is based on the prose form and the different ways male and female Igbo writers have projected the issue of gender. Further studies could examine the portrayal of gender in other literary forms: drama, poetry, folktales and short stories, to decipher the ideology behind the positive or negative portrayal of male or female gender in literature.

5.5 Conclusion

The study examined the question of gender portrayal in early and later post-war male and female-authored Igbo novels. Male writers, especially the early ones, have been accused and criticized based on their lopsided presentation of gender, which is detrimental to the female gender.

The study shows the complementarity of gender roles in the traditional Igbo society, until the advent of colonialism. And the patriarchal order of the Igbo society which changed through the influence of colonial masters. Men were given earlier access to Western education than women. The educational curriculum scheduled for men and women is stereotypically structured according to their gender roles. This is because of the belief that education would affect women in performing their roles, especially, reproductive role. Eventually, the education which was made available to women in the colonial period was domesticity, whereas men were trained to become leaders in every social institution.

Men's education affords them the opportunity to write according to the Manichean allegory of the West, where women were of secondary importance. Nonetheless, the women who have the opportunity to have access to education began to write through their own experiences as African women. Their works were criticized and excluded from the literary canon which was structured by the West, and maintained by African male writers. It was not until the radical dismantling of the European codes and the call from Achebe for the African literary writers, especially males, to write based on African experiences in order to reconstruct the distorted African society by the Europeans that the women's writing gained entrance into the African literary canon. This is because African women writers have started writing about the experiences of African women in patriarchal Igbo society before the male writers (Stratton, 1994).

The early post-war male writers elicit the patriarchal ideology of their time. Nzeako and Ubesie locate Igbo women to the periphery of their works, where women are presented as wives, mothers, child bearers, nurturers, home-keepers, cooks, mistresses and concubines, whereas they centralize men as the head of the family. The male writers centered on the male protagonist to portray men's works, interactions and relationships with people. Consequently, the male characters are presented as bread-winners, decision-makers, achievers, peaceful, loving and caring, benevolent, brave and courageous, strong and protective while women's achievements and their contributions are ignored. The male writers restrict women within the confines of a culture which gives them little opportunity to optimize their capacities and potentials. It follows that when they mistakenly deviate from the norm, they are criticized. Consequently, women are portrayed as wicked, devilish, quarrelsome, greedy, envious, materialistic, gossipy,

perpetrators of family violence, diabolical, witches, cantankerous, seductive and promiscuous. The incessant negative portrayal of women by the male writers provokes women to react against it. This is because their portrayals of women negatively trivializes them in the society and reduces them to the level of insignificance.

The early post-war female writers write out of the need to respond and challenge the unfavourable depiction of women in male-authored novels. They centre on the female characters as protagonists to subvert the stereotypical presentation of women by the male writers as well as cultural limitations which they face in their everyday life. By so doing, they transcend the male writers' negative portrayal of women and in their own works, they portray women as self-fulfilled despite their wifehood and motherhood. African women scholars (both internationally and locally) based on the African experience, family and gender issues, propagate different shades of African womanism as an approach which women should embrace in their struggle to achieve their potentials. African womanism advocates the inclusion of men in the women's struggle for emancipation since the men are the engineers of women's subordination.

This study shows that, through gender awareness, the female writers as evidenced by the later post-war female-authored Igbo novels are responding to the call by women scholars, writers and critics to write from their own experiences in order to reconstruct the reality of the female gender, which the male writers misrepresent, in their works. Using a female protagonist, the later post-war female Igbo writer, Kammelu, presents women who are strong, courageous, industrious, self-reliant, and self-fulfilled in the face of injustice and difficulty, while men are portrayed as wicked, corrupt, diabolical and promiscuous.

Makwachukwu, the protagonist, serves as a role model not only to women, but men and children. Equally, the later post-war male writer, Nwadike, using a female protagonist, Adaeze, presents women who are humble, obedient, industrious, successful, intelligent, self-reliant, self-fulfilled and assertive, whereas men are shown to be indolent, extravagant, gossipy, deceitful, promiscuous and diabolical. Adaeze is a role model to her fellow Rev. Sisters in the convent.

This study suggests that some early male writers who are accused of misrepresentation of women in their novels may not be blamed totally because they act on impulse to recreate and restore the dignity of African society which the colonial imperialists distorted. But, it is high time the complementarity of roles and cultural ideologies (which subjugate women and limit their achievement) were revisited and/or effaced to suit the changing gender roles in African society. However, the early post-war female-authored novels and later female and male-authored Igbo novels analyzed reveal that women's lives have improved greatly over the decades. The women are now enjoying higher education and have greater control over their life choices. They use these choices to participate more in the workplace. They decide to have fewer children and diversify their time beyond housework and childcare so that they can contribute to their communities, economies and societies. But in reality, there are women in every community in Igbo society for whom life has not changed much. These women are still battling with many of the issues their mothers faced. Some girls still cannot go to school on a par with boys. They may not inherit assets from their parents, and they have lower legal and social status. However, it is necessary for the male and female writers to go back to the basics and find a common ground which will help them tackle the issue of gender construction based on African

cultural specificities. Their gender construction will be based on changing roles and show the complementarity of the men and women at the individual, family and societal levels. The ideological practices which are harmful or retard the progress and development of men and women in the family, community, nation and the world at large should be effaced. This will help to have in works of art a better construction of men and women characters who will serve as role models to young readers, especially women; and also change the mind-set of the people, mostly boys, about women. This is important in order to re-orientate the youth about gender-specificity, and help them to learn to be gender sensitive. The re-orientation of youths (boys and girls) to imbibe anti-sexist language and mentality will ensure women's participation along with men, and peaceful co-existence between men and women, in all sectors of education, religion, economy and polity.

5.6 Recommendations

Recommendations are made with the hope that they can help to achieve gender balance in literature and life. The thesis recommends that sustaining peace in the family and society requires a more positive depiction of the female gender. This will help to change the mind-set of people against women and persuade them to respect and recognise the contributions of women in the society. This is because the way women are portrayed in literature is the way they are treated in real life. Women should shun prostitution in the face of difficulties, work hard and be prayerful and focused in whatever they do. This will help them to devote more effort in their work in order to achieve success. Men and women should change their indolent attitude towards their responsibilities. They should be dedicated to their duties as fathers, mothers, and workers in order to contribute their quota to achieving peace in the family, society and in the development of the nation.

Women should be given access to education in order to make them resourceful in the family, community and society in general. Women should empower themselves financially, either through education or business in order to avoid family confrontations which are usually caused by women's over-dependence on their husbands. Since gender is a social construct and it is encouraged through early socialisation, it is pertinent to go back to the root and re-orientate the society, and instil in people the positive aspects of African culture which sees gender sensitivity as paramount. This will help to minimise, and, or close the gender gap between women and men. Women should be their sisters' keepers because sisterly love assists women to face and conquer their challenges bravely. Education should be free of stereotypes and gender-bias in order to achieve gender parity in enrolment. Finally, the Igbo novelists, both men and women, should write through their experiences, especially on the changing roles of men and women in contemporary society, in order to portray the reality of women's lives in their future novels.

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