

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN SELECTED IGBO FEMALE AUTHORED PLAYS

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Abstract:

This work is set out to examine the portrayal of women major characters in selected Igbo female authored plays. Research has shown that the Igbo male playwrights subjugate their female major character; that is, they represent them negatively in their plays. This is the result of gender discrimination and cultural oppression the aim of which is the subordination of African women in general and Igbo women in particular. It is this state of affairs that motivated the researcher into finding out whether Igbo female playwrights equally portray their female major characters negatively or whether they have different relationships with their female major characters in their Igbo plays. The study adopted the survey research method. The selected Igbo female authored plays were critically studied, including other related literatures. The theoretical approach which the study employs is Alice Walker's Womanism. This literary approach is relevant to this study because it advocates that people have to co-exist peacefully in the family as well as the society. The study finds out that Igbo women writers do not subordinate their female key characters in their plays like their male counterpart. It is hoped that this will help people generally to change their negative attitude to gender issues. We recommend that both male and female Igbo playwrights should try to create positive male and female major characters who will serve as role models for readers to emulate especially students.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Many African males in general and Nigerian males in particular, seem to have failed to appreciate the powerful role which women play in sustaining the continent and the nation. There are gender inequalities and discrimination due to existing African oppressive cultural practices and patriarchal structures. Women's struggle and agitation for women rights within the regimented patriarchal system and structures have given rise to series of serious feminist discourses. These struggles and agitations should be understood in terms of women's inability to make demands on the government, their inability to actively participate in policy making as well as their negative representation in literature due to gender inequalities.

According to Omonubi – McDonnell (2003:4), the consequence of the unequal status between men and women is a higher level of economic and political powerlessness among women. Powerlessness in turn retards development at any level politically, economically and socially. Thus, Nigerian women are confronted by two distinct yet related systems of power, the economic mode of capitalism and

the ideological mode of patriarchy and oppressive cultural practices. Often times, this subordinate position also manifest in the way male writers portray their female major characters.

Obviously, women generally have been frowning at their subjugating position. Hence Lucas (2009:13) in Utoh-Ezeajugh (2013:3) notes that:

Time has come for the dismantling of old concepts and values, old mentality and principles and replaces them with pragmatic ones based on fairness and justice. Only few people reflect on the fact that sexism or gender oppression ranks as one of the insidious problem plaguing the country and slowing down its pace of growth and development.

As it were, this gender oppression manifests in the negative ways in which male writers represent their female major characters in their literary works. They neglect to point out the positive side of womanhood because of their cultural reality. Such male authors tend to assume that what obtains in their culture is the ideal thing and as such they allow their cultural reality to manifest in their literary works.

The ideal female character created by male writer acts within the framework of the traditional roles as a wife and a mother. So strong are social values that the respect and love which a woman earns is relative to the degree of her adaptation to these roles. The researcher was motivated into carrying out this study to find out whether female playwrights as well portray their female characters within the framework of their traditional roles or whether they represent them in a different perspective. The selected plays includes Okediadi's *Ihe Onye Metere*, Obidiebube's *Onoḍu Ugo* and Akpiri Richie *Uzo*

2.0 An Overview of Literature And Analysis

Here, our concern is to take on objective, analytical look into the written works of other authors on the topic of research.

2.1 Culture and Portrayals of Women in Literature

Nwankwo (2002:74-75) asserts that culture is the super organic syndrome that was biologically transmitted or inherited through biological means by social groups and individuals in the society. Beattie (1964:105) holds that culture is species specific, although other species can communicate, only human beings can communicate through symbols and language being the most important symbol or system, is a part of culture. In support of Beattie, Rosamund and Billington et al (1991:1) add that culture, in its generality, involves the society, the system, the structure and the origin combined with tradition. In line with the above argument, Douglas (1980:117) observes that attempts to split off culture from the rest of the human behaviour have been relatively unsuccessful. This is because the concept of culture has to do with the biological transmission of the beliefs, values and customs of a particular people and society.

Asigbo (2012:65) sees culture as a people's way of life, how they dress, how they bring up their young, bury their dead, sing, dance, respond to insults, fight their

battles, cook and eat their food. Asigbo further notes that it is in recognition of the pivotal role of culture that the United Nations created an agency like UNESCO so that issues bordering on the cultural component of development can be harnessed for world peace and understanding.

Culture therefore, is a totality of a man's life as practiced in his society. It is an all-embracing concept about the way of life of a group of people occupying a given territorial space, their established norms, behaviour, tradition and practises. And that is why the literary artists, particularly the males are portraying the female major characters negatively because literature is always there to point at the cultural practices of the people.

2.2 Theoretical Framework:

The study adopts a Womanist Theory approach. Alice Walker coined the Womanist Theory in 1983. She first applied it to her work, *In Search of Our Mother's Garden Womanist Prose*. Alice Walker who for many years has been asking feminist questions about race and class – based oppressions, sexual violence, reproductive rights and the relationship between these issues and black woman's culture comes up with womanism theory as a new ideology. Walker (2012:12-14) notes that:

Feminism is incorporated into womanism. The focus of womanism theory is not on gender inequality, but on race and class-based oppressions. A womanist is committed to the survival of both male and female and desires a world where men and women can co-exist, while maintaining their cultural distinctiveness.

Thus, the inclusion of men provides black women with an opportunity to address gender oppression and consequent suppression without directly attacking men. Womanism, as a concept, advocates gender complementarities, which would ensure the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female. Therefore, womanism theory is centered around the natural order of life, family and a complementary relationship between men and women.

2.3 The Portrayal of Female Major Characters in the Selected Igbo Female-Authored Plays.

Here, the researcher attempts the synopsis and the explication of the selected plays.

(a) Analysis of *Ihe Onye Metere*:

The first text to attempt its synopsis is Okediadi's *Ihe Onye Metere* which is a drama that criticizes the inordinate ambition of Okezie in killed his brother, Ogonnaya because of a piece of land that does not actually belong to him. Okezie even still wants to kill the first son of his late brother, but unfortunately, his evil intentions boomerang against him through the death of his only son. The repercussion does not end there, he equally loses his life because of his greed and wickedness. As it is usually said that the evils that men do live after them.

Actually, Okezie and his brother, Ogonnaya have to inherit about four pieces of land from their late father which they are supposed to share. But there is a particular piece of land which their father uses in obtaining loan. He has to pay the loan.

Eventually, Ogbonnaya pays the loan and their father tells him to take that particular piece of land. Obviously, Okezie knows this truth that surrounds the land but greed and wickedness still propel him into disputing it. Okezie's wife, Chinyere, advises him to be careful over the issue of that land to avoid making a mistake. Okezie calls his kinsmen, and after deliberations, they advise Okezie and Ogbonnaya to settle the dispute over the piece of land between themselves before the next meeting.

Okezie goes to his friend, Ezemmiri, a diabolic man to inform him of the land dispute between him and his brother, Ogbonnaya. They agree that they will poison Ogbonnaya's drink on one of their meeting days. On the occasion of the reception of Ojiekwe's son, Nkemdirim, who returns from abroad after his graduation as a medical doctor, Ezemmiri poisons Ogbonnaya's wine in line with his earlier agreement with Okezie. After drinking the poisoned wine, Ogbonnaya dies. After the burial of Ogbonnaya, Okezie goes to Ahudiya, Ogbonnaya's wife who is now a widow.

Later Okezie plans to kill Uchenna, the son of Ogbonnaya because of that land in dispute. He arranges with a hired killer, Ahaotu and his group to kill Uchenna and dump his corpse inside Akpakolu River. Okezie promises them a huge sum of money. He describes the physical appearance of the boy to them.

According to Okezie's description, the hired killers have to wait for the boy, but fail to see him because he does not pass as usual. As the killers contemplate to go, they see a young man coming their way. The hired killers resolve that their concern is to kill somebody according to term of the contract. So they have to kill that young man in spite of the fact that he does not resemble the person that has been described for them. Later it is discovered that the person they have killed is Ahamefula, Okezie's only son. As a result of that, Okezie starts to cry. Coincidentally, as he is crying, Uchenna is seen coming along with his belongings along the Akpokaolu River. Uchenna becomes confused as to why many people have gathered along that way. Little does he know that another person has just been killed instead of him. At the same time Uchenna saw people carrying Ahamefula's corpse to Okezie's house. However, Uchenna and his mother has to sympathize with Okezie who has lost his only son because of his greed and wicked attitude.

Although he is mourning the death of his only son, Okezie pays the hired killers their money. Later Okezie falls sick and is unconscious, and in that critical condition he begins to confess the evils he has done to people. Afterwards, his stomach swells up and he later dies. Chinyere, his wife, goes on crying for the death of her husband. As Ezemmiri, Okezie's friend is going home, thunder storm strikes him down and he loses his life. Obviously, no sinner will go unpunished.

The explication of the story in Okediadi's (2002) *IheOnyeMetere* exposes Igbo female playwright's positive portrayal of the female major character in the play. In the play, the artist presents Ahudiya, the wife of Ogbonnaya and the female major character as a woman that is enjoying the right to participate in joint decision-making on issues affecting her in the family. There is no domination of the female gender by the male which is the common thing in patriarchal society.

In the play, one observes that Ahudiya has the privilege to call her husband and remind him of sharing their inherited property with his brother, Okezie, to enable her know the one that actually belongs to them to avoid unnecessary encroachment. Ahudaiya complains to her husband concerning how his brother and the wife use to embarrass her each time she goes to the farm on that land.

Obviously, Ahudiya's husband, Ogonnaya listens to her complaints but advises her to exercise patience; that the issue of land is a sensitive one and so must be handled with caution.

The playwright also presents Chinyere as a caring woman. While she is about to go to the market, she observes that her husband, Okezie, is not happy. She asks her husband why he is sighing; whether his brother, has provoked him. Okezie explains to his wife, Chinyere, how Ogonnaya is making a demand to share their inherited property. Chinyere advises him to take it easy to avoid regrets as land issue is usually sensitive.

Further in this play, the playwright presents Ahudiya as a caring wife. She has a dream, and informs her husband about it. The dream is supposed to act as a veritable instrument to deliver her husband from the calamity that is awaiting him. But Ogonnaya does not take it seriously. Rather, he just makes a jest of the bad dream due to lack of spiritual knowledge. As a result, he died later according to the wish of Okezie his brother. The playwright also presents Ogonnaya's wife as a wise and responsible woman. When her husband dies, she is able to co-ordinate the family properly. As a result, the children have grown up to become good, wise and knowledgeable children that are useful to the family and society.

Moreover, the writer portrays Ahudiya as a faithful and loving wife. Immediately after the death of her husband, Ogonnaya, Okezie his brother wants to take over the place of Ogonnaya, but Ahudiya refuses due to the true love she has for her husband when he still lived.

After the death of Ogonnaya, the peaceful co-existence in the family continues. With good motherly guidance of Ahudiya, Uchenna, the first son of Ogonnaya effectively replaces his father and goes on to play some of his roles in the family. This is due to the good upbringing Ahudiya has given to her children after the death of her husband and so they have grown up to be useful children. Uchenna helps the mother Ahudiya in co-ordinating the family.

This is the contention of Womanist Theory (which is the basis of this study), a situation whereby all the people, whether male, female and children will have freedom in the family. There is nothing like unnecessary wrangling. One observes that there is no subjugation of the female character all through the play. There is gender equity among the people especially the husband and the wife and this makes way for peace in the family.

(b) Analysis of *Onodu Ugo*

The next text under consideration is Obidiebube's *Onodu Ugo*, (2007) which is an Igbo drama that discusses the story of Ngozichukwuka, the daughter of Okonkwo Mmaduka and his wife, Chiamaka. Before the birth of Ngozi, the mother has no

child for a long time. Amaka is used to going to many places to solve her problem just as it is customary among the Igbo people. Eventually, the couple gives birth to a girl child, Ngozi.

Ngozi is destined to be important and popular right from her childhood. It is the money that accrued from her scholarship fund and various presents from individuals and government that was used for her training and the other children of her parents in schools. Ngozi is very useful to her family. Her name from childhood is associated with success.

As a result of all these inherent ability, strife and jealousy surrounds Ngozi's life. Their mother, Amaka gives birth to four of them. Out of the four children, they have a male child called Obiora. He is a nonentity and has no vision. It is under this hopeless situation that Obiora's parents died. Ngozi has tried to make Obiora a useful being so as to secure their family lineage. She ensures that he completed his university education. She helps Obiora to secure a nice job, marry and settle down as a family man.

Later, Ngozi builds a house for Obiora and also buys a piece of land and acquires her own house where she is going to live to avoid quarrelling with his brother, Obiora. The worst thing occurs at the time Ngozi brings in Nkechi for the purpose of a child adoption. Obiora, Ngozi's brother loses self control. He does all he can to do away with Nkechi but to no avail. Ngozi's kinsmen are in support of her idea of owning a child. They give her encouragement her to ignore Obiora's view of sending away the child. Obiora's wish is simply to inherit Ngozi's property.

Obidiebube's *Onodu Ugo* (2007) shows that the female major character in a drama can be portrayed positively, and not in subordination to the male characters in the play. In the play, Ngozi Okonkwo, the major character is presented by the playwright as a solid and superior woman who is very important and influential in the society. Ngozi is presented to be so wonderful from her childhood. During her student days, she is known to perform well in both education and sports. She receives various presents from government and individuals. All her education has been through scholarship. Even her siblings have to benefit from Ngozi's scholarship funds. Thus one of Ngozi's school mates, Agu, notes that Ngozi is always among the winning groups. Thus Agu observes her good performance by saying;

Ngozi nwa Okonkwo ga-esonyekwu n'otu ndi ahụ n'ihina o bu aguba agunyeghi ugbo a. Akwukwo niile o na-agu bu 'scholarship' e nyegara ya ka o ji agu ha. E jikwa ego a na-akwu ya na-azu umunne ya ndi ozo n'akwukwo (pp.35-36).

Translation:

Ngozi Okonkwo's daughter will be among that group because whoever that does not recognize her must be her enemy. All her education has been paid for with scholarship funds that she has received. The money she is paid is also used for paying the tuition of her siblings (pp.35-36).

The playwright portrays Ngozi positively as a popular person that her friends envy her. She outshines her mates in whatever they do, both in school and out of school, that some of them even begin to ask series of questions as to what is the secret behind her tremendous successes in both academics and sports.

Ngozi is portrayed as the most blessed person in life that while she is still in the university, employment is already waiting for her to complete her education and start work immediately.

Furthermore, the playwright presents Ngozi as a lover of God. This manifests when Ngozi begins to appreciate God for all the things He has been doing in her life. Ngozi recognizes that it is God that makes her to be so popular everywhere due to her wonderful performances in sports and in education. Ngozi asserts as follows:

...Anyị ka lechara ule, ibe m nọ na-eche rizołtu ugbua ma mụ onwe m nọzi na-arụ ọrụ oyibo. Akwukwọ niile a m gụrụ, ọ nweghị nke nne na nna m tinyere kobo na ya kama ọ bụ m na-eweta ego na-enye ha. Chineke, aga m ekwesiri Gị ntukwasị obi n'ihina ọrụ ebube Gị dị egwu na ndụ m (p.46).

Translation:

...We have just finished examinations. My mates are now waiting for their results whereas I have secured employment. In all my educational studies, my parents did not pay any tuition fees during of all my studies, instead I used to give them money. got money and gave to them.... God I will be faithful to you because your works on me are glorious (p.46).

The playwright also presents Ngozi as a caring and meticulous person. After the death of their parents she has to take over the challenge of taking care of the family.

Ngozi is also portrayed as a beautiful, intelligent, hardworking and wealthy person. Ngozi is childless because she has not married, yet, she is portrayed as someone who cannot be intimidated. Upon all the obstacles of her brother, Obiora, over her idea of adopting a child, she eventually has adopt to a girl, Nkechi. The literary artist presents her as a good mother by the way she trains her daughter, Nkechi. She is presented as being responsible and knowledgeable and worthy of emulation. Thus, Ngozi Okonkwo, the major female character is portrayed positively all through the play .She is fully established from the beginning of her life till when she dies in the play.

(c) Analysis of *Akpiri Richie Uzo (O Were Anya Zie Ozi)*

The next text, Obidiebube's (2009) *Akpiri Richie Uzo* is a drama which exposes negative consequence of having love for money more than any other thing .In the drama, because of the love of money, Amadi forces his daughter, Uzoma to marry an elderly man she does not love. In spite of the fact that Uzoma has explained to her parents that she is waiting for someone she will like to marry, they have to force her to marry Akuebuo. Uzoma tries to explain to them that the young man, Somtoo, who she met in the university is trying to gather money to come and perform the

marriage cultural rites. But they have to insist that Uzoma marries Akuebuo who is rich but old. Eventually the marriage is contracted between Uzoma and Akuebuo.

Following the fact that Uzoma married Akuebuo outside her wish, she still went on relating with Somtoo, the young man whom she would have preferred to marry. Later Uzoma poison the food she prepared for her husband. As a result of the quarrel between Uzoma and her husband, Akuebuo, Uzoma's parents did not get the money they required from Akuebuo.

However, Akuebuo does not die from the food poisoning. Uzoma insists that she does not know anything concerning the ill-health of her husband. After series of meetings by Akuebuo's kinsmen, they have to decide that Uzoma will be ordered out of their town, Amaoji. On the other hand, Akuebuo's kinsmen have to deliberate on what punishment they will give to the young man who is causing trouble in their brother's marriage. But Ugokwe who is more reasonable among them opposes the idea of punishing Somtoo. Ugokwe notes that they only have the right to deal with their wife, Uzoma, by chasing her away from their town, Amaoji.

When Uzoma gets to her father's house, she reminds her parents that the whole problem emanates from their too much love for money. In addition, she laments that doing evil is not in her nature, but the unhealthy circumstances in which she is pushed into by her parents have lured her into doing evil. She prays that God will see her through her tribulations.

Later, the young man Somtoo travels overseas and becomes very wealthy. One day, Somtoo unexpectedly meets Uzoma at Abuja and they eventually come together and reconcile. On that ground, Somtoo struggles to see that Uzoma's town recalls her to their town, Amaoji. When he has achieved this, he pays Uzoma's bride price, does the traditional wine carrying and they wedded in the church. They begin to live together as husband and wife. From the experiences Amadi and Ugodiya have obtained from Uzoma's marriage, they have to learn that it is not proper to force their daughter into marriage because of money. It is always good to allow love to be the controlling factor in issues of marriage.

The explication of the story in *Akpiri Richie Uzo...* (2009) shows the danger of having too much love for money more than any other thing. In this drama, one observes that the female major character is not subjugated in the play. When Amadi is thinking on the issue of his daughter, Uzoma's marriage, he calls his wife with due respect for them to discuss the issue of their child's marriage (pp.8-10).

In this play, the writer portrays that women play vital roles in the family. Both the husband and the wife maintain cordial relationship. They tend to have agreements in whatever they do. They talk to each other politely. This is the contention of womanist theory adopted for this study. The theory advocates that men and women have to co-exist peacefully in the family and society without wrangling. However, the theory also advocates that men will take their position as the head of the family where necessary to express their feelings without being quarrelsome. An instance of the cordial relationship in the family of Amadi and Ugodiya which our today's

families need to emulate can be seen in the excerpt where Amadi politely talks to his wife (p.11)

...Nwaanyi ọma ewela iwe na okwu anyi erughi n'isi. I huru na enyi m, mu na ya yiri agba abjala. Ka m gaa kwado ka anyi zolie n'oge wee nwee ike ilota tupu chi ejie (. p.11)

Translation:

...Nice woman, don't be offended that we didn't conclude our discussion. You can see that my friend I have an appointment with has come. Let me go, to enable us come back before night fall (p.11).

In this drama, the writer portrays Ugodiya, the wife of Amadi as a responsible and meticulous woman who plays her role well in seeing that her husband eats before going out. On the day their in-law is supposed to come, Ugodiya knows that it is her responsibility to get things set for the occasion. By the time her husband, Amadi, asks her how far she is preparing, she tell him that everything is ready because of her happiness that day. Thus, Ugodiya says:

...N'ezikwu nna anyi, akwadochaala m ihe niile a ga-eji mee ihe n'ihina obi di m utọ taa (p.34).

Translation:

...Truely, our father, I have prepared everything that will be used on the occasion because I am very happy today (p.34).

The playwright also presents Ugodiya as a loving and caring wife. She lives up to the expectation of her husband. As a result, her husband Amadi cherishes her and always shows appreciation for the way his wife co-ordinates the family affairs.

In addition, the writer presents another major female character, Uzoma, the daughter of Amadi and Ugodiya as an obedient girl. When her parents want to give her out in marriage to Akuebuo, a notable wealthy but old man from Alaoma, she politely informs them that she does not want to marry the man. She explains to them that there is a young man, Somtoo, whom she met in the university that she will prefer to marry. Uzoma further explains to the mother that she is uncomfortable with the marriage arrangement they are making for her with Akuebuo.

One observes that Uzoma tries her best to stop her parents from involving her in marrying Akuebuo, the wealthy old man. But because their main concern is the man's money, they deny their daughter the freedom of marrying a man of her choice. This denial of freedom is against the contention of womanist theory which is the theoretical framework adopted for this study. The Womanists advocate that men, women and children will have freedom in making vital choices such as marriage But Uzoma's parents refuse to grant their daughter the freedom in choosing her life partner. They try to convince her that the young man Somtoo, is poor and cannot afford to take good care of her. The reply Uzoma gives to her mother are as follows in the excerpt below:

Nne, kedu ka m ga-esi luo onye akuwaghi sleeti. O joro njo nwoke. Nke ka njo bu na o buzighi nwata, ego ka o nwere. Aga m eriwezi so ego? Ahughi m ya n'anya. Mgbe obula m chetara nwoke ahụ, o di m ka ala mepee ka m dakpuo. Echeghi m na o ga-adaba ebe o bu na ihunanya adighi ya. Somtoo ji mma

gwu egwu, toruo ihe e ji nwoke eme, guo akwukwo, hu m n'anya. A sikwara na o naghị aru ezigbo oru ugbu a enwere m olile anya na site n'amuma goomentị ji ugbua, o ga-enwetariri oru ma nwekwaa ego...

Translation:

Mother, how can I marry an illiterate? He is an ugly man. The worst thing is that he is no longer young. It is just that he is wealthy. Will I just be enjoying money? I don't love him. Any time I remember that man I will wish the earth should open for me to sink. I don't think the marriage will be possible since there is no love. Somtoo is so handsome and educated and he also loves me. He also has all that is needed in a man. If he has no reasonable job now, I hope he will eventually secure a job with the government present plan....

Upon all these explanations, Uzoma's parents insist that they will give her in marriage to Akuebuo, because they want his money. So, as they continue to pressurize her, being an obedient girl, she allows them to contract the marriage which has no good foundation. Obviously, the marriage fails to last. It witnesses a collapse after a very short period. Uzoma, who has suffered great tribulation since she has been chased away from her village, unexpectedly meets Somtoo at Abuja after eight years. Later, they come together again. Somtoo meets the parents of Uzoma and the marriage is conducted. They later wedded in the church and have to live as husband and wife.

The playwright presents Uzoma as a girl that knows what she wants. She understands the fact that a marriage can only succeed when there is genuine love and not when there is money. The writer uses this play to sound a warning to parents who will wish to give out their daughter in marriage on the on the basis of wealth.

3.0 Summary of Findings and Conclusion:

It is here that we have to summarise our finding and then conclude the study.

3.1 Findings:

A thorough examination of the three Igbo female plays shows that women writers do not subjugate their female major characters. They tend to place both male and female characters on the same level. There is no gender discrimination in treating their characters. The authors of the three Igbo female plays made numerous efforts to present their female major characters in the way more appropriate to their gender than most male writers have done.

The female playwrights try to produce works which modern African women can relate to and be sensitized. For instance, in male works, the issue of barrenness devour the human personality in women. In most cases, it devastates women and subjects them to psychological trauma. But in Obidiebube's *Onodu Ugo*, Ngozi the major character is childless, and she is portrayed positively all through the play, pointing to the fact that childlessness does not make a woman less human as male writers use to portray.

3.2 Summary and Conclusion:

Igbo women writers do not subjugate their female major characters in their plays like their male counterpart. They try to project an objective imagery of women, an image that actually reflects the reality of women's role in the society. They are portrayed as full woman-beings who take up their rightful positions in the society. In the three selected Igbo female-authored plays used for this research, women major characters play positive roles. For instance, Ngozi Okonkwo in Obidiebube's *Onodu Ugo* is portrayed as a beautiful, intelligent, hardworking, wealthy and childless woman. Thus, both her stature and tragic dimension are carefully established in the play. Yet, in spite of her handicap (childlessness), she attains a very high and respectable position in her community. All her education has been through government scholarship. In fact, her scholarship funds are used in training her siblings. She records numerous achievements both in education and sports. Later she has to adopt a child, Nkechi, who has to inherit her estate and many other properties

As the research shows, unlike most Igbo male writers, female writers project a more balanced image of African womanhood. Obviously, the role of women is very visible and considerable at home in the three selected Igbo female plays in terms of participating and intervening in their husband's decision-making processes. There is no incidence of gender discrimination and oppression in the selected plays. The Igbo female writers tend to place both male and female major characters at the same level. One observes that neither the male nor the female characters is subjugated in the selected plays.

In conclusion, the Igbo female writers who are part of victims of male subjugation in a patriarchal society strive to use their literary works to debunk the erroneous male portrayals of women as good for nothing. As one observes in the three selected plays, they created the women that not only hold their own homes but also the ones that are astonishingly independent of their husbands. They try to analyze the women's independent economic position and the power they wield by the mere fact that they control the pestle, mortar and cooking pots.

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