

**GENDER PORTRAYAL IN SELECTED EARLY AND LATER
POST-WAR MALE AND FEMALE-AUTHORED IGBO NOVELS: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the thesis:

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Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, University of Lagos, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**, is a record of original research carried out

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty who made it possible for me to finish this work in good health and my family intact, and to Mother Mary who intercedes with God on my behalf.

It is also dedicated to my wonderful husband, Uchenna Matthew Okafor (Omenyi) and my lovely sons and daughters: Ekene Harrison Okafor, Adaeze Vivian Akwari, Nwabufor Stephen Okafor, Chidiuso Cynthia Okafor and Onyinye Jennifer Okafor who supported me with their prayers throughout the writing of this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The title of this research is “Gender Portrayal in selected Early and Later Post-War Male and Female-Authored Igbo Novels: A Comparative Analysis”. Previous studies on gender portrayal in Igbo literature have concentrated on the image of female in male-authored works, thereby paying inadequate attention to the literature written by women. Consequently, the study examines gender portrayal in early male and female Igbo novels: Nzeako’s *Nkọlị*, Ubesie’s *Isi Akwụ Dara N’ala*, Meniru’s *Nwaeze* and Onwuchekwa’s *Chinaagorom* and later male and female Igbo novels: Nwadike’s *Adaeze* and Kammelu’s *Makwachukwu*. Some feminist scholars argue that literary enterprise is sexist; a view equally supported by the African womanists. The feminist position is that male writers, especially the early ones, present a lopsided view of gender, which is derogatory to the female gender. The study examines the manner in which the early and later male and female Igbo writers depict gender in their novels and the ideologies behind their positive or negative portrayals. The model of feminism employed in the study is Womanism. The three literary theories of Womanism: Ogunyemi’s African Womanism, Ogundipe-Leslie’s Stiwanism and Ezeigbo’s Snail-Sense Feminism are deployed to guide the analysis. This is because the theories are based on African culture and centred on gender balance and the maintenance of unity in the family. The study employs the content analytical method of research. The four early male and female-authored Igbo novels and two later male and female-authored Igbo novels are purposively selected using stratified sampling technique and content-analysis. The early post-war male Igbo writers portray men’s socio-cultural status, achievements and moral attributes, while women’s achievements and their contributions to the family and community are ignored. Specifically, the early male writers promote the cultural ideology which borders on patriarchy, gender role, prevailing attitudes and perception of gender that relegates women to the background. Consequently, non-compliant women are portrayed negatively as prostitutes, devilish, diabolical, gossipy and cantankerous. On the contrary, the early and later post-war female Igbo writers subvert the stereotypical presentation of women based on women’s experiences. The early and later female writers depict mainly the female characters positively as self-fulfilled in spite of their cultural limitations. The writers also construct a balanced picture of gender by equally presenting the male and female characters as achievers, though the male characters are further depicted negatively. The early female writers and later male and female Igbo writers equally portray their female protagonists as role model, intelligent, assertive and successful, thereby portraying the reality of women in contemporary Igbo society. It is established that the early post-war male writers portray the female characters mainly negatively in their novels more than the female writers. However, the early female and the later post-war male and female Igbo writers reconstruct the reality of the female gender which is misrepresented in the earlier male novels thereby breaking the glass ceiling which hinders women’s social progress.