



## Dramatizing Psychic Spaces: Interface between Spousal Relationship and Mental Health in Bode Sowande's *The Spellbinder*

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**Abstract.** The intersection between mental health and literature constitutes the body of contemporary dramatic literature. The theatre has been a very potent platform for dramatizing different human experiences, including medical and health realities. Literature has been generally perceived as an invaluable tool that orientates the people on the adverse effects of mental health disorder in people. The link between family relationship and mental health appears to be a significant aspect of the theatrical conversation on human health experiences. This paper examines Bode Sowande's play, *The Spellbinder*, discussing the types of spousal relationships depicted, and the impact of such relationships on the psychological health of the various characters. The study adopted Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis, to account for the implication of the spousal relationships in the play on the mental health of the characters. The primary drama text, Sowande's *The Spellbinder*, was selected through purposive sampling, and subjected to qualitative literary analysis, paying attention to characters' conducts and utterances. The analysis revealed that there are instances of strained spousal relationships in the play, which plunge the characters into different forms of mental health conditions like maniac depressive and schizophrenic psychosis. While Damilare manifests guilt-induced maniac depressive psychosis which was engendered by his adulterous relationship with Adura, the wife of his friend, Adamu, Adamu and Adura show signs of schizophrenic psychosis—Adamu's psychotic state is triggered by agony of betrayal by his wife while Adura's madness is also guilt-induced. The playwright deploys flashback, interior monologue/soliloquy, dialogue, action and characterization as dramatic devices, to convey the characters' mental states. The theatre, as demonstrated through Bode Sowande's *The Spellbinder*, explores the link between spousal relationship and mental health.

**Keywords:** Literature and psychiatry; Psychodrama; Spousal relationship; Nigerian drama; Bode Sowande

### 1. Introduction

The nexus between spousal relationship and mental health constitutes the body of a good number of Nigerian literary works, especially drama texts. Though there seems to be plethora of publications in the field of clinical psychology and psychiatry on the connection between spousal relationship and mental health condition, scholarly efforts on the subject in Nigerian drama have been inadequate. Spousal relationship is both a social and biological construction that human can hardly do without. In view of this, it becomes imperative for this paper to examine the interface between spousal relationship and mental health challenges in Nigeria drama, with specific focus on Bode Sowande's play *The Spellbinder*.

Drama or the theatre has been very invaluable in portraying mental health condition. In Femi Oyebo's *Madness at the Theatre* (2012), he depicts the role of drama in conveying psychiatric subjects. Oyebo's study has been a major contribution to the role of drama in portraying mental health conditions. Kekeghe (2018) devotes a chapter to analyze representation of mental health condition in Nigerian drama, what he regards as "humoured madness" (54). Kekeghe further identifies different socioeconomic factors that trigger madness in people like socio-political tension, anxiety, obsession, war, economic pressures and inter-gender skirmishes (54). Remarkably, Kekeghe's research which examines the depiction of mental health conditions in Nigeria literature, acknowledge the significance of dramatic literature in such representation.

Essentially, spousal relationships have been portrayed in dramatic texts right from the Greek tradition, though the renaissance era as captured in the works of William Shakespeare and the modern period, is depicted in the dramatic expression of Tennessee William. Since Nigerian Literature is socially committed, it reflects both the sociological and the psychological components of individual and the society (Oyebode; 2009, Kekeghe; 2017). In Nigeria, the culture of espousing spousal relation cannot be overlooked, because virtually all playwrights present family issues which fall out from spousal affairs. Thus, the portrayal of mental health experiences attests to the social function of literature. Gender issues like spousal relationship is part of social experiences which literary writers reflect.

Spousal relationship finds its root in marriage. This is the union between man and woman as enduring companions. Marriage requires courtship or dating, but it must find expression in traditions. The emergence of marriage has its existence in different period in history. The Greek believed that a man must be attached to its companion with the doctrine of help mates. The Romantic period in history is of the opinion that before a man could contribute meaningfully to its society, he must find fulfillment in union. This will avail him the true essence of existence which is beauty. The Medieval scholars believed that women should have dual responsibilities to religion and marriage. The Puritans view marriage as a very blessed relationship that give marital partners an opportunity to love and forgive. As a result of this, many people hold the view that regardless of how they enter matrimony, they are bond into an agreement of legality, as well as commitment and challenge. They are bond to agree with terms and condition of marriage in order to achieve companionship, procreation and relative peace of mind. Mental health in marriage is an integral part of health and well-being, yet it has been neglected in Africa. Therefore, literary or dramatic representation of the experience helps to illuminate it.

Contemporary drama texts in Nigeria have been committed to the prevailing mental health challenges in the society, including experiences of mental health. In line with the submission of scholars, mental health disorders are caused by a number of social factors, including spousal relationship, which manifests in the form of domestic violence, disappointment, cheating and other negative effects. Literary texts written by playwrights are often used to create awareness about mental health disorder. Femi Osofisan's *A Restless Run of the Locust* (2002), Niyi Adebajo's *A Monologue on the Dunghill* (2008) and Bode Sowande's *Spell Binder* (2021) are some of such plays

that explore mental health conditions and their social and environmental triggers. However, it has been discovered that most of the existing works on mental health in Nigerian drama have not given adequate attention to the subject of spousal relationship. Oyebode (2012) acknowledges different triggers of madness in Nigerian drama but no mention is given to spousal relationship. Kekeghe (2018) and (2020) also show different socio-economic factors that trigger mental disorders as represented in Nigerian literature. Though Kekeghe acknowledges the subject of spousal betrayal as a trigger of mental disorder, his focus is on short stories. Kekeghe submits that Tanure Ojaide uses these stories to stimulate public health awareness on the various causes of mental health disorder in the society. The current study, therefore, examines the role of drama and theatre in portraying the intersection between spousal relationship and mental health experiences, with a critical focus on Bode Sowande's play, *The Spellbinder*. Within this context, the present paper seeks to open up new vistas for spousal relationship by interrogating the role of drama and the theatre in enforcing psychological health in marital setting. The selected text for analysis is Bode Sowande's *The Spellbinder*. Specific objectives of the study are to ascertain the nature of spousal relationships depicted in Bode Sowande's play, *The Spellbinder*, and discuss their manifestations on the mental health of the characters involved; highlight dramatic features utilised by the playwright in conveying the subject of mental health. The study is relevant to different academic fields, including literature, clinical psychology and medicine (especially psychiatry). It also promises to create awareness on the common triggers of mental health conditions.

The primary text, Bode Sowande's *The Spellbinder*, was purposively selected and subjected to qualitative literary analysis. Secondary materials in the fields of literature, psychology and psychiatry add credence to the analysis.

This paper adopts Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis as its theoretical framework to account for the negative effects of spousal relationship on the mindscape of the characters involved. According to the view of Nwankwo and Ignatius (2018, p. 2), "Psychoanalytical theory is based on mental disorder that undergoes conflict that occurred in the patient's childhood." Freud argues that conflict is inevitable within the personality of every human being. This is because personality is made up of three conflicting parts—the id, the ego and the superego. Most of these conflicts take place during childhood. If the ego succeeds in resolving the conflict, the child will grow up to be

normal. If the ego fails to resolve a conflict, especially one over important issue, the unresolved conflict will develop in a neurosis or psychosis. The233tress233tt is usually so painful experience that patient experienced. It pushes one into unconscious area of the mind. The conflict manifests itself in the form of psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety, depression and compulsion. To help cure the patient, the psychoanalyst must bring the conflict out into open, so that the patient can understand and solve the problem (Theo, 1995, p. 279). Social 233tresss or crises like divorce, unemployment, rape and death of loved have been acknowledged by psychiatrists and psychologists as common factors that engender mental illnesses (Oyebode, 2009 and Oluwatura, 2008).

The theatre has revealed the significance of the mind in the overall function of people in the society (Oyebode, 2012). Psychological factors have to do with cognitive reasoning and emotional influence. A person's upbringing and stressful incidents can lead to mental derailment. Environmental or social factors have to do with social menace happening within the society, which are capable of causing mental disorders. These include: death, divorce, anger, loneliness, low self- esteem and cultural imbalance. Cognitive reasoning is vital in explaining the emotion of mentally abused persons. In this context, this factor refers to individuals' beliefs in their ability to cope with excessive demands caused by the traumatic events in their environment. The tenets of Psychoanalysis are invaluable to this study.

## 2. Analysis and Discussion

Bode Sowande's *The Spellbinder* explores different episodes of mental health and therapeutic strategies induced by human and spousal relationship. Through the effective deployment of dramaturgical resources like dialogues, action, scenic descriptions, humour, characterisation and flashback, Sowande uses *The Spellbinder* to highlight mental health challenges, starting from the family, down to the larger society. Though there are different cases of mental health disorders and clinical procedures depicted in the play, the thrust of the play's action is the psychotic state of Adamu and his wife, Adura, which is engendered by Adura's adulterous relationship with Damilare, Adamu's childhood friend. While Adamu suffers depression, which escalates to psychosis as a result of the wife's betrayal, Adura manifests guilt-induced psychosis. In the play, Damilare also manifests guilt instincts, which plunge him into depression and eventual death.

## 3. Nature of Spousal Relationships and their Manifestations on the Characters' Mental Health

From the opening of the play, the audience is exposed to the events of mental health challenges and tension that run through the family of Damilare. In what is supposed to be an atmosphere of merriment, presaging the wedding ceremony of Damilare's son, Lanke, and Abayomi Ganzalo's daughter, Bimbola, the audience is left to experiment with a tense domestic environment that shows signs of mental health disorder. It is discovered that Damilare's adulterous relationship with Adura, his friend's wife, leads to a child, Lanke, the very groom being portrayed at the beginning of the play. Damilare's wife, Remilekun, who brings up Lanke, the son of a ravingly mad woman Adura, is afraid to appear in the wedding as the groom's mother, envisaging possible appearance of the groom's biological mother and family. In the midst of this, Lanke is unaware that Remilekun is not her biological mother, a secret mixed with guilt that has plunged Lanke's father, Damilare into depression. Remilekun's quest to let out the secret to Lanke in the eve of his wedding eventually escalates the psychic tension leading to Damilare's sudden death of stroke. At the beginning of the play, the sexual betrayal manifested by Damilare against his friend, Adamu, takes a greater part of his mental health. He exhibits guilt-instincts which make him to take to excessive consumption of alcohol. The emotional complex of his wife, Remilekun, appears to have aggravated Damilare's mental disintegration. The dialogue involving Damilare, Mama Damilare (his mother) and Remilekun (his wife) unfolds the psychological degeneration of Damilare, which is rooted in the sexual relationship he had with Adamu's wife, leading to the birth of Lanke, the groom. Remilekun declares: Remilekun: Damilare, this secret is destroying your health

Your inner tension is so hyper that often it is drug resistant  
This secret confronts me too.  
Especially tonight!  
Tomorrow my heart will be pounding in my chest  
(*Whispers loudly*) Lanke is not my biological son!  
(p. 3)

Remilekun's assertion in the extract above underscores the fact that Damilare harbours some psychological strains engendered by the guilt of having a sexual relationship with Adamu's wife. The fact that the relationship produces a son, Lanke, is a double jeopardy, which Damilare has to suffer. Damilare's manifestation of psychological depression makes him to indulge in excessive intake of alcohol.

The following dialogue conveys Damilare display of psychotic symptoms:

REMILEKUN: You see, Mama.  
He is drinking the brandy like it is water.  
DAMILARE: I am no alcoholic.  
REMILEKUN: You are an insomniac!  
You don't sleep.  
You have not slept for years!  
MAMA DAMILARE: Not slept for years?

...  
Damilare, my son, is it true?  
You find it difficult to sleep?

...  
REMILEKUN: And then, Mama, he has long, very long spells of insomnia.  
Sleeplessness that defies any medication.  
Mama, during the day, he will cat nap in his office penthouse.  
During those spells, Mama, he is a chronic warrior at home. (p. 4).

The dialogue above reveals that Damilare displays signs of insomnia engendered by his depressive state. Insomnia is a mental disorder, which is commonly triggered by depression. Insomnia manifests in people in the form of acute sleeplessness. People who show symptoms of insomnia hardly sleep well. Through the effective appropriation of dialogue, Bode Sowande realistically depicts the psychological states of the characters. For instance, Damilare's wife, Remilekun tells Mama Damilare that Damilare exhibits "very long spells of insomnia" which "defies any medication" (4). The implication is that, the mental disintegration of Damilare affects his wife and the entire family. Remilekun also reports that Damilare manifests symptoms of maniac depression such as aggression, irritability and violence: "During those spells, Mama, he is a chronic warrior at home." (4).

Remilekun's sense of insecurity as a result of her childlessness may have spiraled Damilare's mental disintegration. For instance, upon her revealing the secret to Lanke, Damilare's mental health condition escalates. He eventually dies of a stroke. As stated earlier, his manifestation of symptoms of depression like insomnia (sleep disorder) and aggression is as a result of his committing adulterous act with Adura, the wife of Adamu. He keeps that in his mind for years without sharing it with anybody except his wife and mother. This generates madness, as he cannot sleep for months till the day Lanke is about to get married to his wife, Bimbola. Mama Damilare then reveals the true identity of the biological father and mother to Lanke thus: "I took my son, your father Damilare to Remilekun his wife, with you, the two-day-old baby. Your mother was the wife of another man. Your father

committed adultery with a married woman. Lanke, you were that child of destiny." (p. 13).

It can be argued that besides the guilt-instincts that provoked Damilare's mental degeneration, his relationship with his wife does not add much value to his mental health. This is so because the wife is emotionally disturbed by her childlessness, and exhibits feeling of insecurity in the family. Remilekun's insistence to reveal the secret to Lanke that she is not his biological mother is as a result of the insecurity she manifests. This, in a way, generates tension in their family, aggravating Damilare's mental health disorder, and eventually leading to his death. Remilekun confesses the tension in the home to Damilare's mother, Mama Damilare:

REMILEKUN: Mama, my husband and I carry a heavy burden in our hearts  
It is killing him.  
It is wearing me out.  
MAMA DAMILARE: (*Big sigh*) Ahh.

I know.  
I know.  
The deep coils of our stomach hold the secret of Lanke's birth.  
REMILEKUN: (*Rises, peeps here and there to see if anyone is eavesdropping*). Mama, Lanke thinks I am his mother.  
MAMA DAMILARE: You are his mother, Remilekun.  
DAMILARE: Remilekun! (p. 3).

The dialogue above confirms that there is tension in the family of Damilare, which is triggered by the secret of Lanke's birth and his biological mother. The role of Remilekun in this spousal relationship does not seem to remedy Damilare's condition. This is because Remilekun, like Damilare, nurses her mental stress arising from her feeling of insecurity. Thus, Remilekun refuses to appear as the groom's mother in the wedding that comes up the next day:

REMILEKUN: I shall not be on the high table!  
MAMA DAMILARE: Why?  
It is your day of celebration.  
A day of celebration, merriment and unforgettable joy.  
REMILEKUN: Tomorrow, I don't want to be an impostor!  
DAMILARE: Remilekun, take hold of yourself!  
REMILEKUN: My self is not taking hold of me!  
I cannot keep this secret any more. (p. 6).

As shown in the dialogue above, Damilare's wife, Remilekun adds to his mental stress. Bode Sowande uses the play to show the importance of spousal relationship on individuals' mental health. The tension

in Damilare's home seems to have escalated as a result of the unhealthy nature of his spousal relationship. A characteristic gloom occasionally runs through the family. The pensive atmosphere of Damilare's home worsens his mental health state, leading to his eventual development of stroke and sudden death.

A very significant part of the play is the psychosis of Adamu and Adura which is the result of spousal betrayal. While Adamu becomes psychotic as a result of his wife's (Adura's) committing adultery with his friend, Damilare, Adura's psychosis is induced by guilt instinct. Psychosis is a severe mental condition that is concerned with a radical collapse of the ego leading to irrational actions and conducts (Mbanefo, 1991). Common forms of psychosis are manic depression, schizophrenia and affective disorder (Olatawura, 2008). The spousal betrayal experienced in Sowande's *The Spellbinder* has a profound negative effect on the mindscape of the characters. As evident in the play, Adamu becomes a regular psychiatric patient after the wife's betrayal. Through the resources of flashback, a dramaturgical feature deployed by Sowande, the audience is kept abreast of the triggers of Adamu's psychotic condition. Adamu addresses Damilare after having a sexual relationship with Adura, Adamu's wife. The following extract conveys Adamu's agony, which later escalates to psychosis:

ADAMU: Dear old friends, or should I say dear old foe  
I have a spy camera in my house  
You and Adura stabbed me in the heart the very dear day  
You made love on my matrimonial bed  
I visited a psychiatrist the very next day because  
I felt I was going mad  
The rest is now history in the recording of your sex  
And romance under my roof  
They will serve my divorce purposes (p. 89).

As evident in the extract above, Damilare, Adura's husband's best friend, commits adultery with Adura on her matrimonial bed. Adamu finds out through the in-built camera he planted in the house. This eventually plunges him into mental disintegration. The psychotic symptoms manifested by Adamu and Adura are of the schizophrenic category. This is evident in their exhibition of perceptual disorder like visual and auditory hallucinations. In *The Spellbinder*, Bode Sowande effectively creates what Kekeghe (2018) refers to as "sociological and psychological dimensions of reality" (p.1). Sowande realistically explores the inner conflicts of the characters in relation to social events around them.

The guilt instincts and the dissolving of the characters' ego in the play bear spiritual connotation through the symbolic portrayal of the spellbinder. As a result of the sexual betrayal manifested by Adura and Damilare, Adamu is said to cast a spell of madness on Adura through the effort of the spellbinder. Here, the spellbinder implies the guilt consciousness that will keep haunting Adura. Spellbinder also takes the form of the hallucinatory traits manifested by the characters, especially Adura and Adamu, which underscores the collapse of their ego (the rationality principle). In the play, the spellbinder, which symbolizes the spirit of madness, reveals its character trait as an agent of darkness that occasionally appears as a spirit to frighten Adura and Adamu. Adura's state of madness becomes heightened to the extent that she sees spirits incognito of herself. She begins to manifest perceptual disorder like visual and auditory hallucinations which are common symptoms of schizophrenic psychosis. Self-talks, thought-broadcast and the sight of invisible things are common hallucinatory symptoms that characterise schizophrenia (Olatuwara, 2008). Through scenic description and effective appropriation of dialogues, Bode Sowande conveys Adura's psychotic state, manifesting symptoms of perceptual disorders:

*(Daytime. Adura, the young woman in her twenties. She is a harmless demented person. A fine gleaming white cord is knotted around her waist and thus sags in its link to Adura 2.*  
*Adura 2 is radii away and she will in the scene*  
*Be on the circumference of Adura's positions. This is repeated in respective ensuing scenes where Adura is mentally ill.)*  
...  
Adura 2: See what my husband has done to me  
Adura: Just see how I sit here  
Adura2: Just see how I stand here  
Adura: I am also standing  
Adura2: I am also sitting (P. 44)

The excerpt above attests to the fact that Adura's psychotic state is triggered by her strained relationship with her husband, Adamu. Her adulterous relationship with Damilare is the root of the damage in her marriage, which further engenders her madness. This dialogue is a recreation of Adura's inner crisis, which manifests in the form of hallucinations. It shows that her mind is gravely damaged, and it affects her thought-process. The dissolving of Adura's ego (her rationality principle) makes her to manifest irrational, uncoordinated thoughts that lie within the domain of her id (the unconscious). The disintegrated mind of Adura, and her display of perceptual disorder is further depicted in the following dialogue:

Adura: Who are you?  
 Where are you coming from?  
 Where are you going?  
 Queen: We are creatures  
 You created us  
 Adura: You are so funny  
 Me, Adura created you?  
 Queen: Yes, you created us in your head  
 We live inside your head...  
 Your head is a cosmos of thoughts  
 Gleefully as you thought of us you brought us into a  
 magnificent fantasgomora (p.45)

The dialogue above underscores the psychological crisis of Adura in the play. Evidently, her mind witnesses a radical breakdown as a result of her sexual betrayal of her husband, Adamu. Guilt-instinct is a major propeller of Adura's mental condition. She manifests schizophrenic symptoms like hallucinations by seeing invisible beings in the image of herself. This is an act of psychosis. Adura's hearing of strange voices and communicating with invisible persons are symptoms of hallucination, which attest to the splitting of her mind:

ADURA: (*Holds her head in anguish.*)  
 (*To the Queen*)  
 I am looking for myself.  
 My husband threw away myself.  
 ADURA 2: I am here.  
 Adura, I am here.  
 ADURA: (*To Queen.*)  
 I hear my voice.  
 I am looking for myself. (p. 47)

The characterisation of Adura into two— Adura and Adura 2— underscores the dissolving of Adura's mental disintegration. This is why she laments that "I am looking for myself." (p. 47). She acknowledges the fact that the root of her mental crisis is tied to her strained spousal relationship, caused by her adulterous lifestyle. This is evident in her declaration that "my husband threw away myself" (p. 47). Adura's case needs urgent rehabilitation by a psycho-analyst. This professional will understudy her health status with the use of potent drugs and bed rest.

Sowande uses the play to create awareness on the need to strengthen mental health care. The playwright emphasizes the role of competent psychiatrists in the society, for the overall mental wellbeing of individuals. Adura's betrayed husband, Adamu, is a regular patient in a psychiatric hospital. After diagnosing him as a psychotic patient, he regularly frequents health center for resuscitation against mental disorders. Dr. Helen Michael and her father appear to have treated him as a psycho-patient thirty years back.

Since he keeps reflecting on the sexual betrayal by his wife, it becomes extremely difficult for him to recuperate from his mental health disorder. He continues to nurse hatred and vendetta towards his friends Damilare and Adura. This is revealed with the use of flashbacks:

ADAMU: I have been speaking to psychiatrists for about thirty years.  
 And now, I see the daughter of the man who treated me thirty years ago.  
 If you can permanently send off the spellbinder,  
 I shall buy you a mansion of your choice  
 I CAN AFFORD IT.  
 HELEN: Belief sir is an experience of choice,  
 Of faith perhaps  
 The spellbinder is not an entity.  
 ADAMU: A FIGMENT OF MY IMAGINATION  
 (p.65-66).

Adamu's flirtatious lifestyle with different ladies and the lack of adequate attention to his wife is a major cause of the wife's committing adultery with Adamu's friend, Damilare. So, besides the pain of betrayal which stimulates him to be vengeful, Adamu also has his own share of guilt. The agony of witnessing his wife indulging in sexual relationship with his friend and the self-guilt of not having enough time for his wife affect Adamu's mental plane. The spellbinder, which Adamu refers to as "a figment of imagination", is a reflection of his crumbled mind. That is, like Adura, it is Adamu's constant mental reflection on the anguished experiences that triggers reactive depression, which escalates to psychosis. Sowande's effective appropriation of flashback technique helps to account for the social factor that triggers that characters' mental illness as well as the gradual level of escalation.

The therapeutic strategies adopted in the play underscore a significant part of mental health. Helen, a competent psycho-analyst, after consultation and diagnosis on Adamu's mental health, expresses the need for Adamu to forgive his wife. By implication, forgiveness in this sense is the first step to psychological recovery. She advises Adamu to have a spouse, to create healthy companionship. Dr Helen stresses that a man is expected to be married, father a child and have a mutual love for his family and extended family to live a healthy life. The spellbinder is further given a spiritual undertone in the play. Adamu narrates that the spellbinder is created by his father because his servant impregnated his favourite wife. Since that time the spellbinder has been existing in their family cycle. This psycho-spiritual portrayal of the spellbinder attests to the thin-line between "spirituality and psychiatry" in African society

(Kekeghe, 2022). Spellbinder is the charm the grandfather used to torment his favourite wife as a result of adultery. This psycho-spiritual perspective is reflected in the dialogue below:

HELEN: Your great-grandfather could not forgive his youngest wife?

ADAMU: He was the one who created the spellbinder and infused it in our bloodline.

HELEN: Seven generations will transmit this curse?

ADAMU: I belong to the fourth-generation

A woman who loves me should be faithful to me (p.95)

However, the findings derived from Adamu's mental health status by Helen, the psychoanalyst, are that "he has had a phobia for female sexual experience for about thirty years" and Individual's experiences and life are shaped by culture. Culture cuts across all ages, and it determines values, attitudes and behaviour. It describes and determines psychopathology which influences the general attitude of people within the society. Culture plays an important role in how certain populations and societies view, perceive and process sexual acts as sexual violence. Adamu re-aligned negatively with the culture of his forefathers. A generation ahead of him created the spellbinder, and in his imagination, believes in its potency. While this cannot be subjected to empirical interpretation, it is possible to ascertain that self-guilt and agonies caused by sexual betrayals, are the common triggers of the psychoses in Sowande's play, *The Spellbinder*.

The playwright exposes the discrimination against mental health patients in Nigeria. Yomi Gazzalo, father to Bimbola, the bride, insists that the wedding ceremony should be called off, so that Bimbola will not marry Lanke, the son of a mad woman, Adura. Bimbola remains resolute to her cause, that irrespective of the family background of Lanke, she will marry him. Teresa, her mother, supports the view of her daughter. She reminds Yomi that the fact that Lanke's mother is a mad woman should not derail the love affair between him and their daughter:

TERESA: Unconditional love will destroy the most potent curse

Yes, Yomi Gazzalo

I will not allow you to throw my daughter into mental depression whose end no one

Can predict I am her mother. (P.21)

Teresa goes on to orientate her husband about her experience with mental health. According to her, anybody with a mental disorder should not be left alone. They deserve the love of the society. Mental

disorder patients should be taken care of for society to experience positive growth in the area of human capacity development. In her view, she reminds Gazzalo, her husband, that she was once a post-partum psychosis when Bimbo was born "...mentally out of sync for about six hours" due to the stress of childbirth" (p.19). The character of Teresa is used to explore the positive impact of healthy spousal relationship on individuals' mental health.

#### 4. Relevance of Dramatic Devices in Portraying the Subject of Mental Health in the Play

In *The Spellbinder*, Bode Sowande utilises different dramatic devices like interior monologue, soliloquy, flashbacks, characterization, dialogues and action, to convey the mental health issues in *The Spellbinder*. Interior monologue or soliloquy involves a character engaging in self-talks. This technique helps to ascertain the mental status of the characters. For instance, all the characters that manifest different mental health disorders in the play— Adamu, Adura and Damilare— engage in different self-talks in the play. This is more common in the character of Adamu and Adura, where the spellbinder, a metaphor for psychosis, is used to speak their mind. For instance, the character of Adura splits into two— Adura and Adura 2, a strategy that is used by the playwright to reflect the compartments of Adura's crumbling mind. This falls within Sigmund Freud's compartmentalization of the human mind into the id, ego and super-ego.

Flashback is also utilized in Sowande's *The Spellbinder*, to ascertain the triggers of the characters' mental conditions. The analysis reveals that flashbacks are used by the playwright to show social factors (negative spousal relationships) and the gradual descent of the characters into psychosis. The historical reflections on the characters' experiences through the device of flashback, help in ascertaining the characters' psychological states.

Dialogues various conversations of the characters help to show the quality of their minds. Through dialogues, the playwright reveals the mental conditions of the characters. For instance, Remilekun affirms that her husband, Damilare, is depressed and insomniac, which is a mental condition that is characterized by acute sleeplessness. The utterances of the characters are used to ascertain their mental states. The audience gets to know of the triggers of Adamu's and Adura's psychosis through their utterances and the utterances of other characters in the play. So, dialogue is an

effective technique deployed by Bode Sowande to communicate the subject of mental health.

Characterization and action are effective dramatic devices appropriated in the play. Through characterization, the playwright is able to explore the psychic components of the characters' mind. The various characters manifest actions, utterances and conducts that are socially and psychologically realistic. In essence, both the telling (explicit) and showing (action) methods of characterization are utilized by the playwright to communicate the subject of mental health. The telling or action method of characterization enables the audience to know the status of the character through what he or she says about him/herself and what other characters say about him/her. The action or showing method enables the audience to know about a character through what the action or conducts of the character.

## 5. Conclusion

The discussion above shows that Nigerian drama conveys the interplay of spousal relationship and mental health. This has been demonstrated with Bode Sowande's *The Spellbinder*. Such dramatic reflection of Nigerian psychological realities attests to the psychosocial function of literature. Mental Disorder is a deadly disease that currently ravages the Nigerian society. It finds its head in all strata of the society. Health officials over the years have been trained and re-trained to find a lasting solution to this deadly incident. Dramatists are not left out in the quest to facilitate mental wellbeing in the society. Most of them write plays to sensitize the public on measures to take against this trend. Sowande's handling of dialogues and psyches of the characters give the audience the right perception that madness is real, especially when loved ones fall into the predicament. Adamu whose wife caved into the advances of his friend, falls into depression and his mind turns into a spellbinder, which metaphorically depicts psychosis. Despite his wealth, he struggles to regain his mental health. His psychiatrist passes away and bequeaths him as a patient to his daughter, Helen who is also a psychiatrist. While Damilare manifests guilt-induced maniac depressive psychosis which was engendered by his adulterous relationship with Adura, the wife of his friend, Adamu, Adamu and Adura show signs of schizophrenic psychosis— Adamu's psychotic state is triggered by agony of betrayal by his wife while Adura's madness is also guilt-induced. Adamu

represents one of those Nigerians whose mental challenge may be a creation of their mind, a reaction to an event that has created the spellbinder in his head. The resolution comes from the assurance that his head was playing a trick on him, this shows that the mind rules the body.

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