AN ANALYSIS OF AUTHORS' VIEWPOINTS ON INTER-FEMALE HOSTILITY IN SELECTED IGBO NOVELS

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Abstract

Social relations among women are generally perceived as being hostile. Indeed, women are adjudged to be submissive only to men than to each other. They perpetrate violence against one another over different reasons, including, struggles for material wealth, romance and political supremacy. And one does not only have to experience the behaviour in real life to know it, for it also abounds in various literatures, which can be read. But the problem in reading about the behaviour in literature is that some authors focus on depicting it as a universal character of all women in the world. They create inter-female hostile female characters and, on that basis, make them depict women as such. Yet, that is not always the case in real life, for as common to all women as the behaviour may seem, it also reserves cultural and individual exemptions. Therefore, given variations in cultural values, women from different ethnicities react differently to inter-female disagreements. This means that some authors misrepresent the women's character in their books. And the problem makes a case for interrogating authors' viewpoints for their failure to meet an expectation, especially with respect to their language and style of depiction. This study aims at deploying analytic method of literary discourses to interrogate four authors' views on the subject.

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The views are as expressed in four respective novels, including Nzeakọ's *Jụọchi* (1981), Onwụchekwa's *Chinagọrọm* (1983), Ọfọmata's *Dibịa na-agwọ Otoro* (2000), and Obidịebube's *Kọdịlịchukwu* (2006), which are written in Igbo language. The works are carefully selected with gender differences in mind. The gender disparity is for examining the extent to which bias can influence the depiction of the women's character. And from findings, the essay vetoes the bias in authors' viewpoints but affirms ideological influences. It contributes to knowledge the point that some authors' over-generalized views of all women being hostile to fellow women is merely a product of their ideological positions and, thus, false.

Keywords: Inter-female hostility, Igbo women, Author's viewpoint, Literary language and Style, Gender influences

Introduction

Men are generally considered to be more aggressive than women in struggling for survival (Eagly and Steffen, 1986). Such aggression has been implicated in men's greater success in competitive environments such as sports, warfare, leadership, and the workplace (White and Kowalski, 1994). Indeed, men personify aggression (Geen, 1990; Simon and Landis, 1991). And women, in contrast, are perceived as being submissive (Best and Williams, 1993). This perception is usually extrapolated to rationalise women's oppression, suppression or subjugation by them (men) in society, consequently, when the subject of aggression against women is considered, men are commonly blamed for it. Pateman (1988), for instance, considers men as women's arch-enemy. She posits that sexists' arch-subjugation of women to socially derogatory conditions of life is grossly inhuman. Grappling with what she considers as contractual relationship between men and women in society, she observes that due to feminists' outcry, contemporary society seems to offer women a semblance of equality with men, yet women are still restricted. Anumudu and Ononuju (2011) also reason in this direction where they explore both biological make-ups and socio-

cultural role disparities between males and females in Igbo society to posit on the basis of the disparities, that men are deemed to be biologically stronger and socially useful, say in territorial defense and governance, than women. Hence, processes of socialisation and institutionalisation of gender roles in the society empower men and subjugate women.

Nonaggression is regarded as part of the passive and gentle nature of women, suiting them well for their roles as wives and mothers, while also rendering them unfit for competitive roles of warrior and leadership (Bjorkqvist and Niemela, 1992). This, to Campbell (1999), is due to several socio-biological reasons which include women's maternal investment in reproduction of off-springs, psychological mediation for self-preservation and motherhood, inconsequential struggle for dominance hierarchies and loss of female kin-bonding due to societal preference for patrilocal residence in matrimony. It is for these reasons, therefore, that women consider staying alive through non-aggression than losing their lives from aggression. Indeed, Eisenberg and Lennon (1983) support this position by averring that such reasons are responsible for women's general submissiveness, even to each other.

But are women really submissive? Research shows otherwise – i.e. that women are also aggressive, both toward men and to each other. Dutton and Nicholls (2005), while attempting to debunk feminists claims that women are not aggressive toward men or that if they are aggressive toward men it is for self-defense, rely largely on reported cases of domestic abuse in North America to argue that women aggress on men in intimate domestic relationships. From the data sourced at police stations by them, they find that the reason it appears that women do not aggress on men is because men rarely report cases of such aggression on them due to shame and their (men's) inclination to make excuses for their intimate female-partners. But the true situation revealed by their research is that women are not to be exonerated from aggression, especially at domestic fronts for they actually aggress on men there. If they can aggress on men,

Bettencourt and Miller (1996) further show evidence that they also aggress on each other. And this is due to provocation. The researchers gathered their position from a meta-analytic approach to experiments conducted on gender disparity in aggression where they discovered that, following a tit-for-tat rule of disagreement, provoked women aggress on each other in dimensions that debunk the traditional perception of women as being submissive.

Beyond the few researches mentioned above which show that women are not as submissive as perceived in the past, there are other researches that support the position and also extend the possibility to women's proclivity to aggress on fellow women. These can be seen in the works of Buss (1961), Eagly and Steffen, (1986), Eagly (1987), Dabbs and Morris (1990), Burman (2004), and Eagly and Wood (2016). Consequent upon the abundance of evidence provided by such works that argue for women's aggressive possibilities even on each other, the behaviour has been conceived as a universal character of all women. And by that is meant that all women have the trait latent in them which they exhibit whenever the need arises – i.e. like in struggles for material wealth, romance, political supremacy, among others. Buss (1961), for instance, holds the view that inter-female aggression is any woman's behaviour directed towards another woman or her property with the intention of causing harm, even if the aggressor is unsuccessful. Burman (2004) further opines that inter-female hostility is the emotional or psychological trauma (from fright, threat or consistent terror) that one woman can inflict on another woman over actual, perceived or insinuated rivalry in commodities of common interest. Eagly and Steffen (1986) aver that all women aggress with a view to causing psychological and social harm on their victims rather than physical pain, which undergirds men's aim and strategy of aggression. The women's strategy is covert, in comparison to the men's overt approach, and is intuitively adopted for reasons of protection from exposure to the feeling of

guilt, anxiety, threat to life, and physical harm that overt strategies attract.

With cultural influences and uniqueness of causes and expressions of inter-female hostility, Igbo women, for instance, have different value-laden reasons in their clime (in comparison to Western women), which make them react differently in aggression to their fellow women. And such reasons include polygamy, male children's birthright, patriarchy, and wealth, among others. Where polygamy or, particularly, polygyny, which is a permissible mode of marriage in Africa and, particularly, Igbo society is taken as an instance for explaining this point, it is to be discovered that some Igbo women married to one man usually live in deep-seated jealousy with each other in contradistinction to Western women whose culture does not permit that type of marriage. Ezeigbo (1992) supports this position by submitting that where two or more women are involved in a relationship or, particularly, marriage, the issue of jealousy is not far-fetched. And Arndt (1998) adds that due to women's natural jealousy for each other, they tend to plot intrigues against fellow womenInter-female hostile relations among Igbo women is not a social situation that one only has to experience in real life to know it, for it is also expressed in various literary art forms. One of such literary art forms is novels.

There are several novels that depict the situation in the society. Some of them, including Nzeakọ's *Jụọchi* (1981), Ọnwụchekwa's *Chinagọrọm* (1983), Ọfọmata's *Dibịa na-agwọ Otoro* (2000), and Obidịebube's *Kọdịlịchukwu* (2006), are written in Igbo language. But the problem in reading about the behaviour in literatures is that some authors focus on depicting it as a universal character of all women in the society. They create inter-female hostile female characters and, on that basis, make them depict all women as being hostile to each other. Since, as it has been argued above, there are exemptions – as both cultural and individual values can dictate otherwise – it means that some authors misrepresent the women's character in their literatures. This problem makes a case for interrogating authors' viewpoints

for the defalcation, especially with respect to their language and style of depiction. This study aims at deploying analytic method of literary discourse to interrogate the four novels mentioned above for that purpose. The interrogation is guided by questions such as: Is inter-female hostility a universal character of women? Are there no women that are friendly with fellow women even in daunting situations of inter-female social relations that may portend hostility for others? Are the authors depicting inter-female social relations exactly as it is in real life or are they creating their ideological situations? Does gender belongingness have a role to play in determining authors' viewpoints on the inter-female hostile situations depicted in their novels? This last question informed a careful selection of the authorship of the novels with gender differences in mind. Hence, they are two females and two males. And the number (i.e. two authors per gender) is deemed necessary to expand the interrogation and seek a balance in gender bias (if any). One novel per gender is perceived to be too narrow to avail the expansion and balance, for one male or female, for instance, may approach the subject in a way that another may counter in his or her approach.

Analyses of the Authors' Viewpoints on Igbo Inter-female Hostilities

A. *Kọdịlịchukwu* by Joyce Ifeọma Obidịebube (2006)

In *Kọdịlịchukwu,* Obidịebube, a female author, opens the story with a description of the head of the family, Okoro, and revelation of the patrilineal nature of Okoro's society. The story transits to how Okoro urges his son, Odumodu, to look for a wife as he is mature enough to marry. Then Odumodu marries Ọlụchi. But for no definable reason, the story tells about how Odumodu hates his wife and the child she bore, Kọdịlịchukwu. Ejemeni, Odumodu's mother and Okoro's wife, is then depicted as taking sides with her son to maltreat Ọlụchi, her daughter-in-law. This extends to the point where Ejemeni supports her son to end the

marriage with Ọlụchi – "*Ebe nwa ya kwụ ka ya onwe ya kwụ…*" (p. 15) 'where her son stood is where she herself stands'.

Obidịebube presents Ejemeni as a heartless woman who does not care about the plight of her fellow women. She uses short, punchy, graphic and striking clauses and words to depict Ejemeni's attitude towards her daughter-in-law – a fellow woman. The author also uses phrases intermittently to describe Ejemeni, example, *nwanyị obi ọjọọ* (the woman with a bad heart). Ejemeni's first direct speech in the narrative suggests that she is indeed a bad mother-in-law – as the author depicts. She is depicted as saying to Ọlụchi "*Ebe ọ si na ya agaghị alụ Ọlụchi, Ọlụchi galarịrị*" (p. 16) 'since he said that he will not marry Ọlụchi, Ọlụchi must go'. To emphasize Ejemeni's character as evil, the author chooses to distance her feminity from Ejemeni, while narrating Ejemeni's attitude toward Ọlụchi, her daughter in-law.

The questions to raise here are: Does Ejemeni's hostility toward her daughter in-law suggests that she is an unusually evil kind of woman among women? Are there no such other women that are unfriendly or wicked toward their fellow women or daughter in-law particularly? Why would the author choose to distance her feminity from that of Ejemini? If there are other women that are hostile toward their daughters-in-law, would the author distance her feminity from all of them? If she succeeds in doing that, would she have much women to relate with as a woman or, particularly, friendly woman (which she attempts to portray herself to be with the distancing)? These questions are meant to argue that Ejemeni's attitude toward her daughter in-law is not unusually evil among women. A lot of mothers-in-law are known to be hostile toward their daughters-in-law and vice versa. And one reason for this is the psycho-biological competition that ensues between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law (as women) over the loss and gain, respectively, of the strength, attention and protection that the man at the centre (in this case, son – to mothers-in-law, and husband – to daughters-in-law) provides for the women. Freud (1923) had since postulated this in his theory

of Electra complex, where he explains that women compete over a man that they have mutual interests because of the man's phallic advantage over them. Given this position, Ejemini's attitude toward Ọlụchi is not enough for the author to distance herself as a woman from Ejemini. Indeed, the author's disposition toward Ejemini's character also indicts her (the author) for inter-female hostility, since seeking to distance herself from Ejemini suggests that she – a woman – is hostile toward Ejemini – a fellow woman. The author, therefore, is also guilty of the attitude that she tries to decry. This does not mean, however, that since Ejemini's attitude is common to most women – as Freud would have us think – all women or mothers-in-law are hostile toward their daughters-in-law. Some women are friendly, especially for reasons of peace in their son's new home and peaceful co-existence with the new woman (Ajikobi, 1999).

Obidịebube continues to narrate Ejemini's hostility toward Ọlụchi where she makes a twist in the story to depict the behaviour in its indirect form. Indirect hostility implies that a tormentor, rather than confront her victim in person – physically and overtly – chooses to attack the victim's property, relatives or associates with the intent of covertly inflicting psychological or social pain on the victim. Hence, even when Ọlụchi bears a son – a situation which, in Igbo culture, brings immense joy to the entire family and which, therefore, would be expected by readers to change Ejemeni's attitude – the author continues to heighten the tension between Ejemeni and her daughter-in-law. Ejemeni is still unhappy and unfriendly with Ọlụchi. And she transfers the aggression for Ọlụchi to Kọdịlịchukwu – her grandson. Ejemeni is depicted as a bad grandmother. The author says "*Ejemeni anaghị anọkata echeta n'echiche maọbụ rọta na nrọ na o nwere akụkụ ahụ ya nọ n'Amanabo, ka ọ fọdụzie ijụ ase maka nwatakiri ahụ. O din ndụ, nwụọ anwụọ, ọ gbasaghị ya*" 'Ejemeni has never thought of or dreamt that there is a part of her at Amanabo, not to talk of or asking after the wellbeing of that child. Whether he is alive or dead does not concern her' (p. 38). This shows the snowball effect of inter-female hostility. Deploying an opaque

idiomatic expression "*afọ tara ya mmiri n'ezie*" 'she is indeed heartless' (p. 39), the author concludes that Ejemeni is indeed a wicked woman.

Indirect hostility is not an exclusive strategy of women in hostility or, particularly, in inter-female hostility. Even men utilise indirect strategies in their aggressions, although they (men) are predominantly direct – i.e. attacking their victims in person – physically and overtly (Graham and Wells, 2001). The important aim of aggression, whether indirect or direct, is to inflict pain or death on a victim. Also, Ejemeni is not the only woman who attacks her victim in indirectly. Even the author in her bid to distance herself from such an evil woman as Ejemini applies that strategy, for if Ejemini were to be a live person she would discern the author's attitude as an indirect disagreement and aggression. All these, once more, do not suggest that all women are aggressive toward fellow women.

Obidịebube further depicts indirect inter-female hostility where Odumudu's new wife, Ujuakụ, is portrayed to dislike her stepson, Kọdịlịchukwu, passionately. And this is simply because the boy belongs to another woman, Ọlụchi. Based on Odumodu's hatred for Ọlụchi, their marriage could not survive for long. Hence, in keeping especially with his mother - Ejemeni's dictate, Odumodu divorces Ọlụchi. He then marries another woman, Ujuakụ. And she comes home to meet Kọdịlịchukwu as Odumodu's first son. That bothers her because the boy is another woman's child. Her anxiety in this direction is particularly motivated by the Igbo culture which institutes the first son as the sole inheritor of the father's property. Accordingly, Ujuakụ wishes Kọdịlịchukwu dead so that Odumodu's property will be for her children alone. "*Ihe ga-aka ya mma bụ ọ pụta ụra n' ụtụtụ ka akụkọ ọ ga-anụ bụrụ na nwa ahụ anwụọla*" 'What she would prefer is to wake up in the morning and hear that the child has died' (p.39). One day when Ujuakụ heard that Kọdịlịchukwu was returning home, she displays her hatred for the boy and, indirectly, his mother by saying "*Onye n'eche na ya ga akwunye ube n'ahụ were rachaa ntụ, bụ onwe ya ka ọ na-arafụ*" 'Whoever

thinks that she would attach a pear to herself to lick ash, is deceiving herself' (p.68). The indirect meaning of Ujuakụ's statement is that she has ten children; eight boys and two daughters and her husband's wealth should be for her children only.

Although this appears more like a hatred for the boy than his mother (a fellow woman) and, thus, ought not to be considered as a case of inter-female hostility, it makes a good case too – as an indirect expression of the hostility. This is because the hatred for the boy is hatred for his mother and vice versa. Were the boy's mother, Ọlụchi, to hear about Ujuakụ's attack on her son, Ọlụchi would be unhappy. Hence, Ujuakụ would have succeeded in attacking Ọlụchi. Also, the hatred might not be so visited on Kọdịlịchukwu by Ujuakụ if the boy were to belong to her. Indeed, the hatred requires interrogation as an expression of inter-female hostility (no matter how indirect it may be) because it is that which spans most of the novel and, thus, forms the reason for its title. The image depicted by the author in this aspect of the story is that of "wicked" stepmothers. And that image is a longstanding and, thus, familiar experience in the world (not just Igbo society) (Schulman, 1972). However, the image and its character are changing as society and institution of the family is also changing (Brown, 1987). Some women in polygamous marriages or remarriages (after the demise or divorce of an earlier wife) that already have children actually love and care for their step-child or children as theirs (Brown, 1987). This restates the position that it is not all women that are hostile to fellow women, even in such indirect way.

Obidịebube continues her expose on Ujuakụ's ill-character as she also depicts Ujuakụ as a disrespectful and proud woman who enjoys flaunting her husband's wealth with evil intents. Accordingly, the author says of Ujuakụ: "*onye mee, ewere m ego mefuo ya*" (she will use her money to destroy anyone she feels is getting on her nerves) (p. 93). That pride eventually leads Ujuakụ to misbehave with a female neighbour, Ifeọma, who has been married for some time but without

children. Ujuakụ gets into the habit of taunting Ifeọma for being barren. Ifeọma reports Ujuakụ to her (Ifeọma's) brother who is a custom officer and who, based on the vantage position that his occupation endows him, vows to deal with Ujuakụ through her husband, Odumodu. Ifeọma's brother thereafter actualizes his vow by seizing Odumodu's trucks of goods and Odumodu's downfall begins. Ujuakụ is then humbled. By doing what Ifeọma did through her brother, Ifeọma attacked Ujuakụ, a fellow woman, indirectly. This further shows how women attack fellow women indirectly. But, again, this does not mean that all women behave in this way. As earlier argued, some women are friendly to fellow women even in daunting situations that would elicit hostility from some other women.

All through the narrative, it is important to note that the author's language is interspersed with proverbs, witty sayings, and hyperboles. And as earlier noted, she also uses short, punchy, graphic and striking clauses and words as well as phrases and idiomatic expressions to depict the women's character. She re-coins existing proverbs to express old and new meanings. The common proverb "*agwọ na-atụ mbe, n'atụ n'okpokoro*," (the snake that is poking tortoise back or shell, is poking on a hard container) for instance, is re-phrased as "*agwọ na-atụ mbe, bụ olu ya ka ọ na efeji*" (a snake that is poking tortoise back, is its neck that will break) (p. 90). The author deploys this proverb to warn Ujuakụ to be careful in plotting evil against Kọdịlịchukwu, as she may rather be the one to suffer for it.

Another important point to note is her style of narration, which commences with a robust introduction that gives readers background insight into what to expect especially from the main characters. Also, she presents the characters and their lives from an omniscient perspective, giving the impression that she can read the characters' minds. She sermonizes with names of characters i.e. giving a name to character and narrating about the character's behaviour as though ways of acting is a consequence of the name. She fills the narrative with both direct and indirect inter-female hostilities. The author also builds in minor stories to

further depict the women's character. Finally, despite her attempt at portraying inter-female aggression as a general condition of women's social relations in the society, the author still tries to balance it with portrayals of bond and care existing among some other women in the society. In all her depictions of the women's character, she is careful not to criticize women who extol women's virtues. Indeed, she eulogises such women with statements such as "*Chukwu kpacharaa anya kee nwanyị dị ka onye enyemaka pụrụ iche nye nwoke*" (God deliberately created women as a special helper to men) (p. 98). This goes a long way to support the view that not all women are hostile toward each other. Some women are friendly, kind and calm, even in situations that may cause others to be hostile. If there are no kind and friendly women, where would the author find those that extol women's virtues? Does such capacity of women extolling fellow women's virtue not account for the exception of some women? The point, therefore, is made that the author is not gender-biased in her presentation of the women's character.

B. *Chinagọrọm* by Julie Onwụchekwa (1983)

Onwụchekwa, a female author, also introduces her narrative with a robust background that gives readers an insight into what to expect especially from main characters. She divides the narrative into sections and carefully subtitles each section in ways that offer readers clues of the sectional contents. Each section is concluded with a re-emphasis of the subtitle. Like Obidịebube, characters and their lives are also presented by Onwụchekwa from an omniscient perspective. And she sermonizes with characters' names too. The author also fills the narrative with both direct and indirect inter-female hostilities, while building in minor stories to further aid depiction of the women's character.

With respect to language, Onwụchekwa uses simple Igbo words and sentences to narrate the story. Hence, the reader is expected to quickly understand the idea, situation or condition portrayed. An instance is this graphical description of how indecently some women dress to lure men – "*O na-afọdụ ka*

ụfọdụ ha gbara ọtọ ebe ha na-achọ iji ngwa ga-emebi Dr. Chinedum isi" (It is remaining for some of them to get naked in their bid to dress in attires that would entice Dr. Chinedum) (p. 85). From this choice of language, the author mirrors the events and happenings in the society as simply as they are i.e. how some women just choose to make the lives of other women miserable.

Right from the beginning of the narrative, Onwụchekwa sets a tone of bias against women. Indeed, her opening language and style of writing shows that she is particularly biased against barren women. This is excerpted in "*nwa nyere nwanyị oche n'ụlọ di*" (child gives women authority their husband's house) (p. 1). There are also statements in pages 3, 10, 15, that communicate prejudice against women. This is heightened in the utterance *"…o nweghị ihe na-atọ ọtụtụ ụmụ nwoke na ndịnyom ha mụọrọ, ha ụmụ nwoke, n'ihi na ha n-atụ egwu ịmụta ụmụagbọghọ n'oge ugbu a*" (nothing gives joy to many men like their women give birth to male children, because they are afraid to have female children nowadays) (p. 30).

The author also appears to be interested in encouraging inter-female hostility with her narrative style, for apart from what she makes the female characters to think and say, she actually uses a male character, Dr. Chinedum (Chinagọrọm's husband), to cause aggression among women. This, for instance, is evident where Dr. Chinedum tells Chinagọrọm, his wife, to deliberately withhold from everyone information about her becoming pregnant during his brief secret trip back to Nigeria. In his view, he intends to use the situation to assess how fellow women perceive a married woman who lives separately from her husband and, yet, gets pregnant. Given the situation, a deep-seated misunderstanding is created among the ever curious and gossipy women of his community who always relate closely with his wife. Nweke (a female character) who leads the gossip circle is depicted as being in the habit of incessantly insulting Chinagọrọm as a philanderer. Also, Ekemma (another female character) is depicted as advising Chinagọrọm to vacate her husband's house and return to her parents to avoid the shame that

her husband would mete out to her upon his return. This is excerpted in "*Ụmụ nwanyị a na-alụ n'oge dị ugbu a mụrụ akwụkwọ na nkịta rachara ha anya*" (Women who are being married these days are educated and wild) (p. 10). And it earns Ekemma the depiction of a bad-mouthed woman, especially where she says to Chinagọrọm that educated women are shameless flirts. As an omniscient narrator, Onwụchekwa figures out Ekemma's wishes for Chinagọrọm. This is excerpted as "*Ọ sị na Chinagọrọm ga-eji anya ya hụ ntị ya mgbe di ya lọtara*" (Chinagọrọm will be dealt with when her husband comes back from his trip) (p. 10). This means that Ekemma wishes that Dr. Chinedum maltreats Chinagọrọm upon his return. Through the use of this male character, Dr. Chinedum, as a troubleshooter, the author experiments with and strengthens the thinking that women can are worst enemies of themselves.

But a critical assessment of the situation reveals that that is simply the author's ideological manipulation of characters to communicate her perception of life. This does not mean that such situations do not occur in real life though. They do. However, given the evidence above which attests that the author is biased against some women, it is clear that the idea of inter-female hostility so far is her careful plot from the bias. Indeed, one would not be wrong to perceive the author herself as an inter-female aggressor. She fails to portray a situation where certain women in such condition as Chinagọrọm's close associates would act very friendly and kind by guiding her (Chinagọrọm) aright on what to do to save her marriage and self-respect before the husband. Why? Yet, there are also such friendly and kind women in the society. But the author would not depict them because of her ideological objective of portrayal.

In the bid to further advance that ideology of hers, the author also sarcastically portrays some women who meet Dr. Chinedum at Aba club and, despite knowing that he is married, begin to write letters requesting him to be their lover. Others even write him to marry them. The author intends to show through this the idea that some women do not mind to seek their

happiness at the expense of another woman, even if their desire displaces that other woman from her matrimonial home. This is excerpted as "*ọtụtụ ụmụ nwanyị ndi Dr. Chinedum zutere n'Aba klụb na n'Imo hotels wee detewere ya leta ụtọ. Ụfọdụ ha na-ede ka ọ bụrụ enyi ha ma ndị ọzọ na-edekwanụ ka ọ lụ wa ha*" (numerous women that Dokita Chinedum met at Aba Club and Imo Hotels started to write love letters to him. Some are writing for him to be their friends, while others are writing for him to marry them) (p. 85).

Yet, this does not mean that there are no real-life situations where single women actually behave in that way toward married men (and indirectly, fellow women that are married) by trying to make or making intimate advances at them (the married men). Smith (2010) gives evidence of this in his research on promiscuous girls and cheating husbands in Southeastern Nigeria where he avers that some single women in that part of country consider dating successful married men as means to their economic survival and social integration. But the behaviour is not universal to all single women, even in the society. A lot of single women also respect the institution of marriage and, thus, steer clear from married men. This is because they perceive marriage as a sacred relationship and do not wish to destabilize the socio-cultural bond involved in it or hurt their married counterpart as they fear karmic reprisal of such hurt on them (George, et. al., 2014).

Onwụchekwa continues with her ideology of inter-female hostility by comparing Chinagọrọm with other women for the purpose of eulogizing her (Chinagọrọm) and vilifying the others. Accordingly, the author uses innuendoes to depict other women as unfaithful while presenting Chinagọrọm as an ideal and reserved lady. This is excerpted in "*O jighị ụkwu ebie ọkazị dị ka ụmụ agbọghọ ibe ya ji nke ha ebie*" (She does not use her waist to shred Okazi leaves just like other ladies use theirs to shred i.e. She is not a flirt) (p. 3). To emphasize her point of positive difference in Chinagọrọm in contradistinction to other young ladies who flirt, the author speaks of how shamelessly those other

ladies 'use their waists to chop Okazi leaf' – as excerpted in "*Ịhere gwụrụ ibe ya n'anya, nkịta racha akwa ha anya*" (her mates are shameless as well as wild) (p. 3). In Igbo society, Okazi leaf is used to prepare a type of soup – Okazi soup. To use the leaf for the soup, a cook is required to chop it finely with a knife. Hence, the act of chopping the leaf is used metaphorically in the context by the author to portray the recklessness of the women's attitude to flirting. But for Chinagọrọm, who has the author's heart, however, positive adjectives are used to describe her manners – as exemplified in Mrs. Ayọdele, Chinedum's co-worker's opinion about her (Chinagọrọm) – where Mrs. Ayọdele says "*mma gị mebiri m isi, ma ya fọdụzie di gị*" (your beauty intoxicates me let alone your husband) (p. 46). Also, Mrs. Emeka is depicted as agreeing with Mrs. Ayọdele that Chinagọrọm is, indeed, a beauty to behold. The author further uses simile to describe Chinagọrọm in good lights, in contradistinction to other women, when she speaks of Chinagọrọm's dancing steps: "*ọ na-ete o na-ereji ka aka igu nkwụ ka mepụtara ọhụrụ. Mma ya na otu o si agba egwu na-awụ onye ọ bụla akpataoyi. O nwere ndị chi ha kpụziri akpụzi nyekwa ha nganga eji ete egwu obi adi ndi na-elete ha ụtọ"* (as she dances, she bends like newly sprout palm leaves. Her beauty and the way she dances give everybody goose bumps. There are people that their God created specially and gave them skill for dancing that thrill the audience) (p. 53).

All these reinforce the point that it is not all women that are hostile to each other or that some supposedly hostile ones are also capable of being kind and friendly sometimes and in some situations. Even the author, in her seeming hostility for some women, displays in the above scene that she still has the capacity for kindness and admiration for a fellow woman, Chinagọrọm. She also makes the characters of Mrs. Ayọdele and Mrs. Emeka to portray inter-female friendliness toward Chinagọrọm. This summarizes that, despite her attempt at portraying inter-female aggression as a general condition of women's social relations in the society, the author is also aware of and tries to balance the

condition with portrayals of bond and care that can and do exist among some other women in the society.

C. *Dibịa Na Agwọ Otoro* by Chinedum Ọfọmata (2000)

Like Obidebube and Onwụchekwa, Ọfọmata, a male author, starts his narrative with a robust background that gives readers an insight into what to expect especially from main characters. The characters and their lives are also presented from an omniscient perspective. And he sermonizes with their names too. Ọfọmata also fills his narrative with both direct and indirect inter-female hostilities and builds in minor stories to further aid depiction of the women's character.

The narrative commences with introductory background that exposes readers to Ezinna who expresses his intention to marry a wife. Following that immediately is introduction of Ezinna's sister, Chịọma (Goodluck). Then, Chịọma's bad attributes are highlighted: "*ọ bụ eziokwu na aha nwanne Ezinna a bụ Chịọma maa Ị baa ya ime Ị hụ na nwanyị a bụ chịọjọọ dị na mmadụ*" (It is true that the name of this Ezinna's sister is good fortune, but when you experience her internally, you will see that she is a kind of human misfortune) (p. 1). Using the pun Chịọma (goodluck) and Chịọjọọ (bad luck) to describe Chịọma, the author sets the tone of the narration and prepares readers' minds for an ill-mannered character in Chịọma. Hence, one is not expected to be shocked about Chịọma's attitude when she begins to display inter-female aggression towards her brother's wife, Ngọzịka. The author deploys denotative terms, transparent and opaque idiomatic expressions, proverbs and witty sayings to depict Chịọma's hostile nature towards Ngọzịka. Hence, describing Chịọma's character further, Ọfọmata avers that its badness belies her beauty. This is excerpted in "*Nwanyị a bitụrụ mma aka. Kama ọ bụ ụdara ọọọọma danyere na nsị. Ọ gbachara ajọ mmadụ were na-ajụ chi ya ma o nwere ebe ọzọ ọ fọdụrụ*" (This woman is very beautiful. But she is a beautiful 'ụdara' fruit that fell on feces. She is extremely wicked) (p. 2). The author uses the metaphor "*Kama ọ bụ ụdara ọma danyere na nsị"* and

"Ọ bụ abuala na onye ọ tara anaghị anọ ndụ" (But she is a beautiful 'udara' fruit that fell on feces, and she is a poisonous snake that whoever it bites does not survive) (p. 5) to explain the irony of Chiọma's beauty and her bad attitude.

In a bid to commence his depiction of hostilities among women, the author leads readers to perceive women as entities that are pretentious and insensitive toward each other. This is embedded in the circumstance where Chiọma is depicted to welcome Ngọzịka very well after her (Ngọzịka's) marriage to her (Chiọma's) brother, Ezinna. In an attempt to act as a good sister-in-law, Chiọma further depicted as advising the newly married couple to live in peace. However, the twist in Chiọma's character begins to manifest when she displays aggression toward Ngọzịka, even when Ngọzịka is heavily pregnant. Chiọma slaps Ngọzịka for failing to fetch firewood for cooking. Then Chiọma's mother, seeing her daughter's error, tries to reprimand Chiọma by explaining to her that Ngọzịka cannot fetch firewood because of the pregnancy. But Chiọma retorts: "*afo ime, o bukwa nke m burula ugboro ugboro ka o nwere ozo*" (pregnancy, is it not the one I have carried severally or is there any other one?) (p. 22). To Chiọma, therefore, being pregnant is not a substantial reason for Ngọzịka to fail in carrying out her chores. When Chiọma goes to take a few firewood from the ones Ngọzịka managed to fetch, Chiọma threatens Ngọzịka: "*o buru na ipkachaghi anya gi n'ulo a, m gwa gi na o bu m bu Chiọma*" (if you are not careful in this house, I will tell you that I am Chiọma) (p. 24). Chiọma also threatens Ngọzịka with a possibility of terminating her (Ngọzịka's) marriage to brother, Ezinna, where she tells Ngọzịka that she will send her back to her parent's house and then get another wife for her brother. This is excerpted in "*I kwusie okwu ike, ilaa be nnagi, agaa m chotara nwanne m nwoke onye ozo o ga-alu*" (p. 24).

Although the narrative presents Chiọma as a very hostile woman, her nature is to be considered as an ideological product and presentation of the author. This means that she is as hostile and, thus, as bad as the author manipulates her character to be in

the story. This position is supported by the initial observation that exposes the author's intention to identify the character with the role it plays – as Chịọjọọ (p. 1). In real life, though, it is important to equally observe that there are such characters as the author idealized in Chịọma. But does that mean that all women behave in that way? No. There are some sisters-in-law that are kind, friendly, and helpful to their relative's wife. Chịọma's case is exceptional. And the author supports this by continually referring to the character as "*nwanyi a*" (this woman). The reference points out that the author is focused on a particular woman's character.

Ọfọmata continues to portray Chịọma in bad light where he describes her, thus: "*Nkita ara ka ya mma*" (a mad dog is better than her) (p. 3). "*Nwanyi a lee gi anya gbawa oso otu okpa gi ha*" (if this woman looks at you, start running as fast as your legs could) (p. 3). "*I puta ututu kpoo ya ihu, I mara na chi gi egbuola gi ubochi ahu*" (when you wake up and see her in the morning, know for a fact that the day is ruined for you) (p. 3). "*O meghe onu gwa gi okwu ipkoo chi gi bia gbuo gi*" (when she opens her mouth and say something to you, you will ask your creator to kill you) (p. 3). The author further describes Chịọma's ill-character in co-relation with a change in her skin complexion where he says that she used to be light skinned when she was a young girl but is now darker as a result of her bad character. In particular relation to Ngọzịka, the author describes Chịọma's bad character with extreme hyperboles where he says of Chịọma "*O gbachara ajo mmadu were na-aju chi ya ma o nwere ebe ozo o foduru*" (Chịọma is so wicked that she asks her creator if she could be more wicked) (p. 39) and of Ngọzịka "*nani ihe Ngọzịka na-aruzi bu iji anya mmiri akwo aka*" (the only thing that Ngọzịka does is to be washing her hands with her tears) (p. 39). This means that Ngọzịka cries everyday as a result of Chịọma's ill-treatment such that Ngọzịka washes her hands daily with the tears.

The author also portrays Chiọma's mother in bad light where he blames Chiọma's attitude toward Ngọziịka on the mother's docility and complacency. This means that Chiọma's mother supports her daughter's actions. She is not shown to question Chiọma at any point. For emphasis on Chiọma's mother's encouragement of the daughter's hostility toward Ngọziịka, the author speaks of Chiọma and her mother's hostility toward Ngọziịka as leaving Nzozika psychologically traumatized and ugly "*emekatala ya ihe, o si na mmadu puo, na-achuzi udele oso na njo*" (the ill treatment meted out to Ngọziịka by Chiọma and her mother makes Ngọziịka appear so ugly that even the vulture which is known for its extreme ugliness is finer than Ngọziịka) (p. 61).

In all of these, Ngọziịka is depicted as a pitiable, hardworking and resilient strong woman who refuses to be unsettled by Chiọma and Chiọma's mother's plots against her. Ngọziịka's mother is also depicted as a strong, supporting woman, especially where she intercedes for the daughter spiritually when Chiọma seeks to entreat Ajaala (a deity) to annihilate Ngọziịka and her children. This is when Chiọma's hatred and hostility towards Ngọziịka climaxes. But Ngọziịka's mother seems to have endured enough of the torture on her daughter as she also takes sacrifices to Ajaala to counter Chiọma's entreaties. The deity favours Ngọziịka's mother against Chiọma as Chiọma's plan fails. By this, the author uses Ngọziịka and her mother's behaviour to balance general perception of women as being hostile to each other, for Ngọziịka and her mother's characters attest to some degree of exemption of some women from the behaviour. It proves that it is not all women that are hostile toward each other. Some are kind, friendly, caring, and supporting, even in daunting situations that would motivate hostilities in others.

D. *Jụọchi* by Tagbo Nzeakọ (1981)

Like the three authors already discussed above, Nzeakọ, a male author, starts his narrative with a robust background that gives readers an insight into what to expect especially from main

characters. Accordingly, the protagonist, Jụọchi's pathetic family background is introduced in a way that makes readers know what lies ahead for her and her mother. The reader is led to understand how Ekwuigbo, the Jụọchi's father, suffers from one form of illness to another. And some of the illnesses are the handiwork of the evil people around them. This is presented in the proverb "*n'ihi na onwu gburu nne okuko agaghi ahu nwa ya wee leghara ya anya*" (the death that killed the hen will not leave the chicks) (p. 4). He eventually dies in the hands of his beloved wife, Udumma. And the death changes the rest of life for Jụọchi and Udumma. First, due to the death, Ekwuigbo's relatives tell Udumma to return to her father's house because she no longer belongs to their family "... *iji mee ka o mata na o buru na nwa anwuo, nwata biara iku ya alaa*" (when the child that a maid babysits dies, the maid leaves) (p. 5). This is because she does not have a male child – as the culture demands for her to stay. Hence, she heeds her in-law's pressure to leave and returns to her father's house. Second, Udumma's siblings receive her and try to re-integrate her in the family by building a house for her. However, despite building the house for Udumma, during the planting season she is not given any piece of land to cultivate. This, as portrayed by the author, is because they hail from a patriarchal agrarian Igbo society where women are not allowed to own a land or landed property and cannot be entrusted with any. Even Udumma and Jụọchi's living condition and industriousness cannot change the tradition.

The author also presents the characters and their lives from an omniscient perspective. He depicts Udumma as a hardworking but unintelligent woman. On meeting a woman who indicates interest in taking Jụọchi as a maid for the first time, for instance, Udumma is said to fail to ask the woman to identify herself. When Udumma gets home to tell her brother, Eloka, about the woman and her interest in taking Jụọchi as a maid and the brother asks her for the woman's identity, Udumma responds that she did not ask the woman. Eloka hisses and tells Udumma that she behaves like a senseless person. In angry disappointment,

he also educates her about what happens in the society to people with such low intelligence; how people kidnap their children and sell. This corroborates the author's depiction of Udumma as an unintelligent woman.

The woman interested in taking Jụọchi as maid – Adamma – eventually comes and takes Jouchi to live with her and her husband. And while with them at Enugwu, Adamma shows Jụọchi that all that glitters is not gold. Adamma becomes hostile to Jụọchi – in words and action. Each time she gives Jụọchi food, for instance, she asks her if she gets that kind of food to eat in her house. This is excerpted as "*o na-anu nke di otu a n'ulo ha?*" (does she drink this type in their house?) (p. 33). Adamma's ill treatment of Jụọchi makes Jụọchi sad all the time.

For emphasis, Nzeakọ makes Adamma to repeat harsh words at Jụọchi. He also intersperses the narrative with rhetorical questions to further reveal Adamma's wickedness to Jụọchi. For instance, "*kedu ihe bu iwe ya mere ka o jiri iwe nyuo Jụọchi oke ikpakwu n'ahu*?" (what was her annoyance that warrant her beating of Jụọchi mercilessly?) (p. 35). And "*O buru nwa omutara, o ga-eme ya udi ihe ahu o mere Jụọchi*?" (If she is her child, will she do that type of thing she did to Jụọchi?) (p. 36). Also, "*O buru nwa ya ka mmadu ozo mere udi ihe ahu, o ga-adi ya mma n'obi*?" (If it were her child that somebody else did that to, will she accept it?) (p. 37). Adamma punishes Jụọchi constantly for offences she is not responsible for.

All these clearly show that Nzeakọ's narrative is a function of his ideology on inter-female social relations. Since that idealizes hostility among women, especially where one is more influential than the other, he manipulates the characters to depict the hostility. But that does not mean that all women are hostile to each other, especially where one is socially and economically more privileged than the other. Some privileged women actually treat the less privileged ones kindly and friendly. This is evident within the same novel where Oriakụ, another female character and sister to Adamma, assists the same Jụọchi to

escape the harsh life meted out to her by Adamma and go to live at a friendlier place (Nzeakọ, 1981).

Adamma's relationship with her sister, Oriakụ, therefore presents another window into inter-female hostility in the narrative. Through Oriakụ's character, the author subtly portrays women as insensitive philanderers. This is because Oriakụ engages in an amorous relationship with her sister's husband, Ikegwuọnụ. And the relationship results in a pregnancy. Adamma is very furious and aggressive toward her sister. Yet, Oriakụ cares less about that. She does not mind if Adamma's marriage and happiness jeopardized by her action. Her illicit relationship with her sister's husband, however, seems to be a form of reverse inter-female hostility. This is because while Adamma displays hostility toward Jụọchi, Oriakụ's relationship with Ikegwuọnụ displays hostility toward Adamma. When Ikegwuọnụ asks Oriakụ to keep the pregnancy and promises to pay her bride price, Oriakụ does counter the position. She concurs and does not feel any form of remorse for her behaviour against her sister. Upon Ikegwuọnụ's confession to Adamma that he is responsible for Oriakụ's pregnancy, Adamma makes Oriakụ leave the house.

Adamma's anger at her sister is not unusual with any woman who finds herself in the situation that her sister's relationship with her husband presents her. Ikwubụzo (2012, p. 160) supports this where he asserts that "in real life situation there is no Igbo wife who would take lightly, or condone, such pregnancy in her matrimonial home." This, however, does not mean that all women would behave like Oriakụ in their sister's home and with their sister's husband. Yet, the situation is merely the author's ideology.

Upon leaving Adamma's house, Oriakụ is portrayed to connive with her friend, Nneka, to assist Jụọchi to leave Adamma's house too. Though, to some extent, Oriakụ's thought to assist Jụọchi to leave Adamma's house may be a welcomed decision, it shows, to a very large extent, Oriakụ's reciprocal hatred for Adamma, especially due to Adamma's highhanded treatment of Jụọchi and the fact of the intimacy subsisting

between her (Oriakụ) and Adamma's husband. The intimacy becomes a point of jealousy, competition and, thus, hatred or aggression for both women. And this is substantiated by the Freudian position on women's struggle for mutual phallic interests mentioned above in the analysis of Obidịebube's *Kọdịlịchukwu*.

Oriakụ's assistance to Jụọchi, as mentioned earlier, further reinforces the argument that it is not all women that are hostile to each other. Some are kind and caring to fellow women. Hence, the position that women are hostile toward each other is flawed.

Conclusion

Given the problem of reading about inter-female hostility in literatures, where some authors are perceived to focus on depicting the behaviour as a universal character of all women in the society, this essay aimed at deploying analytic method of literary discourses to interrogate the four novels stated above for that purpose. The analysis was guided by certain questions that sought to interrogate the authors' viewpoints for the defalcation, especially with respect to their language and style of depiction. Due to the assumption that gender bias could play a significant role in influencing the authors' viewpoints on the subject, the authorship of the novels was carefully selected with gender differences in mind. Hence, they were two females and two males. And the number (i.e. two authors per gender) was deemed necessary so as to expand the interrogation and seek a balance in gender bias (if any). One novel per gender was perceived to be too narrow to avail the expansion and balance, for one male or female, for instance, might approach the subject in a way that another might counter in his or her approach.

From findings, the essay vetoed the bias in all the authors' viewpoints. This means that no author was found to be influenced by gender bias in their depictions of the women's character as all of them wrote about it with similar language and style. However, they were all found to be influenced by their

personal ideologies concerning the character. Each of the novels affirmed the point that most authors depict their personal viewpoints concerning the behaviour as a character latent in all women. Yet, evidences sought by this research, which also include the novels interrogated, debunk that impression and position and argue that exemptions abound that are attributable to cultural and individual values. Consequently, this essay contributes to knowledge the point that some authors' over-generalized views of women as being hostile to fellow women is incorrect.

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