



An Exploration of Women's pain and adversity in the selected novels of Buchi Emecheta

Akanksha Duhan ^{1*}, Dr. Sujata ²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of English, Manav Rachna Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad, Haryana, India

² Professor, Department of English, Manav Rachna Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad, Haryana, India

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history:

Received: 16-08-2025

Received in revised form: 03-09-2025

Accepted: 04-10-2025

Keywords:

Gender, Feminism, Pain, Women, Literature

The complicated lives of women and their painful realities are often coiled by cultural oppression, phallogocentric systems, and the enduring effects of colonialism. Women's pain is not only a distinct category, but it is encompassing a wide spectrum of experiences that can be entwined with gendered constructions. These challenges are often exacerbated by stereotypic portrayals of women in literature, which often reinforce their victimization. This paper delves into the portrayal of women's pain and adversity in the selected novels of Buchi Emecheta, a celebrated Nigerian writer for her lucid exploration of gender, tradition, culture, and socio-economic difficulties. Through an analytical viewpoint, the study examines how Emecheta's portrayal elucidates the varied hardships of African women, selectively in navigating repressive patriarchal systems, cultural obligations, and economic distress. The selected novels offer insight into the intersectionality of race and gender in creating women's experiences and identities. Devoting a feminist and postcolonial approach, the paper examines Emecheta's craft of resilient female characters who stand against systemic injustices while personifying the power and perseverance of womanhood. By concentrating on subjects like marital discord, motherhood, and the assertion of personal agency, this paper highlights that the fictional depiction of the origins and experiences of pain and agony sets out a broad perspective of ideological intersections. Moreover, this discourse supports the contemporary feminist ideologies that aim to make women's agony visible by giving meaning to the realities of gendered experiences and eventually creating a framework that promotes the healing of pain.

© 2025 The Authors. Published by IASE. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Introduction

Few human experiences stimulate the extreme anguish bonded with a perceived lack of control and endurance of helplessness- the true essence of pain and victimization. This emotion is intensely intricate in the novels of Buchi Emecheta, where women go through adversities and trauma under the oppressive forces of patriarchy, cultural oppression, and

racism. Owing to cultural obligations and forces that are not in her control, a woman is the one who endures misery and pain [1]. It is significant to understand and investigate African women's literary works, which unveil the process in which various writers have given a discourse and confronted concerns of female creativity, the notion of African women, and their colonial history. Buchi Emecheta's

persuasive narratives establishes the characters of Igbo women, who try liberation in spite of difficult challenges, emphasizing how these sufferings and experiences redefine their traditional roles of women, wives, mothers. In the course of this, we will acknowledge how Emecheta's narratives highlight the Igbo woman's characterization as strong and determined despite witnessing difficult circumstances. In this paper, we analyse on human implications of painful and adversity experience in the works of Emecheta. By drawing from her own life experiences, Emecheta knits stories that come across with the adversities faced by women in Igbo society. Emecheta's work denounces the cultural elitism of White Feminists who have an inclination towards African women's emancipation the dreary impact of imperialism in Nigeria; hence, the novels outweigh conventional Western feminist ideology. For the purpose of this paper, we lay our discussion within the boundary of African-centered critiquing the literature, and it does not fully align with Emecheta's literature as a definitive reflection of feminism. However, we locate our focus on the womanist theory demonstrated by Chikwenye Okonjo and Alice Walker

[2]. The Nigerian literature entails many theories and literary frameworks, an accumulation of different ideologies, such as African feminism, Womanism, Black feminism and so forth which merge in the direction of various scholars' viewpoint. In the background of this discourse is the position of African feminist concept in the confines of African women's writing [3]. Although Susan Arndt, an African feminist theorist examines and describes African feminism as a theory that takes into account African feminist literatures' heterogeneity simultaneously, the entity of African feminism is questioned by African womanist philosopher Cleonora Hudson-Weems, who enunciates that Eurocentric feminist approach was formed for specific White Women agendas and the possibility of blending feminism into African women concerns is very rare [4]. (1) Even though, this approach is debatable, it cannot be underestimated, as Buchi Emecheta and also Mariam Ba are often defiant and displeased to be called out as a feminist, their works unarguably serve to feminist discourse. Buchi Emecheta's concept of feminism varies from Western feminist theorists by prioritizing cultural distinctiveness, gender-based inter sectionality and

different culture and race [5]. She defines her feminism that is deeply rooted in the realms of African cultural contexts and called it womanism. On that account, within the pursuit of African-centred female struggle for self-liberation, self-actualization and womanhood lies an immense struggle to delineate unfolding ideologies and theories, a practice that, it is anticipated, will become more and more clearer and enlightened. Carole Boyce Davis believes that this sort of feminism “respects African woman’s status as mother but questions obligatory motherhood and the traditional favoring of sons.”

Literature review

Hooks, B. (1984) [1] in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* provides a foundational critique of traditional feminist thought, emphasizing the need to center the experiences of marginalized women, particularly women of color and working-class women. Hooks challenges the mainstream feminist discourse of the time for being predominantly focused on the experiences of white, middle-class women and advocates for an inclusive, intersectional approach. Her work is pivotal in redefining feminist theory to

consider the complex interactions of race, class, and gender.

Emecheta, B. (1977) [2] in *The Slave Girl* explores the intersection of gender, culture, and oppression in Nigerian society. Through the narrative of a young girl subjected to systemic patriarchal oppression, Emecheta highlights issues of female subjugation, autonomy, and resilience. Her work offers a literary perspective on African women’s struggles and serves as an important resource in understanding the lived experiences that inform African feminist theory.

Carole Boyce Davies (Date unspecified in source) [3] Boyce Davies, in the introduction to *Ngambika*, emphasizes the development of feminist consciousness within African literary criticism. She argues for the importance of recognizing African women’s voices and experiences as central to literary and cultural analysis. By situating African women’s narratives within broader social and historical contexts, her work provides critical frameworks for understanding how gender, colonialism, and race intersect in African literature.

Phillips, L. Ed. (2006) / Russo, S. (2009) [4] in *The Womanist Reader* and Russo’s review (2009) highlight the

contributions of womanist thought to feminist discourse. Womanism, which centers the experiences of Black women, extends feminist theory by addressing the dual oppressions of race and gender. Russo (2009) notes that Phillips' collection offers both theoretical and practical insights, emphasizing the relevance of womanist perspectives in understanding intersectional struggles and the importance of culturally grounded feminist praxis

Arndt, S. (Date unspecified in source) [5] Arndt's *The Dynamics of African Feminism* explores the evolving nature of feminist movements in Africa, highlighting how African women navigate social, political, and cultural challenges. The book examines diverse strategies of resistance, activism, and empowerment employed by African women across different regions and historical contexts. Arndt emphasizes the dynamism and heterogeneity of African feminism, countering stereotypes that frame it as monolithic or secondary to Western feminist discourses.

Frank, K. (1982) [6] in *The Death of the Slave Girl: African Womanhood in the Novels of Buchi Emecheta*, examines the portrayal of African womanhood in Emecheta's early

novels. Frank highlights the struggles of female protagonists against societal and patriarchal constraints, emphasizing themes of resilience, identity, and autonomy. This work situates Emecheta's literature within a broader discourse on gender and postcolonial African society, providing critical insights into the social realities faced by women.

Showalter, E. (1985/1988) [7] in *Towards a Feminist Poetics* develops a theoretical framework for feminist literary criticism. She advocates for the recognition of women's writing as a distinct tradition and emphasizes the importance of exploring female experiences, creativity, and expression in literature. Showalter's work contributes significantly to feminist theory by linking literary form with women's social realities, offering tools for analyzing gendered narratives, including African women's literature.

Buchi Emecheta – The Bride Price (1976), The Slave Girl (1977), The Joys of Motherhood (1979) [8] Emecheta's novels from the 1970s, including *The Bride Price*, *The Slave Girl*, and *The Joys of Motherhood*, explore the intersection of gender, culture, and colonial influence in Nigerian society. These works consistently address issues of female

oppression, forced marriage, motherhood, and societal expectations. Emecheta's narrative approach combines personal and societal struggles, providing a nuanced critique of patriarchal systems and reflecting the lived realities of African women during this period.

J. Adeola (1990) [9] in *Buchi Emecheta* from *In Their Own Voice: African Women Writers Talk*, provides an in-depth examination of Emecheta's literary contributions and thematic concerns. Adeola highlights Emecheta's focus on women's resilience and agency in the face of oppressive cultural and familial structures. The study contextualizes Emecheta's works within African feminist discourse, emphasizing the significance of women's narratives in shaping postcolonial literature and consciousness.

Africana Womanism (1993) [10] The release of *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* in 1993 marked a significant development in feminist theory by centering the experiences of African-descended women. Africana Womanism expands on mainstream feminism and womanism by emphasizing race, culture, and heritage, while advocating for self-reliance, family-centeredness, and community

engagement. This work provides a theoretical lens for interpreting African women's literature, including Emecheta's novels, within culturally grounded feminist perspectives.

Stratton, F. (1994) [11] in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, examines gendered dynamics in African literature, focusing on how women writers challenge patriarchal norms and negotiate identity in postcolonial contexts. The author explores the political and social implications of female narratives, emphasizing literature as a site of resistance and empowerment. Stratton's work provides analytical tools for understanding the interplay of gender, culture, and politics in African women's writing, including that of Emecheta.

The Joys of Motherhood (Oxford: Heinemann) [12] *The Joys of Motherhood*, published by Heinemann, remains one of Emecheta's seminal works, depicting the life of Nnu Ego and the complexities of motherhood within patriarchal Nigerian society. The novel critically examines the cultural expectations placed on women and the personal costs of fulfilling traditional roles. It is widely studied as a key text in African feminist literature for its

vivid portrayal of the struggles and resilience of women in a changing social landscape.

Case Study

The research uses qualitative data analysis techniques such as hypotheses and opinions to gain a deeper understanding of the selected text and to emphasise the impact of colonialism on black women's lives. Holst Petersen and Rutherford's Postcolonial Feminist perspective on black women's oppression under local hegemony and international influence provides a conceptual foundation for the debate to come. The primary text is closely examined in order to reveal British methods of disrupting the socio-cultural conditions of African people.

The Africans followed their religious credos for ages but multiple imperialist intrusions jeopardised their rich legacy. It would be inaccurate to assert that Christianity was introduced in Africa only in the nineteenth century [6]. Various written records talk about the presence of apostles in Africa much before the continent was colonised. For example, Baur records, "The Christian Church blossomed in North Africa for six centuries before the arrival of Islam in this region. In those early centuries C.E., Athanasius, Clement of Alexandria, Anthony, Pachomius from North Africa, Origen,

Tertullian, and Augustine were the pillars on which the universal Church were standing" (17). Just when people began to familiarise themselves with Christianity, the Arabs invaded Africa in the seventh century.

The mental configuration of the colonised population as deficient and benighted was not limited only to the colonial administrators and authors but evangelists also [7]. Daniel Kumler Flick inger in his missionary memoir mentions, "The only reason why our theological views are not as foolish and corrupting as theirs (Ethiopians), and that we are not believers in witchcraft, devil worship, and a thousand other foolish things, is simply because the light of Heaven shines upon us" (84). The chronicle speaks volumes about the deeply entrenched patronising attitude of the colonisers. The spread of Christianity during this time can also be attributed to the establishment of church buildings that largely facilitated Evangelisation [8].

Religion and Gender It has been amply emphasised that 'sex' refers to the biological difference between men and women while gender is a socially constructed category. Studying gender is important not only because it is pivotal to our existence but also on account of its being a major determinant of cultural, social and moral structuring. Almost every religion across the globe is androcentric, therefore, the reason behind re-reading, re-interpreting and re-writing the religious

texts by postmodern women authors is not far to seek. There were no pronounced gender differences in the African societies before the advent of the colonisers. This can be attested on the basis of women's participation in several outdoor and revenue generation activities. Women used to help men in tilling, sowing, harvesting and animal husbandry apart from looking after the household [9]. The adverse impact of Christianity on the lives of African women can be gauged by the privileges they lost in the name of religion. Marriage in African society was not just a transaction but an institution that bestowed social stability upon women. They exercised absolute authority in the household as matrons and played a significant part in economic endeavours too. Women also had the liberty to divorce their husband in case of negligence or violence and remarry. A few scholars refute the centrality of the feminine principle in the pre-colonial African society as bride-price and polygamy were among the then prevalent norms [10].

Subsequently, Northern Nigeria being the centre of pre-colonial Islamic empire named, the Sokoto Caliphate held the Middle East governance practising Shariat in high regard. Evidently, the differences became the means of antagonism since colonial times, well reflected by Moses Onchonu in his article, "Northern Nigerian Muslim Nationalist Leader Declared Nigeria 'the Mistake of 1914' while a Prominent Southern Nigerian Christian

Nationalist Figure Called Nigeria 'A Mere Geographic Expression' " (n.pag.). The broadened ethnic diversity imposing a singular forced identity has generatively fomented violence and terror [11]. Men in southern and Northern Nigeria were multiply jeopardised on the basis of race, region, religion, while adding to the cauldron women were additionally jeopardised on the basis of gender too. Clearly, the following thematic analysis discusses Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's attempt to examine the distorted identities of two Nigerian women – each belonging to a rival ethnicity, for the surgical implantation of singular identity in each [12].

An American scholar, Larry Diamond (b. 1951) limpidly explains in his scholarly work, *Class, Ethnicity, and Democracy in Nigeria* (1988): "When Southern Nigerians migrated to the North, whether they were Yoruba, Igbo, or an ethnic minority, Northern Muslims were forbidden on religious and administrative grounds to [not to] associate with Southerners, whom they [Northern Nigerians] were taught to regard as pagans and infidels" (26). Perspicuously, Adichie sets the story in the ancient city of Kano blazing riot between Southern Igbo and Northern Hausa. Setting the grounds for a spiteful riot, "when a man drove over a copy of the Holy Koran that had been dropped on the roadside, a man who happened to be Igbo and Christian" (5), the chapter intends to analyse the colonial policy. Chika, who is

studying medicine in America and has lately come to visit her aunt in Nigeria (Chika's birthplace) with her sister Nnedi, suddenly loses the track as religious riots break in the market. Unable to come to terms with the abrupt conundrum, "Riot! Trouble is coming, oh! They have killed a man!" (4), she drops oranges and handbag to climb the store window to seek refuge. Ignorant of the reason for the hasty outburst outside, Chika accidentally bumps into another mid-aged woman clambering in the same store after her. Comparing the inner space the store marked with the two women at a "silent stand-still" and the outer space the market, marked with the chaotic "shouting, running, overturning..

When Nnu Ego migrated to colonial Lagos, she encountered the change in gender roles assigned to her in her local Ibuza village. In Lagos, Nnu is forced to marry Nnaife, an English lord's servant, who washes under garments of his English Madam in Nnu's Ibuza village he didn't even deserve to be called a "man." Colonial Lagos proved to be a place of ultimate poverty for the Nigerian people. Nigeria had good economic conditions back at local villages with plenty of yams, wine and food and nobody would ever suffer or fell ill due to hunger. But Nnu's children had to suffer weakness and illness because of lack of food at Lagos and she had to set up small business to

cope up with these conditions. Women were also closely affiliated with farming and giving a helping hand to their men at work prior to colonisation. Their fertility and productivity were linked to farming agriculture. As Lagos represents the colonial environment and all the changes brought by the colonisation process in the lives of the people of Africa, which changed gender roles in multifaceted oppression and increased the burden on colonised women Emecheta integrates the effect of colonisation in the trials and challenges faced by her female character Nnu. Buchi Emecheta depicts colonial Lagos as a place where the protagonist, a woman, is confronted with a drastically different way of life brought on by British colonialism and imposed on Africans. In this new city, Lagos, Nnu Ego is portrayed as a defiant woman. She is subjected to dual colonisation: on the one hand, local patriarchal suppression, and on the other, the issues of life brought about by British colonists. Emecheta's novel spends a lot of time talking about these two issues that black women face. Emecheta contrasts the lives of Nigerian women before and after the British colonisation of the continent. Nnu Ego in Lagos represents the shifts in African women's interests

during and after colonisation, while Ona in Ibuza represents the generation of women before colonisation. It's worth noting that, despite the many challenges posed by the local Ibuza patriarchy, women wielded a disproportionate amount of influence, as symbolised by Ona. With the arrival of colonisation, women's influence in the African world began to dwindle. The novel, as Ogundele (2002) points out, tells the story of Ibo society as it emerges from the depths of myths and rituals to be transformed into a newer system of slavery (p.135). Nnu Ego enters a strange world of colonial Lagos, where her husband Nnaife does not have an honourable position in the white men's service. Nnu Ego is dealing with a new family structure, a house they don't own, and a life in which food scarcity is the norm. The negative effect of colonisation on specific gender roles can be seen in Nnu Ego's reaction when she meets Nnaife in a new Nigerian city. She encountered a man who was diametrically opposed to her perception of Ibuza men, a man who walked in: ...with a belly like a pregnant cow...His hair, unlike that of men at home in Ibuza, was not closely shaved...like that of a woman mourning for her husband. His skin

was pale, the skin of someone who had for a long time worked in the shade and not in the open air... (Emecheta 1979, p. 42). The picture of Nnaife depicts the negative effects of colonialism on Nigerians. At Ibuza, Nnu compares Nnaife to her previous husband... She was used to her long wiry Amatokwu...not this short, fat, stocky man [...] Nor, unlike men at Ibuza who had a healthy smell of wood and tobacco, did he smell healthier. He smells like he was over-washed and all soapy (Ibid, p. 44).”

The interactions between the colonised and the colonisers, as Nnu and Nnaife's relationship with the white masters demonstrates that it culminated only in extortion. Stress, intimidation, hate, and mistrust arose as a result of their connection. Nnaife's attitude toward his wife Nnu was influenced by his mistreatment by white masters. The white employers mistreated Nnaife, therefore he mistreated Nnu Ego in return. This is how oppression moved from one degree to another during colonisation. Nnu Ego, who has already been marginalised by local patriarchy and poverty in colonial Lagos, is now the target of yet another embarrassment. If we draw a hierarchy of how third-world women are oppressed by multiple oppressors,

we can see how white men, as exemplified by Meers, influence African men, as exemplified by Nnaife, who oppress Nnu Ego, who exemplifies black women as colonial subjects. The way of life that the British introduced created a form of friction and a lack of contact between husbands and wives. They became so preoccupied with making ends meet that they lost sight of the true spirit of conjugal relationships. An examination of the passage below shows how the British invasion destroyed native family ties: Like other husbands and wives in Lagos, Nnu Ego and Nnaife started growing slightly apart, not that they were that close at the start. Now each was in a different world. There was no time for petting or talking to each other about love. That type of family awareness which the illiterate farmer was able to show his wives, his household, his compound, had been lost in Lagos, for the joy of buying expensive lappas, and for the feel of shiny trinkets. Few men in Lagos would have time to sit and admire their wives' tattoos, let alone tell them tales of animals nestling in the forests, like the village husband who might lure a favourite wife into the farm to make love to her with only the sky as their

shelter, or bathe in the same stream with her, scrubbing one another's backs (p.52). In addition, native women are prevented from employment by colonists. They must, without a doubt, work to make ends meet, but in colonial Lagos, they lack capital and investment. Both domestic and workers positions, such as those at railways, are primarily provided to native men. As a result of traditional traditions and the colonial climate, Nnu Ego suffers twice.

Discussion

Florence Onyebuchi "Buchi" Emecheta is one of the most celebrated African born female writer. Born in Nigeria, Emecheta faced pain and adversity in her childhood as she lost her parents at a young age. She married Sylvester Onwardi in 1960 and moved to London in 1962, with her two children and joined her husband who was pursuing his studies there. She left her abusive husband at the age of 22 who burnt her first manuscript and exert herself to provide for her five children by working and writing. Emecheta's personal life experiences play an influential role in expressing her works of fiction, inspired by culture. A narrow understanding of Emecheta's struggle and sense of African culture is noteworthy of understanding her

inspiration of writing, an exposure of Igbo culture and values. Her representation of culture and tradition of Igbo society is influenced by her personal conquest, pain and sufferings; however, her purpose of writing is to uncover the subjugating system of Nigeria and highlight the common pain and hardships of Igbo women. Her three novels *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) reflects the changes an Igbo woman has to face in a male-dominated society with the advent of colonialism. In *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), Emecheta demonstrates the questionable joys the protagonist, Nnu Ego encounters in her marriages and how the conventional perception of a woman's status in pre-colonial Nigerian era was not relevant during the colonial era. She emphasizes the fact on how a Nigerian woman lost her societal status and role that were assigned to her in pre-colonial rule and did not benefit from the colonial power. As Nigerian society underwent changes, Igbo women continued to face adversity from the continuation of traditional roles as wives, mothers and financial providers reinforced their subordinate position in the society. These vast changes during the colonial period generated many problems for women.

One of the major challenges for a Nigerian female was helplessness to accept constrained imposed on women in the journey of motherhood. Emecheta, as an author questions the traditional nature of African society that bearing more children will give women more joy. In her interview with Adeola James, Emecheta remarked "In *Joys of Motherhood*, I created a woman who had eight children and died by the wayside." Emecheta reveals that even though having many children, her heroine, Nnu Ego faced miseries and died alone by the roadside. The protagonist does not embody a flawless depiction of African women, or mother and fail to adapt her life as a self-reliant Nigerian woman in a colonial set up. She is instead a suffering character, impelled to conduct her consciousness between the past and present belief systems. The writer, Florence Stratton in her analysis of *Joys of Motherhood* (1979) asserts that Emecheta "outsishes her conservative heroine [Nnu Ego]" for complying by the traditional roles of 'wife' and 'mother' as expected by the traditional Igbo society. The prospect of motherhood is integrally part of Nnu Ego's consciousness as Katherine Frank mentions, "The African woman without children is clearly better off dead, for she has no

intrinsic value of her own. The only power a woman possesses is her procreative power, and if she is unable to exercise it she is deemed useless and expendable, both in her own eyes and those of her culture.” Even though, a woman’s fortitude is not dependent on her ability to bear children, taking into consideration, her relative economic independence, it prevails a defining aspect of her identity and feminine consciousness. In fact, the great poignancy of novel’s ironically titled work rests in the protagonist’s incompetence to resolve the traditional and dignified idea of motherhood with unpleasant realities of urban life. Even though Emecheta may lack sincere efforts in her portrayal of Nnu Ego complex character, she doesn’t fail to highlight the impacts of colonialism on the existence of women who surrender themselves to their traditional duties and serve’s men’s interests. In view of this, it is well-suited for analysis of woman attributes in Nnu Ego’s character as she does exhibit solidity and resilience. Emecheta has used fiction as a tool to analyze, understand and express the pain, adversity and cultural traumas caused by colonialism, rigid traditional customs and myths. In her novel, *The Bride Price* (1976) Emecheta efficiently builds a narrative

that analyze the emotional and psychological pain that gender disparities that a woman can encounter, through the expedition of the protagonist, Aku-nna. The novel revolves around Akunna as she makes her way through Lagos and Ibadan within traditional society of Nigeria in the late 1950s. Aku-nna which literally mean “fathers’ wealth” is burdened by the oppressive custom of bride price and has no say to her own life. As described in the novel, bride price is a common practice in Africa, where the groom pays money, or transfer properties to the family of the bride as a bride price. This marriage tradition is part of African society. Although usually money is paid for bride price but items like farmlands, orchards, palm wines, animals are also given by the groom’s family. Akunna is subjected to victimization and fails in resisting the oppression forced upon her by her stepfather. She loses her spirit and surrenders to the patriarchal regimes and traditional customs of the society. Bell Hooks in her work ‘Feminist Theory for Morogon to Centre’ (1984) describe feminism as “a movement to end sexist oppression” (Peterson and Rutherford: 1986). This implies that the political intention of feminism is not mis and rist but to

acknowledge the pervasive prevalent sexist issues in the society. On the other hand, Showalter defines feminism culturally in her study, *Towards a Feminist Poetics* (1985) as “it is a self-conscious interest in and celebration of the values, beliefs, ideas, behavior uniquely, or traditionally characteristics of women”(ibid, 131). Additionally, Toni Morrison, a Black female writer has raised the sufferings of women in her works. Buchi Emecheta delves into the pain and experiences of Black women and represents the realities of Black women. This results to lifelong pain and adversity in the lives of African women. The female protagonist of Emecheta’s novel *Aku-nna* is shattered and depressed as she witnesses her father's death, mother’s pregnancy loss, unfortunate step father, and her own fate. ‘It is so even today in Nigeria: when you have lost your father, you have lost your parents. Your mother is only a woman, and women are supposed to be boneless. A fatherless family is a family without a head, a family without shelter, a family without parents, in fact a non-existing family.’ (Emecheta 1977: 25).

Conclusion

Africa is predominantly a patriarchal society where women are subjected to oppression, psychological trauma and

emotional burden. In this centralized analysis of Emecheta’s novels, a better understanding of African society and culture plays an important role in understanding the relationship of individual, society and traditional practices. The prescribed gendered roles and customs often validate gender disparity and gender stereotypes, representing women as passive contributor in the social structure. In many cases, women are subjected to oppression, mental and physical pain and prohibited to voice their opinion on marriage, children, and family concerns. The impact of colonialism not only altered the conventional role of women but also prompted the women to challenge the traditional roles of ‘wives’ and ‘mothers’ that are imposed on them and reevaluate their identities. Emecheta is an outstanding writer who portrays the characters of black women with honesty but doesn’t shy away from showing her disagreement and rage against traditional customs and gender stereotypic society. While her character Nnu Ego does not reflect female potential and liberation and characteristics of Igbo women completely, but she still embodies womanist traits of new image of women. While the analysis of her

works may indicate it as a social reality, there, I believe is definitely a scope of improvement for women's societal, cultural and psychological well-being, as reflected in the character of Adaku in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) who debunks the fallacy of patriarchy by standing against male-dominance. If a woman is given power and authority, she is not only valued

and respected, but also rises above her social tendencies. Adaku achieves this status through her trading ability. They confront the misconceptual attitude of men of Nigerian male characters, vehemently giving the impression that the existing gender expectations and inequalities is faded and disable women to achieve their goals.

References

1. Hooks, B. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*. New York: South End Press.
2. Carole Boyce Davies. "Introduction: Feminist Consciousness and African Literary Criticism," in *Ngambika*, p. 9
3. Emecheta, B. (1977). *The Slave Girl*. London: Allison and Busby
4. RUSSO, S. (2009). [Review of *The Womanist Reader*, by L. Phillips]. *Feminist Teacher*, 19(3), 243–245. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40546104> L. Ed. Philips, *The Womanist Reader*, New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 47.
5. *THE DYNAMICS OF AFRICAN FEMINISM* by Susan Arndt (HARDCOVER)
6. *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* was released in 1993, *The Bride Price* (1976),
7. *The Slave Girl* (1977), and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979)
8. J. Adeola. "Buchi Emecheta," in *Their Own Voice: African Women Writers Talk*. London: Currey, 1990, p. 43.
9. Showalter, E. (1985). *Towards a Feminist Poetics*. New York: Pantheon. (1988).
10. *The Joys of Motherhood*. Oxford: Heinemann.
11. F. Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*. London: Routledge, 1994, p.117.
12. Frank, K (1982). *The Death of the Slave Girl: African Womanhood in the Novels of Buchi Emecheta*. World

Literature Written in English.

21(3), 476-497.