



***'Adie ba l'okun; ara o r'okun - ara o r'adie'* – A Socio-Cultural Dissection of Gender Stereotypes and its Implications for the Contemporary Nigerian Society**

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Abstract. Exposure to various cultures, civilization, and technological developments has brought in diverse knowledge and experiences to Africa in contemporary times. These intrusions have far reaching negative implications for us as a people especially as it regards authenticating and propagating our values and identity. To this end, it is only apt to assert that unlike the roles and essence of gender assertion and propagation that stood us out as Africans in the past, socio-cultural factors such as education, ethnicity and economic status amongst others have come to be indices for continually redefining and propagating gender and its roles contextually. Thus, this new phenomenon which wears the gab of gender stereotyping, is catalytic in family bound. This paper therefore utilizes a sociological gender conceptual framework to analyse selected works of Ahmed Yerima and Ezenwanebe Osita, examining perceived gender stereotypical performances especially in the contemporary Nigeria. The work critically analyses identified characters in Ahmed Yerima's *The Mirror Cracks* and Ezenwanebe's *Adaugo* vis-a-vis their actions, in the light of the theoretical frameworks of hegemonic masculinity and African Womanism under the ambience of the social reality of the present-day Nigeria. The implications of gender stereotype in the analysis is used to evaluate and interrogate factors responsible for individual and family disorientation and disillusionment while advocating for a critical revisit to the gender theories in Africa that shall tilt towards solving the peculiar problems of family units in Africa and by extension the society at large. The paper concludes that the Matriarchal Womanism and Womanist Masculinity is not only a preferred tangible and pragmatic solution to most of the questions bedevilling the society presently, but it is equally worth subjecting to more academic rigours. The result will provide tangible solutions to the identified problems in the paper, and also to those problems present in some homes and the society.

Keywords: Gender, stereotypes, disillusionment, sustainability, conceptual evolution

1. Introduction

'Adie ba l'okun; ara o r'okun - ara o r'adie', literally translates to 'when a chicken perches on a rope, peace naturally eludes both the rope and the chicken'. This is a Yoruba adage that is curled to relate the rippling effects of gender identity crisis in contemporary African society of today. In Nigeria like the rest of the world where the new wave of gender role re-interpretation and re-evaluation holds sway, identity crises has become a tall order giving rise to family, individual and societal disorientation, disillusionment and dislocation. This is particularly so because gender dynamics is a confluence of networks that shape gender relationships through numerous past and present circumstances of power and control. Desiree Lewis helps to crystallize this observation further when she remarked that interdisciplinary studies reveal that power relations between the male and female gender are "complex, multi-dimensional and pervasive, requiring diverse tools and angles to disentangle and contest them" (Lewis, 2000, p.38).

This paper is poised to take a cursory look at *Adaugo* by Ezenwanebe C. O. and *The Mirror Cracks* by Ahmed Yerima in our quest to interpreting and gauging aspects of some gender concepts and expectations against the backdrops of the African worldviews that is created for them to thrive in. Our articulation and analysis of the harvested standards for gender affirmation, disparities and expectations in the plays mentioned above are essentially within the gap that exists between the lenses of African worldviews as well as the realities of today's global perception of modernization and civilization.

Essentially, it is imperative for us to start this discourse with some basic notions that foregrounds the two adopted plays and their playwrights. Yerima for

instance identifies the major preoccupation for writing the play, *The Mirror Crack*, to be “an evaluation of human life, fear of death and the contrasts with our acts in life and the judgement from people around us thereafter”, this he refers to as “the three-dimensional cracked images which often mirrors the complex symbiosis of the human psyche” (Ahmed, 1999, p. 113). Ezenwanebe on the other hand describes *Adaugo’s* content as “filial relationship at a time of crisis” (Ezenwanebe, 2011, p.7). To this end, it suffices to say that economic challenges necessitate a redefinition of the male and female social responsibilities in the play. Observably, equal access to economic, legal and educational opportunity and power avails both gender’s unprecedented exposures and accomplishments. Herein, both materials are directed towards the family situation in which daily inter-gender relationships start and ends with the power play trajectory, which triggers factors relating to the socio-cultural dynamics that defines us as Africans in Africa.

2. Gender: A Contextual Discourse

Vygotsky (1978) advocates individual development which he insists are initiated by social and cultural influences and interactions, leading to higher and deeper mental development and functions resulting in both the socio-cultural forces and inner stimuli connecting to enable the execution of gender roles.

Human relationships are often operated on rather too many assumptions which makes a lot of things get taken for granted, putting unnecessary pressure on individuals and groups. Societal expectations also keep both genders (male and female) boxed in different moulds which invariably creates problems for relationships in society. The characteristics of the personalities that make up the society will keep changing as our exposure and experiences encounters some variables.

Researches, theories, international and local policies have all added to the yarning and call to the revisit of gender-based discourses, disparities, relationship, imbalance and expectations in the society. Thus, femininity has become injected with feminism which in itself is essentially about calling for woman emancipation, awareness, actualisation self discovery.

In discussing the societal expectations and realities of both genders, in a report titled “*Being a Man in Nigeria: Perceptions and Realities*” (2015), for example, it states that:

young men particularly struggle with the need to prove themselves as men by obtaining and providing for a

family given the current insecure economic and political climate. Money and wealth are very important for the men than what it was some decades back. More women are also becoming more visible in public, more vocal and more educated than what obtains previously in our society. Both men and women are getting involved in decision making in the family over issues like investments, use of contraception and the number of children to have. It is observed that a primary challenge to men’s role as providers is that many men are unable and sometimes unwilling to provide for their families, due to lack of economy opportunities and an insecure environment. The gap between societal expectations and individual realities however continually recreate conflicts the people in their spotlight. (p.32-33).

Moreso, according to Olajubu, it is noted that: ...evidences from oral tradition and myths of the Yoruba project the notion that male and female genders are interdependent such that duties performed are believed to be important to the well-being of others in the society. The boundaries create have fluidity such that roles expected of either gender could be performed by either gender, given peculiar contexts (Olajubu, 2003, p. 21).

This fluidity is a very important stance particularly which is needed in the African and Nigerian contemporary realities. Harsh economic realities have also brought more female to the forefront of public working environment while rapid educational exposures have ensured an influx of the female presence to the professional circles creating more opportunities for the female folks at the detriment of times they spend at the home front.

Masculinity on the other hand is a theory that is hinged on the notion of descriptive, prescriptive and proscriptive cognition about boys and men. Masculinities are constructed based on social, cultural and contextual norms essentially because it is observed that boys and men integrate multiple aspects of their social identities in the course of their lifetime responsibilities. Power, privilege and sexism particularly impact on development of boys and men and on their relationships with others around them. This also affects the individual’s brand of masculinity and it is particularly portrayed homogenously in Africa than in any other continent. The identified ‘crisis of masculinity’ is explained as men’s contested roles, identities and duties which includes, increasingly, not being able to achieve the African man’s ideas of masculinity- marrying, fathering, providing for one’s family (nuclear and extended), and building a house (Smith Daniel, 2017). The reality of

this calls for continuous negotiation of roles, concepts and expectations for both male and female relationship and the consequences of such actions against the family unit being a microcosm of the macro society system in general.

This study therefore examines the selected plays employing hegemonic masculinity and African womanism theoretical frameworks to interrogating the consequences of gender-stereotype within the orbits of the happenings in the adopted plays which are in themselves a reflection of the realities of gender relationships in our society.

3. Synopsis of the two plays

The two plays adopted for this discuss are Ahmed Yerimah's *The Mirror Cracks* and Ezenwanebe's *Adaugo*. Hence, it is only proper that we relay the synopsis of both plays in order to facilitate familiarity and ease of reference when we move on to the analytical stages of the plays.

3.1 Ahmed Yerimah's *The Mirror Cracks*

Ahmed Yerima's *The Mirror Cracks*, gives the narration of what transpires in the family of His Excellency, Ambassador Ayodele Adegabi and his wife, Tundun. The wife walks out of her marriage to get self actualized and she is forced to leave her six-year-old son behind because the husband ensures he legally gets the custody of the child. Supo, the son, is left in the care of Joseph, Amb. Adegabi's older cousin as his chaperon. Gerald the cook and his wife become Supo's surrogate parents. While his biological parents try to understand Supo's person after his death at age thirty-six, Joseph admits that Supo was quiet and withdrawn as a child in the absence of his mother. And in his secondary school he had anger in him but controlled it. To Gerald he was an angel who was a Mass Server in church and later became Sunday school teacher, which should make him a saint. Hawa Kabata-Jones, a very close associate of Supo, sixteen years old and five months pregnant for him, explained how he could be described as an animal that needed love. Captain Tade, Supo's close friend also explains how he saw Supo's innocence grow into hardness. Her lordship Tundun, Supo's mother admitted she and her husband failed as parents. Eventually they both agreed to retain Hawa who is expecting Supo's child in their family circle, not minding what the public will say about it.

3.2 Ezenwanebe's *Adaugo*

In Ezenwanebe's *Adaugo*, the story of Chuma who has some financial challenges in his business is central, and this puts him in psychological disarray. Unfortunately, Chuma has a back-stabbing friend who tries to lure Chuma's wife at this period. *Adaugo*, Chuma's wife however remains loyal to the husband in the face of all the challenges and eventually their family overcomes the lack of trust challenge between husband and wife with the uncovering of the Eddy's evil plot by *Adaugo* to Chuma. This also coincides with the news of Chuma's business+ is coming back to life. Chuma's supposed missing vessels at sea were sighted which promises resuscitation of his business at their arrival. The play ends like the typical womanist work, where the woman is always accommodative of the excesses of her man to ensure the success and progress of her husband and home.

4. Theoretical frameworks

Home grown sociological theories of African Womanism and hegemonic masculinity are the theoretical tools for the analytical tools for this paper. Ogunyemi Chikwenye's African womanism theory being a strand of feminism that ought to African views and peculiarities to the feminine gender within the society advocates that

that the gender question can be dealt with only in the context of other issues that are relevant for the African women...(this) would contextualize the criticism of gender relationships-and in a much more complex way than (other) concepts" (Arndt, 2000, p. 712).

By implication, this will essentially have the woman more actively engaged in the public space, productively and professionally, than the traditionally recommended engagements of the woman or female in the society. Engaging the core values of this theory to family settings vis a vis the womanist activities towards achieving self actualization. The rationale behind this is that the African society operates institutions. Hence the expectations and engagements of the female folks outside the boundaries drawn by socio-cultural, religious and other indices is bound to have a spiral effect of the society as a whole. Nonetheless, while some women struggles and sustain the unity of their family at the expense of their peace temporarily, and even go extra mile to sacrifice for this, some other women will reject any extra strain like child care and remaining in the matrimonial home under what they describe as oppressive condition in this situation, it may ripe to say that walking away from 'her' home is tantamount to deviating from the womanist theory which is built on ensuring that the

woman create unity and sustainability for her home and people. The reality as it is for some economically independent women is that rather than continue to strain themselves, the women walk away. If there is however, a forum for negotiation for the woman and the man, sustainability of the home is should be achievable.

The womanist text does not only focus on emancipating women as individuals but it also has in view the reformation of patriarchal institutions to cater to the needs of women. The womanist is committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire people male and female. This is a philosophy that supplies a way for black women to address gender oppression without attacking the black man. Although, African womanism also economic and human development ahead of sexual issues, it however does not celebrate everything in a culture particularly the oppressive practices for the and against the women. The two texts adopted for this study highlights instances where the female figures had to make decisions that had far reaching implications for their families. Hence, the major point of concern for this paper is within the merits and demerits surrounding their actions and the implications it has on themselves, the male gender, their children and the sanctity of their family as a whole.

As much as patriarchy has numerous rules and nuances that makes the woman a subordinate of the man as seen from the character Adaugo, whom the husband expects her to seek his permission before she can reach out for financial assistance in form of a loan from even his friend, the womanist stance remains Adaugo's disposition as she does not actively put up a fight against this but she navigates her way around, ensuring the progress of her children and home even+ in the difficult situation with a challenging husband. Tundun in *The Mirror Cracks* does not engage in negotiation as a womanist but simply walks out of her home to self actualize which leads to character deformation of their only child, Supo, and his eventual death.

Another theory examined and adopted for this study to compliment the above is the Hegemonic masculinity theory deals with issues of hierarchy and the concept of subordination of women to men as a right. This remains a frame of reference for a lot of African males as it obtains in day to day living which is seen in the plays been discussed. Connell and Messerschmidt, who posited this theory, have also developed this further to open up plural masculinities and multiple hegemonic masculinities.

Kopano Ratele, a South African psychologist asserts that the fear of being perceived as less than a man, keeps the African man exaggerating all the traditional rules of masculinity. He established that masculinity is a pattern of practice that is constructed as a group with subjective exposure. The same way a child learns about the culture, values and expectations of his society by observing actions around him or her accounts for how the African male learns what his masculinity should be without being actively taught.

Ratele posits that African masculinities are hegemonic and subordinate at the same time. For Chuma and Eddy in *Adaugo*, they both see themselves as celebrated or hegemonic in their own rights but they also remain answerable to other males around them especially as their political and economic strength enables them. The fear of the African man is expressed in Chuma when he has challenges with his financial obligations. He expresses his fear in various ways from harassing his children to beating up his wife and throwing her out of their home, showing his insecurity in the absence of his economic strength. These concepts also help in understanding men's exposure to risk and their difficulties in responding to various forms of disability and injury. The African man's psychology is deeply tied to his masculinity and this is passed down from generation to generation.

5. Masculinity and Womanism as seen in the plays in form of Self Pursuit and Ego for both Genders

In discussing self and identity, Oyserman opines that: 'Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relation, roles, and social group membership that define who one is. Identities can be focused on the past-what used to be to be true of one, the present-what is true of one now, or the future- the person one expects or wishes to become or the person one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears one may become. Identities are orienting, they provide a meaning-making lens and focus one's attention on some but not other features of the immediate context (2012, p. 69)

This aptly explains the perspectives of the characters to be discussed in the plays as seen in the gender stereotype moulds.

While the character - Tundun (*the Mirror Cracks*) sees herself as marginalized, Ambassador Gabi sees himself as the patriarchal head, initially in *The Mirror Cracks*. Gabi's self-identity is shared by Chuma in *Adaugo*, as a similar pattern of behaviour is observable in the two of them. While Gabi gradually shows traits of a transforming male later in the play after the bitter

experience of losing an only child, Chuma remains unchanged because the wife accepts him for who he is.

Tundun, the wife of His Excellency, Ambassador Ayodele Adegabi walks out on her six-year-old son and her husband because she was tired of being the husband's shadow. This is the reality +which Tundun refuses to accept. Traditionally, the married African woman is most of the time a marginalized person because her essence is expected to be derived from the male she is identified with, her father or husband. This is observable from the ways both Tundun and Aداوگو are initially referred to or addressed in the plays. Gabi says of Tundun as his divorced wife, "She is no longer an excellency. She is a bloody divorced commoner now." (Yerima, 1999, p.117). For Chuma, that Aداوگو borrowed money from Chuma's friend, Uche, Aداوگو is labelled "Useless whore!" (Ezenwanebe, p. 51). Tundun and Aداوگو however carry out their unilateral decisions in forging ahead with life at their challenging moments. For Tundun, leaving the husband to actualise herself, becoming a lawyer who attains the rank of a judge is self actualisation. According to her, she is tired of leaving in the shadow of her husband. This is a womanist who goes all out for herself even at the expense of being separated from her six years old child.

This is a rather extreme decision that could have been negotiated with the husband.

Opportunities of self-development and achievement of personal dreams professionally is longer limited to the male gender both globally and locally given the contemporary modernization where diverse opportunity obtains for every individual. Power dynamics to determine the quality of life, socially and psychologically is no longer a given to be handed over to any party in a relationship since education and the exposure that comes with this gives leverage to everyone about what they desire and can achieve with their lives.

At the initial stage of a marriage relationship, this could be taken for granted. But with progress in years of the relationship, maturity in years and multiplicity of exposure and experience for the woman, couple particularly with various social responsibilities she will acquire both in the family circles and other circles, the drive to improve herself and, or, the lives of her children in every possible way becomes stronger for the woman. This explains why Aداوگو did not seek for the approval of her husband before reaching out to borrow money to finance the education of their children. Though identified as 'self-pursuit', the positive result from this is expectedly rubs off on everybody around her. Although she was separated

from Supo in the real sense of mothering a child, Tundun as a mother never stopped thinking of and identifying with her son. "I never stopped talking about him, letting people know I was proud of my son". A psychological exchange plays out here, even though it results into no positive physical impact for the child concerned to a large extent. However, a balance must be created with the roles of being a mother and a professional to avoid a major fall out as it results in the life of Supo, Tundun's son.

Supo is thirty-six years old at his death and his mother is in her early fifty. It adds up that Tundun married as a young girl of about twenty years, who could possibly hardly or clearly know what she really wanted from life ultimately and how she hopes to achieve this, given a limited exposure and experience of her age at this point. This explains why walking away was compelling for her when the realization of her life pursuit dawns on her.

Ezenwanebe opines that the male ego can be seen as "the various aspects of projected self based on the ideals of being a man which the male gender brings to bear in their relationship with women" (2011, p. 277-278). The quality of the man's attitude, behaviour, or character is a combination of the sociological instinct in every man. This is "shaped, nourished, sustained, regulated and propelled by customs, beliefs, rituals, morals and early childhood training by the culture in which he lives" (Ezenwanebe, 2011, p. 278).

Hegemonic masculinity projects various forms of subordination to people around him, and 'it embod[ies] the currently most honoured way of being a man, it require[s] all other men to position themselves in relation to it' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832). This identification is observable in main male characters of the plays being discussed. Gabi is hegemonic. His reputation matters too much to him and he confirms this when he said he did not remarry because he was afraid of what people will say about him. It is only after the death of his only child Supo that he thinks of adopting 'Supo's matra' of not caring about what people say. As the male head of his family and a recognizable achiever in his profession, Ambassador Gabi had much pressure on his person from societal expectations of what should be known of him at various situations regarding his immediate family. This also determined his actions and reactions as seen in the play.

When Tundun comes home for Supo's funeral, she demonstrated being accomplished as a successful person at her person by having all arrangements to take her of herself independently pre-arranged. However, she didn't have the assurance of being accepted to stay in her former matrimonial house given the

circumstances of her departure from the house and the prevailing situation at her arrival back in the house. She didn't bring in her luggage when she gets to the house but rather kept the cab that brought her waiting for her to inform Joseph and Gerald to tell her husband that she is in town. Her actions and words at this point portray her as empowered but needing acceptance by father of her son to be consoled at the death of their child. She needed emotional support at this point and when her grieving partner offered her his shoulder; she ended up crying on it and putting up in the house. It was at this crucial time that had Gabi saying 'our son'. The mourning period brought them together again as a couple.

In *Adaugo*, Chuma is a complete product of the patriarchal system. Everything interaction with his wife particularly at his economically disturbing period for him is perceived as a challenge to take up. Practically every word from his wife, whom sees as his "personal possession(s)" is challenged. The consistent comical way these activities takes place in the play however douses the strain of the gender crisis for the audience. Chuma identifiable hegemonic masculinity produces unwarranted aggression on his wife which results into his beating her and throwing out her belongings. It is only after *Adaugo* goes the extra mile to prove her faithfulness and commitment to him that the stability of their home is restored.

6. Social and Psychological Disillusionment of Childhood producing damaged adulthood

Further discussions on self and identity theories also agree in grounding self and identity in the social context. It is observed that contextual effects on the self can be distant or proximal. The distant contextual effects can be in form of parenting practices, the culture, the time and place in which one lives, or the experience of the early life. The proximal is the psychological implications of the immediate situation surrounding a person. The contextual effects could also be at different levels. These are the macro, middle, and micro levels. Macro-level context is identified as the historical epoch, society, and culture within which one lives. The context at the middle level embraces the family processes and socialization practices with which one grows up. At the micro-level, this is the day-by-day, moment-to-moment situation one experiences because of the structures and institutions involved.

Self and identity are also observed to be social products in at least three ways. People do not create themselves from only what is deemed possible, what

is important, and what needs to be explained, which are all from the social context. This is because people are likely to define themselves in terms of "what is relevant to their time and place". This includes group memberships, family roles, looks, school attainment or even athletic prowess could matter more or less depending on what is valued in one's culture and one's place within the social hierarchy. The second way is that a self or person requires others who will endorse and reinforce a person's selfhood. This refers to others "who scaffold a sense that one's self matters and that one's efforts can produce results". The third is that self and identity are determined by what is deemed relevant at the moment. "A clear way to signal an identity socially is to act in ways that are (stereotypically) congruent with it" (Oyserman, Elmore and Smith, 2012, p. 76).

Self and identity in the social context can be observed from the plays by all the characters. Supo, Hawa, and Ebere particularly mirror how the social context affects a child. Supo and Hawa as children were socially and psychologically disillusioned. Hawa says of Supo "He was in a constant struggle to control the animal in him" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 126). But eventually, she grew to understand that all he needed was love that Supo did not seem to get from his childhood. Supo had a first-class degree in Political Science from Oxford University in London. His father says "Supo's problem was the missing link, and believe me when I say that missing link was you. You failed your son. Now see what he became... a certified self-conceited, wild, brutal, cold-blooded animal... that description surely rings a bell, Your Lordship" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 135). His mother said, "I never stopped talking about him, letting people know, I was proud of my son". But Supo's friend, Tade replies to the mother: "You never told him either, and he never knew. It drove him further and further until it drove him to his death. He started to do things to stand out." (Ahmed, 1999, p. 132). Supo is cold-blooded enough to shoot a major who was his commanding officer at close range, and thereafter he was made a major. He ended up making more enemies than friends. Even Tade, Supo's friend acknowledged that he saw the innocence in Supo gradually change into hardness. Supo's experiences of a growing child into a maturing man pushed his life out of balance which eventually produced his tragic end in the play.

The implication of aggressive gender stereotype extends to them. Late Major Supo Adegabi lives behind Hawa a sixteen-year-old girl, five-month pregnant for him. He had raped and killed the mother of the girl while she watched. She fainted at the gunshot that kills the mother and Supo captures her. Hawa

is handcuffed and kept behind in Supo's van to come back to life and discover herself there. Gabi describes Supo as the well-arranged bouquet on a bottomless vase and a well-framed mirror that cracks. The contrast in the descriptions reveals the irony of all that was done to produce a good person of Supo.

The irony in the play is that Hawa, a war victim who had experienced the tragic death of her father who was killed in confusion and she had become a dropout from secondary school, from a war-torn nation and should be left in the refugee camp, is the one who brings succour to Supo's family at his demise. She is traumatized child who is forced into early adulthood, but as a young woman in a socially friendly environment, she rises to the challenge of making a happy union of the relationship she had with Supo. He also guarded her as much as possible, so much so that she recalls that the last man who said to Supo that she was still a child 'never came back to the house again'.

In *Adaugo*, the fight of the husband and wife is comical but the children are usually caught in the gender crossfire. The children also give their interpretations of the situation and try to react to situations around them as it seems appropriate to the children. While running for safety from violence from her husband, Ebele holds this conversation with the mother:

Ebele: I hate daddy.

Adaugo: Shut up. Don't say that about your daddy.

Ebele: I said that I hate daddy, and I mean it. I hate daddy for beating you. I hate daddy for throwing your pants up to these people and they are laughing. I hate him for sending us away.

Adaugo: Don't talk like that!

Ebele: After all, he did not give birth to me. You told your friend the other day that daddy was in China the day you gave birth to me.

Adaugo: That he travelled on business when I was giving birth to you does not mean he is not your father.

Ebele: (Yells) I don't understand all that, all I know is that he hates you first, and he hates me second. He beat you, and the shoe fell on my head that time he was throwing things. Mummy, wait n-o-w! Just one more thing.

Adaugo: (*stops and listens a bit calmly*) I am not in the mood for that now! What is it?

Ebele: You said daddy was angry because he could not get enough money to shower on one *em em* Lilian, his sugar lady. Is that why he should beat you? (Ezenwanebe, 2011, p. 61-62)

The true level of psychological implication for children from overdrawn gender stereotypes cannot be

appropriately quantified but a portion of this is depicted in the lives of the children in the plays. To Ebele, the little girl in this conversation, the security of a healthy atmosphere around her appears bleak at different levels where the father is involved and her interpretation of the situation only sees the father's unfaithfulness and infidelity. The father's aggression comes to her as exploitative oppression of the mother. Supo possibly never had an opportunity to discuss with anyone. Revealing that what children internalize at various points in their childhood can be expected to manifest at a later time in their lives.

7. Conclusion

Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria (2023) in its executive summary states the percentage of women and men in the population as 49.44% and 50.56% respectively. While this paper acknowledges that economical independence, social enlightenment and cultural evaluation of the female rights are fundamental steps towards the emancipation of women in our society. The connectedness in relationships, families, and the society at large should however not be sacrificed wholesomely at the detriment of the male folks or at the expense of the family well being. Arguably, the choice of womanism as an alternative to the core concept of feminism in the quest for equipping the African woman intellectually and economically and by the reasons advanced further in this paper, collaboration and negotiation should be the watch word for the advancement of relationship between genders.

The two plays used in the paper have major female characters who are womanists. They are accommodationists who seek to escape their perception of their role as being enslaved by their male partners. For instance, Tundun in *The Mirror Cracks* initially sets out to be self actualised by cutting off the ties that binds her to her immediate family. Significantly she was successful in her bid and ended up becoming 'a significant judge of the Court of Appeal' but lost most importantly her family's bond. The result of her one-sided decision of pursuing her career at the expense of the properly upbringing of her only child resulted in a tragic situation for the family.

As part of the measures to ameliorate the disastrous state of hopelessness the family was thrown into, Tundun first became remorseful and recognized that she needed to be a part of everything happening in the family. Thereafter, the conversation in their home returns to 'dialogue'. When Tundun walks out silently and returns with her former dress and hat, it can be interpreted as a symbolic gesture which could be seen

as an old order going out while a new order comes in with their accepting Hawa to become a member of their family. Her returning back to the scene could be equated to giving her life a renewed lease by giving her clothing to Hawa. Hawa who symbolically represents the upcoming generation also was responsible for bearing the future generation. She needs all the support to succeed to avoid repeating the tragic story in the family. She has to be helped to properly identify herself and be prepared for the assignment of rising the new generation successfully. Beautifully, Hawa embraces this hand of fellowship. The way forward is expectedly a heterogeneous, multi-dimensional, and continually evolving relationship that gets adapted to the various situations it has to operate with. Hawa and Tundun are starting on a good note of sisterhood as it is recommended by womanism theory. We have these starting out at the conclusion of the play. The connectedness for collaboration, cooperation, and complementarity also comes into being in this play. This is also Adaugo's reality as she reunites with her husband.

Similarly, rigid gender stereotypes of men and women, as also observable in the plays for this study, create individual tensions which find expression through negative social vices and interpersonal conflict and violence. However, the positive non-violent role models and education for men and boys (as well as for women and girls) help to ensure better gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours. When these are inculcated in childhood or re-learned in young adulthood, they last into adult life with family and produce community-wide benefits. Positive progression in the gender trajectory however suggests that traditional gender attitudes and behaviour may be changing in Nigeria and in Africa. Gabi and Supo from *The Mirror Cracks*, both demonstrate the possibilities and traits of transformative masculinity, given the exposure and experience to promote and facilitate this in them. The possibility of the same for Chuma in *Adaugo* however remains quite difficult as he displays the total character of hegemonic masculinity.

The experiences of both genders come with peculiarities such that the way forward also demands peculiarities of out look to ensure successful adaptability for sustainable development goals for the society. Every isolated decision taken outside the engagement of both genders in a relationship has the potentials of divisive results that could be destructive for the social unit concerned and could possibly put the interests of all parties concerned in jeopardy ultimately. Intersecting roles of genders, out of necessity, calls for 'intersecting identities' which W.E.B. Dubois describes as "double consciousness"

which we have conceptualized as "Matriarchal Womanism" for the female gender and "Womanist Masculinity" for the male gender. Matriarchal womanism concept is positioning the female from not just having complementarity perspective of her relationship with the man but to also having a matriarchal essence with it, particularly understanding that she remains a bond for the sustainability of the family unit, as well as the African society even as a self-actualized person. Similarly, the Womanist masculinity creates a dual perspective for the male to identify with the females are going through at various stages of life to be able to identify with their situation or context per time, towards complementarity of relationships. As it is, womanism for some females is coming hegemonic womanism which needs to be redefined. Discrepancies in perception and realities of masculinities creates lacuna for men which most of the time manifests as withdrawal or silence like is observed in major male characters of the plays discussed. These concepts seek conscious efforts to let family relationships work and not to seek who to blame for challenges in relationships or the family.

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