

**REVISITING THE REPRESENTATION OF PATRIARCHY AND
GENDER INEQUALITY IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY
AFRICAN NOVELS**

AYIKORU GLORIA

17/U/14415/GMAL/PE

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DIRECTORATE OF
RESEARCH AND GRADUATE TRAINING IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER
OF ARTS IN LITERATURE OF
KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY**

OCTOBER, 2024

DECLARATION

I, **Ayikoru Gloria**, declare that this study, titled, “Revisiting the Representation of Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Selected Contemporary African Novels”, is my own work and has never been submitted to any institution of higher learning for any formal award. All works cited have been acknowledged.

Signature:Date:

APPROVAL

I confirm that this dissertation, entitled, “Revisiting the Representation of Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Selected Contemporary African Novels”, was done under our supervision.

signature

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

ASSOC. PROF. BENON TUGUME (PhD)

Date:.....

SUPERVISOR:

Dr. RONALD MUSANJE (PhD)

Signature:.....

Date:.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family: my loving husband, Dr. Alfred Driwale, and my lovely children, Taisi, Ijoyi, Evangeline, Nizo and Adroni. What an inspiration you are!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this research work has been due to the immense assistance, guidance and prayers from many people whom I now happily acknowledge. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Benon Tugume (PhD) for the invaluable academic guidance, encouragement and support without which it would have not been possible to complete this study. Thank you, Professor, for always being there for me! I also appreciate Dr. Musanje Ronald whose timely guidance as the co-supervisor enabled made progress achievable. I further express gratitude for the numerous guidance and encouragement that I received from the lecturers in the Department of Literature and Film Studies: thank you all for the numerous supports, counsel and encouragement throughout the course of this study. Specifically, I thank Ms. Elizabeth Asiimwe, the Ag. Head of Department for the motherly advice and constant reminders on the need to finish the programme.

I am highly indebted to my family for the enormous sacrifice, encouragement and support right from the first day of my graduate studies at Kyambogo University: specifically, I am very grateful to my husband, Dr. Alfred Driwale, for the exceptional financial and moral support, and my children for the prayers and love. You have greatly inspired me! Finally, I am deeply-appreciative of my graduate class mate, Mr. Rodgers Twasiima, for the insightful discussions, advice and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

This study offers a comprehensive re-examination of the patriarchal and gender inequality representation in selected African novels, capturing key aspects of the continuous and nuanced evolution of the patriarchal and gender-inequality issues on the African continent. The analysis centres on three specific research objectives, namely: the examination of repression of women by fellow women; analyzing the oppression of men by both patriarchy and women; and an exploration of male's advocacy for the emancipation of women under patriarchal societies. The study utilised qualitative, library-based research approach, characterized by close reading and textual analysis of both primary and secondary sources, to unravel the intricate evolution of patriarchal and gender inequality issues portrayed in the selected African novels; Kyomuhendo's *The First Daughter*, Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* and Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, to highlight the magnitude of the evolution of both patriarchy and gender inequality issues in Africa. From the broader sociological literary lens, the analysis of the study is presented in five chapters. The findings of the study confirm the continuous and intricate threefold evolution of both patriarchal and gender inequality issues in Africa, namely: the subjugation of women by fellow women, the oppression of males by both women and certain patriarchal ideals, and male's contribution and support to the woman emancipation in patriarchal African societies. The study concludes with two recommendations: firstly, future literary scholars should probe the role of the activism for women emancipation in the marginalization of the male gender (boys and men) in Africa, and secondly, that policy designers across the globe should pay serious attention to the plight of both the man and boy-child, since the continuous evolution of patriarchy and gender has, to some extent, marginalized them, too.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This study revisits the age-long representation of patriarchy and gender inequality in the African novel as a literary genre, using four (4) contemporary African novels, namely, Goretti Kyomuhendo's *The First Daughter* (1996), Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (2010), Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (2004) and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* (1977), as primary textual references. Drawing from the wider sociological literary theory that includes both feminist and Marxist critical postulations, the study delves deeper into the continuous and nuanced development, and indeed, paradigm shift, in the patriarchy and gender inequality debate by mainly focusing on three key emerging gender and patriarchal issues on the African continent, namely: the bizarre repression of women by fellow women; men's repression by both women and patriarchal norms; and men's advocacy for the emancipation of women in society—critical issues that have, surprisingly, not captured sufficient critical attention of the existing scholarship on the subject, despite its continuously changing trends and patterns.

1.1 Background to the Study

Patriarchal systems in African societies were deeply rooted in cultural and social practices. Gender roles were rigidly defined, with women often relegated to domestic and subordinate positions. These systems perpetuate gender inequality by enforcing rigid expectations, where men typically hold authority and women's voices are marginalized or silenced. Women navigate these challenges within

private and public sphere, whether through marriage, family dynamics, work environments or political spaces. Contemporary African novels continue to grapple with these legacies, but they also reflect changing attitudes towards gender roles. Modern African writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Buchi Emecheta use their narratives to challenge and deconstruct traditional gender norms. Adichie's 'Half of a Yellow Sun' (2006) and Emecheta's 'The Joys of Motherhood' (1979) both explore the complexities of female identity within patriarchal frameworks, showcasing women's resistance and agency.

The representation of patriarchy and its impact on gender relations and roles in many African societies still remains a central focus in contemporary African literary discourse, given the reciprocity of the two. According to Sylvia Walby: In her seminal work *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), Walby defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. She identifies six structures of patriarchy including; the household, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality and cultural institutions. On the other hand, Raewyn Connell; defines gender as a social structure that involves the expectations and norms associated with being male or female. In her work, she emphasizes the diversity of gender expressions and identities, arguing that gender is shaped by social cultural and historical contexts (Raewyn Connell: in *Gender and Power* 1987). In fact, gender activists and feminists regard gender equality as a form of human rights that necessitates great agitation for.

It can be argued, especially from a very conservative perspective, that since time in history, the relationship between patriarchy and gender inequality has been one of adverse mutuality: as patriarchy is often viewed as a social system that absolutely valorizes masculinity, equally has it been seen as the main reason for

the untold feminine repression in society over the years, and globally. Indeed, Yomi Olesugun-Joseph (2021), in his essay, “The ‘African Male Literary Tradition’ and Revisionist Polemics in Isidore Okpewho’s Writing”, argues that for the last three decades, African literature has been at the receiving end of polemic, but useful criticism by feminists and other gender stakeholders because of the patriarchal nature of its form of gender representation in which the woman figure is presumed as either “absent”, or just the “other” (1). He argues, further, that:

In the view of some Africanist feminists, the patriarchal relegation and regulation of the female body informed the gradual ‘peripheral’ gestation of female-authored writing which, despite its subversive interrogations, produced a series of traumatized depictions of womanhood in sordid existential metaphors, signifying the embattled psyche of the author (90).

In other words, patriarchy is seen as an unjust social system that, in its attempt to privilege the male gender, sets up rules that adversely relegate women to a merely peripheral social position whose depiction, especially in female-authored literature, is so traumatizing that the reader can see the psychic embattlement of even the author—the patriarchal discrimination of men and women is so bad that it even affects the emotional state of the writer. This clearly indicates that female authors who write about patriarchy often use their own experiences or those close to them as inspiration for their work. This can mean reopening emotional wounds and confronting past abuses, leading to emotional pain. As they create stories that explore patriarchal violence, sexual exploitation, they may find themselves trapped in cycles of emotional turmoil, where the trauma they once endured resurfaces.

Ali Arian (2018), in “*A Comparative Study of Patriarchal Subjugation in Eliot’s and Edrisis’ Novels*”, views patriarchy as a term that refers to a “society in which

the male is the powerful, dominion and privilege-favoured gender” and that “male power in a patriarchy can be found at family, community, social facts and even universal issues” (223). On the other hand, he views women subjugation as “a state of being under the control of men in society” (223). Here, Ali’s view of patriarchal subjugation is that a society where man has undue privilege, dominion and favour is bound to cause gender inequality which will definitely result into female subjugation. He concludes, thus:

To better understand of the fact, it would be worthwhile to have a closer look to the important characteristics of the Patriarchy. The very much clear and obvious aspect of a patriarchal society is the fact that the institutions of that society give much importance to men. It means that the social interactions between people are constructed in a way that constantly and ubiquitously upholds male sex superiority. From values, rituals, and traditions to laws and formal institutions like governments, power within a society is focused on uplifting men under a patriarchy. (225)

This implies that at the centre of patriarchy is the unquestionable male power and dominance that ultimately relegates the woman to the periphery of the social ladder. And what makes patriarchy highly entrenched is because all institutions and systems, including those of government, seem to be structured in a patriarchal paradigm, hence, the eternal nothingness and repression of the female genders affect men as well, showing the restrictive roles that patriarchy impose on both genders. Authors like Gorreti Kyomuhendo, Lola Shoneyin, Nawal El Saadawi and Tsitsi Dangarembga provide narratives that highlight the multifaceted experiences of women, while also emphasizing roles of women as both victims and agents of repression within these structures. Moreover, these works explore how patriarchal norms affect men as well, showing the restrictive roles that patriarchy impose on both genders.

This study fundamentally argues that while the trends and patterns of gender (in)equality and patriarchy continue to rapidly evolve, much of the existing

scholarship on the subject is still rooted on the zealously feminist and Marxist feminist view of the two: the notion that patriarchy engenders unmerited male privilege. on the other hand, the portrayal of patriarchy in African novels has undergone significant transformation, reflecting broader societal changes evolving literary perspective, while perpetrating undue subjugation (oppression) of women, on the other hand. There is, therefore, urgent and great need to re-examine the existing discourse so as to capture its emerging trends and patterns for purposes of achieving genuine gender equality not just the equality of only one gender.

1.1.0 Synopses of the Selected African Novels and Background of the Authors

1.1.1 Goretti Kyomuhendo's *The First Daughter*

Gorreti Kyomuhendo was born in Hoima, Uganda, 1965. she grew up during the political turmoil including Iddi Amins regime. she went to school in rural areas. After leaving school she went to study in Kampala, where she attained a diploma in Business Administration. In 1996 she was the founder of Uganda Women Writers' Association FEMWRITE. This was the year she published her debut novel, *The First Daughter*'. As the first female writer in her country, Kyomuhendo was awarded a grant from the University of Iowa International Writing Program. A children's book, *Different worlds*', was published in 1988, followed by her second novel, *Secrets no More* (1998) and many others. Kyomuhendo explains her literary motivations as follows: "I write because I am dissatisfied with the world I live in. I want to create another." she is particularly keen to improve the lot in her country. She joined FEMRITE to campaign for publication of works by female Ugandan authors. Her novels such as *The First Daughter* often address the struggles of women in post-colonial societies emphasizing the intersection of gender and politics. Her experiences in both rural and urban settings inform her to

explore the complexities of Ugandan identity and socioeconomic challenges faced by women.

Published by Fountain Publishers in 1996, *The First Daughter* is Goretta Kyomuhendo's first and most popular novel as a writer. It tells of the story of the protagonist, Kasemiire, a very brilliant girl from a poor family whose excellent academic performance prompts his uncompromising father, Kyamanywa, to send her to Duhaga Senior Secondary School, despite the scorns her father receives from his local beer drinking-mates who believe that a woman's place is naturally gazetted in the kitchen. Although warned by her parents to be extra-careful and focused on her studies, Kasemiire, while in school, falls in love with the hunky Steven and subsequently gets impregnated, unfortunately, Steven deserts her! At home, her father, Kyamanywa is so enraged and disappointed with Kasemiire beats her up and even chases her away from home. In her bid to support herself, Kasemiire encounters Mrs. Mutyaba, a local politician who takes her with her to her home, but things take a bad turn for Kasemiire as she is sent away from the politician's home on allegations of attempting to seduce the politician's husband, although Mr. Mutyaba actually wanted to rape the helpless girl. Seeking refuge in the church, Kasemiire is sent back to school by a very compassionate nun. By the end of the novel, Kasemiire is a university graduate and reconciled with the father of her child, Steven.

1.1.2 Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*

Nigerian author Lola Shoneyin was born into a well-educated family. Born on 26th February 1974 in Ibadan, Nigeria. She is a Nigerian poet and author who launched her debut novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, in the UK in May 2010. Shoneyin has forged a reputation as an adventurous, humorous and outspoken poet

(often classed in the feminist mould), having published three volumes of poetry. Her writing delves into themes related to female sexuality and the difficulties of domestic life in Africa. Lola lives in Lagos, Nigeria where she runs an annual Ake Arts and Book Festival. In 2017 she was named African Literary person. Her diverse upbringing which included exposure to different cultures and educational experiences, shaped her world view. In her novel *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, she critiques polygamy and societal expectations placed on women, reflecting her understanding of Nigerian cultural practices. Her works often delve into issues of identity, gender and class, highlighting the tensions within contemporary Nigerian Society.

The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives is Lola Shoneyin's first novel that was published in 2010 to great critical reception. It is a captivating tale of the complex life of polygamous life in modern-day Nigeria, specifically, and Africa, generally. The story revolves around Baba Segi, a rich and flashy man, and his four wives, namely, Iya Segi, Iya Tope, Iya Femi and Lao Bolanle, a university graduate and the youngest wife through whom the perspectives into the complex dynamics of Baba Segi's household are learnt. From a feminist perspective, the novel seems to radically urge women in polygamous marriage relationships where the husband has infertility issues to either produce children illegally out with other men, or to just jilt the marriage relationship.

1.1.3 Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

Tsitsi Dangarembga was born of 4th February 1959 in Mutoko. Southern Rhodesia. She is a Zimbabwean novelist, playwright and filmmaker. Her debut novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988) was named by BBC in 2017 as one of the top 100 books that have shaped the world. She has won other literary honors, including the

Commonwealth writers 'prize and the PEN Pinter prize. In 2022, Dangarembga was convicted in a Zimbabwean court for inciting public violence, by displaying on a public road, placard asking for reform. She was educated in both Zimbabwe and the west, giving her a unique perspective on postcolonial issues. Her novel *Nervous Conditions* addresses the impact of colonialism on gender education, exploring the complexities of being a woman in a post-colonial. Dangarembga emphasises the importance of education as a tool for empowerment, reflecting her own experiences and the broader socioeconomic challenge in Zimbabwe.

Tsitsi Dangarembga's semi-autobiographical novel, *Nervous Conditions*, was originally published in 1988 in the United Kingdom (UK). Derived from Jean-Paul Sartre's famous introduction to Frantz Fanon's 1961 book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which he argues that the colonial condition was a nervous condition, the novel is a critical examination of the nervous condition experienced by the lead characters, namely, Tambu, Nyasha, Maiguru and Ma' Shingayi, due to gender disparity, social class and cultural norms that perpetrate women subjugation in a male-centric Rhodesian society. The novel can, therefore, be read as a critical examination of the power relations between the sexes (men and women) in the Sigauke clan, part of the Shona people, during the 1960s as the lead characters seek to challenge this unequal power-relation.

1.1.4 Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*

Nawal El Sadawi was born in-Egypt in 1931 to a relatively privileged family, with her father being a government official. Nawal El Sadaawi is the second among nine children. Her father taught her self-respect and to speak her mind. He encouraged her to study the Arabic language and supported her education beyond school. Nawal was subjected to female genital mutilation at the age of six, when she was

10 years old, her family tried to make her marry. Her mother supported her in resisting this. Nawal did well at school, despite her efforts at school to perform very well, her grandmother told her that one boy was better than fifteen girls, this did not go well El Sadawi. She eventually went to medical school and graduated from Cairo University and married Ahmed Helmi, whom she met as a fellow student. Nawal has written several books, for instance in 1969 she published *women and sex confronting and contextualizing the systematic aggression perpetrated against women's body including female circumcision*. In 1977 she published *the Hidden Face of Eve*, in 1981 she helped publish a feminist magazine, she also *Woman at Point Zero* and many other texts.

El Sadawi's work is heavily influenced by her experiences with gender inequality and social injustice. Her texts such as *Woman at Point Zero* focus on oppression of women in Arab societies. Her critiques of religious and cultural practices that perpetuate female subjugation stem from her personal observations of women's lives in Egypt.

Based on Saadawi's meeting with a female prisoner who was on murder charges in Qanatir Prison, Egypt, *Woman at Point Zero* was written in 1975, but published in Arabic in 1977. The novel offers a first-person narrative of the protagonist, Firdaus, a female murder convict who offers to tell her own life story before her execution. The novel, thus, depicts the plight of women under patriarchal repression and the complexities of their struggles for independence and control for their own lives, generally, and scathing attack on the repression of women in patriarchal Middle Eastern (Arab) societies which impede women independence and sense of self-worth.

However, the socioeconomic background of these authors deeply influences their writing, shaping their themes, characterization and critical perspectives. Their experiences with gender, cultural traditions and political upheaval inform their narratives, allowing them to address complex issues related to identity, empowerment and social justice in their respective contexts. Through their works, they illuminate the struggles and resilience of women in African Societies, contributing to a richer understanding of contemporary issues.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The exploration of patriarchy and gender inequality in contemporary African novels provide valuable insights into how patriarchal repression is depicted and critiqued in literature. Historically, African societies have been characterized by patriarchal structures where men held primary authority, and women's roles were largely domestic and subordinate. This gender inequality was reinforced by colonial interventions, which imposed additional economic and legal systems that further marginalized women.

Contemporary African literature reflects ongoing challenges and evolving attitudes towards gender roles. Modern African novels often portray the complex interplay between traditional patriarchal norms and contemporary feminist ideals. For instance, works by authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Buchi Emecheta critique patriarchal dominance and highlight women's resistance. Despite some progress, gender-based violence, economic disparities, and cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality remain significant in the African society.

The question of patriarchy and how it has both promoted and sustained gender inequality in many African societies still remains a major area of interest in contemporary African literary studies. Although a lot has been written on the subject, the existing scholarship, despite the continuous evolution of the African novel (as a genre) and the rapidly-evolving global gender dynamics, mainly centre on how patriarchy has sustained the inequality between men and women that has led to the continued subjugation of the latter. However, with the nuanced and rapidly evolving ideas on the gender discourse, especially due to the socio-political and cultural dynamics in Africa, the subject needs a critical re-think that considers its ever-changing paradigms. Moreover, the status and roles of both men and women have been constantly changing over the years in Africa due to globalization, constitutionalism and social media, and so has the patriarchy and gender landscapes been greatly reshaping.

This study, therefore, offers a paradigm shift in examining the presentation of patriarchy and gender inequalities in the selected African novel that adequately captures new trends and insights on the African novel, and patriarchy and gender inequality in Africa through a broader sociological literary perspective—including both feminism and Marxist Feminist ideas.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The study critically re-examines the presentation of patriarchy and gender inequality in four (4) selected African novels, namely, Goretti Kyomuhendo's *The First Daughter*, Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*. The selection of the above novels was based on the fact that they adequately illustrate the new trends and dynamics regarding the depiction of both patriarchy

and gender in Africa which are the basis of the study. In addition, the study was anchored on the wider sociological theoretical framework which includes both feminist and Marxist theoretical perspectives, given the reciprocal relationship between literary works and the societies in which they are produced.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to critically re-examine the presentation of patriarchy and gender inequalities in selected contemporary African novels.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The study was informed by three objectives, namely:

1. To examine the repression of women by fellow women in the selected contemporary African novels.
2. To analyze the repression of men by both women and patriarchal norms in the selected contemporary African novels.
3. To explore men's advocacy for the emancipation of women in the selected African novels.

1.5 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions, namely:

1. How are women repressed by fellow women in the selected contemporary African novels?
2. How are men repressed by both women and patriarchal norms in the selected contemporary African novels?

3. How do men advocate for the emancipation of women in the selected African novels?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study draws from the wider sociological literary approach which includes both feminist and Marxist feminist-ideologies. Originating mainly from the writings of Simon de Beauvoir (1963) and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1884), the sociological literary approach mainly examines the relationship between a literary work and the society in which it was produced. According to the sociological literary critics, literature and society have a reciprocal relationship: society provides the raw materials for the production of literary texts—in form of incidents, characters and thematic concerns—while, in return, literary texts offer a faithful reflection and commentary on the social reality of the time in an attempt to make society see itself and probably change for its own good. Feminist theory seeks to understand the ways in which gender inequalities are embedded in various social, political and cultural systems, which focus on patriarchal structures that privilege men and subordinate women. It explores how gender is socially constructed and how societal norms enforce unequal power relations between men and women. Feminist theory also emphasizes women's agency in resisting these oppressive systems.

Feminist theory critiques patriarchy as a dominant force that enforces male dominance and female subordination in all aspects of life -social, political, economic and cultural. This study used this frame work to examine how patriarchy manifests-in African societies through literature where women are often positioned as a second-class citizen.

Gender as a social construct is one of the key tenets of feminist literary theory, they argue that gender is not seen as biologically but as socially constructed, with expectations and roles imposed on individuals.

Stressing the fact that any literary work should be viewed as a reflective-mirror of the prevailing social, political, cultural and religious aspects of a given society, sociological literary theorists underscore the relevance of the social context (milieu) in the analysis of literature. In other words, a literary text cannot be divorced from the social context of its production, but should rather be seen as the sum total of all the real-life events, experiences, facts and issues of a given society, and that in offering social commentary in their texts, writers may either critique, or even affirm the prevailing social mores in their societies.

This study also incorporated Marxist feminist theory which focuses on the intersection of gender and class, oppression, offering a materialist critique of the ways in which capitalism, Marxist feminists argue that patriarchy is not just a system of male dominance but also a system of economic exploitation that is inextricably linked to capitalism.

Sylvia Walby (1990) provides a key foundation for understanding the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. In her work Walby defines patriarchy as a system of social structures that positions men in power over men but emphasizes how this power is tied to economic structures including women's roles-in unpaid domestic labor.

As already noted, the sociological literary theory in its wider spectrum includes both feminist and Marxist feminist ideas about society. Therefore, through the sociological literary theory, the study critically re-examines the feminist notion that

patriarchal norms in African societies always privilege men at the disadvantage of women through a critical analysis of the nuanced and evolving dynamics regarding patriarchy and gender in the selected African novels. Secondly, a Marxist reading of the selected texts sought to re-interrogate the so called patriarchal-based class system in as far as the plight of both women and men are concerned in a patriarchal African society.

Feminist and feminist Marxist theories are relevant to this study as they provide critical frameworks for analyzing the oppression of women, men by both patriarchy and women within cultural and economic contexts. Feminist theory allows an exploration of how gender roles, expectations and stereotypes are perpetuated in literature, particularly through patriarchal structures. Feminist Marxist theory extends this by linking gender oppression with class struggles, highlighting how capitalism and patriarchy intersect to reinforce inequality. In examining the selected texts, these theories enable a deeper understanding of how African women are marginalized both as gendered and economic subjects while considering the complex relationships between women, men and societal power structure.

1.7 Review of Related Literature

Christopher Babatunde Ogunyemi (2018), in his essay, “Gender (Re)configuration in Nigerian Literature through Time and Space”, argues that the first generation writers in postcolonial Nigeria, such as Chinua Achebe and Cyprian Ekwensi, were more preoccupied with political and economic issues as opposed to gender inequalities, and the result was that when it came to the question of presentation of the two genders, there was a patriarchal-based depiction of the male gender in highly dominant and politically-active roles, characteristic of hyper masculinity. Womanhood was, on the other hand, ascribed a more demeaning portrait, hence,

his acknowledgement of how women writers such as Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa and Zaynab Alkali burst on the literary scene producing literary works that countered the stereotypical depiction of women as pervasive in Nigerian literature, specifically, that have offered a firm foundation for contemporary woman writers such as Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi, Lola Shoneyin and Chica Unigwe, among others, whose literary works unapologetically question the unfair gender hierarchies in Nigeria, specifically and Africa, generally. Although women literary writings are part and parcel of the rapidly changing trends and patterns on the discourse of patriarchy and gender inequalities in Africa, Ogunyemi's analysis is simply on the positive imaging of African women in literature that does not capture the repression women have meted on both fellow women and men. This study, therefore, seeks to fill that gap by re-examining the whole discourse on gender and patriarchy to capture the existing trends and patterns.

Janet G. Stotsky, et al (2016), in their International Monetary Fund (IMF) working paper, "Trends in Gender Equality Women's Advancement", argue that whereas the world has moved closer to gender equality through narrowing gaps in education, health, as well as providing economic and political opportunities to both men and women in the past several decades, gender inequality remains prevalent in South Asia, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa as women remain greatly disadvantaged compared to men in important areas of social, economic and political life. This, they argue, is despite the immense advocacy for gender equality by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and its successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although their analysis of individual indicators of gender equality point out some improvement in education, health, economic opportunity and political empowerment, they nonetheless stress the uneven

progress so far made in regard to the equality between men and women in the aforementioned geographical areas. Moreover, and interestingly, they also point out some distinct elements of women equality with men. Much as Janet G. Trotsky et al raise fundamental issues regarding gender inequality, their ideas seem to regurgitate the over-clichéd notion that women are always the victims of gender inequality, deliberately ignoring the gender-based repression that men have also suffered. Although they commendably point out some instances of gender equality, the study does not capture some of the shifting dynamics in gender equality, especially the inequality perpetrated by women against fellow women, and women against men, gaps that this study intends to fill by a paradigm shift analysis of the gender subject.

Jumanne Kassim Ngohengo (2021), in his review, “Modernism and the Change of African Gender Relations: Historical Discourses”, offers an elaborately insightful perspective on the discourse of gender inequality in Africa, generally, and gendered social relations and its changing trends across time in Africa, specifically. His argument, premised on the historical and Afrocentric view of gender relations in Africa is that the current interpretation of gender inequality in the continent, especially in regard to resource access and decision-making, is merely a modern and western construct that has nothing to do with the traditional African view of gender before Africa’s interaction with the predominantly capitalistic western world. Stressing the fact that western modernity and perceptions under the guise of human rights, equality and discrimination have swayed Africans away from their deep-rooted social relations, and subsequently making some embrace western sentiments on the subject, he bemoans the adverse impact that these pro-western views on gender have had on the long-cherished African traditional lifestyle based

on mutual respect and agreement between man and woman. Hence, his recommendation that the African view of gender should be benchmarked from the deep-rooted traditional norms of our ancestors. Much as Jumanne Kassim Ngohengo should be lauded for his Afrocentric take on the gender discourse, his analysis, nonetheless, is not illustrative enough of all the evolving key trends and patterns on gender inequality in Africa, such as the current inequality and repression among women, patriarchal and women repression of men, and men's agitation for the emancipation of women. The study, therefore, seeks to address such a lacuna by re-examining the gender discourse to capture such vital gender dynamics.

Gbaguidi Celestin, et al (2022), in "Social Representation of Women in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joy of Motherhood* and Florence Nwapa's *Efuru*" contend that although there has been, for years, a biased depiction of male and female characters in the African literature South of the Sahara, characterised by the patriarchal marginalisation (repression) of women due to their total confinement in peripheral domestic affairs and with no access to good social conditions, the image, and indeed, status of a woman in a patriarchal African society has greatly improved, thanks to women writers such as Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ata Amma Aidoo, among others, whose interest has been to repaint the distorted image of a woman under patriarchy in African prose fiction by assigning masculine attributes (characteristics) to their female characters, essentially depicting women as not any different from patriarchal men as they (women) too demonstrate an efficiency in executing roles traditionally reserved for men. Although Gbaguidi Celestin, et al commendably illustrate the shifting trends and patterns in the representation of patriarchy and gender in African prose fiction,

they (like most earlier studies) demonstrate a conventionally feministic view of gender and patriarchy by over-romanticizing the female gender, thereby deliberately ignoring the dark aspects of these so-called masculine attributes of women, such as the oppression of fellow (especially less-statured) women, and men. The current study intends to broaden the scope of these changing gender dynamics by examining the repression of both women and men by female-masculinity.

Omar Sougou (2010), in “Rethinking Androcentric Representations of Women in African Literature”, asserts that with the emergence of the feminist critical school, the debate on the treatment (representation) of women in male-authored African literary works continues to rage on as the critics intently focus on the deliberately biased portrait of women in male writings. Although, Sougou argues, further, some male writers have endeavored to positively present women by emphasizing their agency as much as possible, overzealous feminists question both the spirit and authenticity of such depictions, thereby creating the requisiteness of “insider knowledge” (87) as a basis for the analysis of the males’ portrait of women, in which case womanist critics view male writers as not having anything to do with women presentations in literature. Drawing from Davies’ “revisionist critical outlook” (88), Sougou contends further that “although the charges of flawed representation are valid for most of the literature” (88), it is not only necessary to appraise the negative pictures of women in some African novels, but to also discuss the attempts of those who have accorded women a significant place and role in their writings. It can, thus, be argued that Sougou appreciates the changing trends and dynamics in the literary imaging of African women under patriarchy. He, however, limits this amazing evolution to only the positive attributes that male

writers have assigned women, although not yet fully appreciated by womanist critics. The current study, therefore, seeks to re-evaluate the portrait of the African woman by also capturing how patriarchy is increasingly favoring women to the extent that women have become mutilated versions of men by engaging in acts of repression against fellow women and men.

Florence Stratton in her influential book '*Contemporary African Literature and Politics of Gender* (1994)' critically examines how African literature, particularly that authored by men, often perpetuate patriarchal ideologies that marginalize and subordinate women. Stratton's analysis focuses on the way patriarchal norms and gender inequality are deeply embedded-in African cultural narratives and how these are reflected in literature. Stratton argues that male authored African novels often depict women as passive, secondary characters whose roles are largely defined by their relationships to men. In works by authors like Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiongo, women are frequently relegated to traditional domestic roles-wives, mothers or daughters thus reinforcing patriarchal values that confine women to subservient positions in society. Florence Stratton (1994) also critiques how these narratives uphold male dominance, while women are portrayed as symbolic figures tied to culture, reproduction or tradition, rather than fully fleshed-out individuals with their own agency.

For instance, in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, women play a minimal role in decision-making and are often portrayed in the context of their value to men, whether through marriage or motherhood. In other words, such portrayals reflect and reinforce the patriarchal social systems in which these novels are set, making it difficult for female characters to transcend these limitations and find independent expression.

Stratton contrasts the above with the work of African female writers, who challenge patriarchal norms by creating more complex, autonomous female characters. She highlights how these writers, such as Tsitsi Dangarembga, Nawal El Sadaawi, and Buchi Emecheta, push back against traditional depictions of women and instead portray them as agents of resistance and change. In novels like *Nervous Conditions* by Dangarembga (1988), the protagonist Tambu seeks education and autonomy, challenging the patriarchal constraints imposed by both her family and broader society. According to Stratton these depictions represent a critical feminist intervention in African literature, where women assert their agency and resist limitations placed on them by both gender and societal structures. In other words, African women writers use their works to challenge the norms imposed by society and gender roles. Through their characters and narratives, these women assert their independence, make their own decisions, and resist the traditional restrictions placed on them. This is seen as feminist intervention because it offers a critique of societal structures that oppress women, advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment in African literature.

In *Women and Power: A Dual Perspective* by Chikwenye Ogunyemi (2023) explores the complex dynamics of gender relations, particularly focusing on how women navigate power structures within patriarchal societies. Ogunyemi argues, that while women have historically been portrayed as victims of patriarchy, they also often exercise power in ways that reinforce the existing hierarchies, suggesting that women can be both oppressed and oppressors. She references “The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives” by Lola Shoneyin, she draws several examples from her texts about gender dynamics. She examines the relationship between Baba Segi’s wives, highlighting how they engage in rivalry and competition for the

patriarch's attention. Bolanle's co-wives treat her with utter contempt and callousness for her barrenness and jealous of her literacy and beauty. The author states, Bolanle was denied the comfort of an armchair because of her barrenness'. They gang against her and even plan to get rid of her. This competition reflects internalized patriarchal values, as the women often reinforce their subjugation by pitting themselves against one another rather than forming solidarity. Just like how Baba Segi's wives struggle for power within the house hold illustrate the complexities of female agency in a patriarchal society.

Furthermore, Ogunyemi emphasizes the importance of intersectionality in various factors such as class ethnicity, and age interact with gender to shape women's experiences of power and oppression. She illustrates this through examples from contemporary African literature, where female characters often exhibit agency within restrictive environments. However, this agency can manifest in ways that inadvertently uphold patriarchal values, such as when women internalize societal expectations and turn them against each other. For instance, in the, *Secret Lives of Baba Segis Wive,*” women engage in rivalry and coemption reflecting how patriarchal structures can create divisions among women.

‘...Iya Segi is right. she walks as if she owns this house. Who has made her Queen over us. Envy seeped through every word that came out of Iya Femi. And look at all the lace Baba Segi buys her! What has she done to deserve it’(The Secrete Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives) Pg. 49

Ogunyemi's analysis ultimately calls for a reexamination of female solidarity, suggesting that genuine empowerment must address internalized forms of oppression that women may impose on one another, thereby fostering a more inclusive and transformative feminist discourse.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies on the novelty with which conventional ideas regarding both patriarchy and gender are critically re-examined to capture the current trends and patterns on the subject. Whereas much of the existing scholarship on the subject mainly focuses on the traditional view that patriarchy automatically privileges men at the expense of women, on one the hand, and that gender inequalities in society are only perpetrated and sustained by men, on the other hand, the current study intends to broaden this scope of knowledge by examining instances where the reverse is actually true given the rapidly changing global trends and patterns of patriarchy, gender and the African novel itself.

Furthermore, given the paradigm shift in which the study critically probes the representation of patriarchal and gender aspects in the African novel, the study findings may be important in guiding both the advocates of gender equality (activists) and policy-makers in designing humane laws and policy-frameworks that cater for both genders or sexes for purposes of achieving a truly egalitarian society. In other words, the study uniquely brings to the attention of both activists and policy-makers of the rapidly changing global trends in which the plight of the man (boy child) should also be given a consideration.

1.9 Research Methodology

1.9.1 Research Design

This study was a library-based and qualitative approaches were employed to analyse both primary and secondary sources of data. Textual analysis was used as a primary research method in this study to examine how patriarchy and gender inequality are represented in the selected contemporary African novels. The

method involved a careful, detailed reading of these texts to uncover the underlying themes and ideologies related to the study.

1.9.2 Primary Sources

In this study, the primary sources of data were got from the four selected African novels: Kyomuhendo's *The First Daughter*, Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, El Shadai's *Woman at Point Zero*. The selection of the novels was based on their rich depiction of the new trends and patterns surrounding the discourse of patriarchy and gender.

1.9.3 Secondary Sources

The secondary sources in this study were got from a critical review of textbooks, articles, reports, journals from on line data bases, essays, dissertations/thesis and any other such relevant scholarly material to enhance the analysis of the evolving trends and dynamics on patriarchy and gender in the African novel.

1.9.4 Data Collection Methods

Since this study was intended to be library-based, data was collected using such qualitative approaches as close reading and textual-analysis of both primary and secondary sources. This involved careful reading of the texts to understand their literal meaning, deeper meanings and identify how they represent patriarchy and gender inequality. The rationale behind such approaches was to ensure presentation of informed perspectives in line with the three stated research objectives and questions.

1.9.5 Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

In line with the research objectives, both primary and secondary data were collected and critically analysed through feminist and feminist Marxist theoretical

perspective. Close reading and textual analysis of the selected African novels were undertaken to present the major arguments of the study. All the cited sources of data were acknowledged through proper quotations, paraphrases and references. The primary method of analyzing the texts were thematic analysis, which involved identifying and interpreting recurring themes in the novels. The study focused on themes such as: repression of women by fellow women, repression of men by patriarchy and women, male advocacy for female emancipation. Coding for gender-related themes, contextual analysis and application of feminist and feminist Marxist theory.

The analysed data was then arranged in five chapters as follows: Chapter One is the Introduction and Background to the Study; Chapter Two presents The Repression of Women by fellow Women in the Selected African Novels; Chapter Three presents The Repression of Men by both Women and Patriarchal Norms in the Selected African Novels; Chapter Four centres on Men's Advocacy for Female Emancipation in the Selected African Novels; and Chapter Five presents the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Study.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Patriarchy:

In this study, Sylvia Walby: In her seminal work, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), Walby defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.

Gender:

Raewyn Connell: In *Gender and Power* (1987) defines gender as a social structure that involves the expectations and norms associated with being male or female. In her work she emphasizes the diversity of gender expressions and identities, arguing their gender is shaped by social cultural and historical contexts.

Masculinity:

In this study, masculinity is used to refer to the set of traits, behaviors, attributes and roles traditionally ascribed to men. Such attributes include: strength, assertiveness and independence, among others.

Femininity:

In sharp contrast to masculinity, femininity is used in this study to refer to the set of traits, behaviors, attributes, characteristics and roles traditionally associated with women in a patriarchal set up. These characteristics include: empathy, nurturing and sensitivity.

It is, however, important to note that due to the rapidly changing global dynamics on the discourse of both patriarchy and gender, it can be argued that masculinity and femininity are not traits exclusively associated with a particular gender, but rather dependent on someone's personality aspects.

Gender Inequality:

In this study, gender inequality means the discrimination or disparity (imbalance) that exist between man and woman due to patriarchal dictates in which one of the

genders is routinely prioritized and privileged at the expense of the other, hence, creating a barrier for egalitarianism.

Repression:

This is used to mean the marginalization or subjugation (oppression) of one gender by the other due to the undue patriarchal set-up that tends to privilege only one of the genders. Patriarchal repression of gender manifests socially, culturally, economically and politically. Unlike the long-held traditional views on patriarchal in which the man is the architect, and the woman the victim, this study offers a paradigm shift by analyzing repression from feminine masculinity to both men and fellow women.

The African novel:

In this study, the African novel is defined as that particular work of prose fiction that is written in Africa, by an African (as legally-determined), highlighting African major concerns. The study makes the argument that the African novel has greatly evolved with time, and so has its representation of gender and patriarchal issues.

Re-examine:

In this research, the word is used to refer to a second, subsequent or new perspective that is intended to question, challenge and subvert the existing worldview (s) on the discourse of gender and patriarchy so as to cater for the rapidly evolving global trends on the subjects.

Feminism:

This study upholds the mainstream view of feminism as a cultural, political and literary movement that seeks to advocate for socio-economic and political equality in society by seeking to emancipate women and girls who are presumed greatly marginalized under the unfair patriarchal systems in African societies.

Marxism:

Drawing from the philosophy of both Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, this study sought to re-examine the economic and material implications of a patriarchal-led gender repression.

CHAPTER TWO

FEMININE REPRESSION OF FELLOW WOMEN

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers the first insightful perspective on the continuous trends, nuances and complexities on the questions of both patriarchy and gender inequality in the African novel. Specifically, the analysis centres on how women themselves have strangely become accomplices in the prevalence of hatred, discrimination, marginalisation and oppression of fellow women (the female gender) that has arguably, further, widened the Gender-Inequality gap in Africa. This is in stark contrast with the traditionally-held notion that gender-based inequality and oppression are always promoted by men because of their undue privileges under patriarchal African systems.

2.2 Defining Feminine Repression.

In this study, I use the phrase, Feminine Repression (oppression) of Women, to refer, specifically, to the various forms of hatred, mistreatment, oppression, subjugation, cruelty, authoritarianism, marginalisation and dominance that some women under patriarchy have unleashed, either consciously, or otherwise, on fellow women, thereby widening, further, the already existing gap of gender inequality, and in a way exacerbating the subjugation of women in the so-called patriarchal-led African social, cultural, economic and political structures. My discussion in this chapter heavily draws from Alphonse Dorien Makosso (2022), in “Woman against Woman in Postcolonial Fiction: Rethinking African Feminist Discourses in Lola Shoneyin’s *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*”, who argues that prominent Nigerian writers and women activists, such as Lola Shoneyin, Buchi

Emecheta, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and others, in their attempt to portray the African women's struggles with "patriarchal bondage" (1), have actually ended up creating a "new woman" who is no longer a mere victim and onlooker of the African patriarchal oppression, but has instead, strangely, become a real oppressor of other (fellow) women, manifesting the trends and changes that both patriarchy and gender inequality depict.

By engaging in a critical examination of the female oppression of fellow females (women) in the selected African novels, the study underscores the nuanced and complex evolution of both patriarchy and gender inequality in Africa, pretty much like the rest of the world. I, therefore, argue that although the selected African novelists could have intended to offer a quintessential depiction of the patriarchal-based gender inequality and female subjugation in the African societies of the texts, as evidenced from the numerous instances of women repression by their male counterparts, a close textual analysis of the selected novels also offers very grim situations where women, in their attempt to assert themselves under patriarchy, are so ruthless in their oppression of their fellow women.

2.3 Women Repression on Women in Goretti Kyomuhendo's *The First Daughter*

Goretti Kyomuhendo has been deservedly praised for her use of creative writing as a platform to campaign for the emancipation of the African woman, generally, and the Ugandan woman, specifically, from the unfair socio-economic and political dictates of the African patriarchal systems. In fact, Abasi Kiyimba (2008), in "Male Identity and Female Space in the Fiction of Ugandan Women Writers", cites her, alongside other prominent female authors, such as Barbara Kimenye, Mary Karoro Okurut and Violet Barungi, as the lead voices of protest against Uganda's

age-long patriarchal hegemony, discrimination and oppression of women by not only assigning female characters lead roles that had hitherto been a preserve of Uganda's male gender, especially in male-authored Ugandan literary works, but have actually used their literary works to satirize such aspects as male-chauvinism, discrimination and the wanton repression of women in many Ugandan societies. Kyomuhendo's protest against the marginalisation of women is probably what prompted her to be one of the founding members, and long-term editor, of the Uganda Women Writers Association (FEMRITE), a Ugandan writing platform and publishing house that strives to advocate for the rights and emancipation of the Ugandan girl-child and woman through a positive depiction of the female gender.

Although her first novel, *The First Daughter* (1996), can arguably be regarded as classic narratology of the trials and tribulations of the Ugandan woman under a predominantly patriarchal society that unduly privileges men at the expense of women, as seen in the numerous challenges, struggles and oppressions that Kasemiire and other women go through, this sub-section, on the other hand, offers a new perspective of the novel's portrait of the aspects of patriarchy and gender inequality that accommodates the evolving, nuanced and complex ideas on the subject. Specifically, the sub-section delves into the strange aspect where women with some status and power are ruthless in their oppression of fellow women, drawing from postmodernist feminist theorists, such as Helen Cixous and Julia Kristeva, whose major interest is to advocate for equality among women with regard to class and racial differences, as the study elucidates in the subsequent paragraphs.

The first instance of women oppression against fellow women in *The First Daughter* is clearly seen when the protagonist, Kasemiire Jacent, the academically-

brilliant daughter to Kyamanywa and Ngonzi Abwooli, is admitted and finally enrolls for her secondary school studies at Duhaga Secondary School. Although everyone in the Kyamanywa household is filled with joy and excitement at Kasemiire's admission for secondary education, her sisters warn her of the oppression that she soon encounters at school, although she is dismissive of such.

The narrator says:

During the following week, a new life seemed to have emerged in Kyamanywa's household. Everybody participated in the preparation of Kasemiire's requirements. Her mother was the most excited; one would think that she was the one going to school. ... Her sisters roasted groundnuts, simsim and maize for her. They were obviously envious of her. They kept on reminding her how the students of Duhaga were well known for teasing newcomers. Kasemiire was appalled by these threats, but the idea of joining a secondary school was so great that she quickly forgot her anxieties.

(27-28)

Being a female (girl) and especially coming from a poor family where neither the parents, nor any of her relatives had achieved anything significant in education, Kasemiire's and her entire family's excitement at her prospective joining of secondary education is highly understandable. The problem, as the envious siblings kept on reminding her, is that secondary school education itself has its own challenges, especially for newly-admitted young girls. The teasing and bullying at Duhaga Secondary School that Kasemiire and other newcomers experience make life so oppressive for a person of her age. For instance, on her way to her assigned dormitory, Nightingale, Kasemiire was intimidated by the girls' incessant stares at her through the window, although some boys also directed some obscenities at her by chorusing "njuka-njuka-njuka" (31).

On her arrival to the Nightingale Dormitory, the reader is shocked by the form of mistreatment and cruelty that Kasemiire experiences from her new dormitory

mates, the girls. Even while her father, Kyamanywa, is still around, these bullish girls have already surrounded Kasemiire and are busy peeping at her wooden suitcase, while directing funny gestures at her. The girls, further, subject Kasemiire to great mockery by bursting into uncontrollable feats of laughter when her father naively wonders why she should have toilet papers, suggesting instead, that Kasemiire could do with leaves in the toilet. Apart from asking for the sanitary requirements from the students, the school matron does not seem to offer any serious help and support to newcomers like Kasemiire, and so, the laughter, jeers and rude gestures from the school girls leave her very embarrassed, in a strange manifestation of women oppression on a fellow woman.

Perhaps the most striking form of female indifference and brutality on fellow females in the novel is seen in the intolerance and mockery of the school girls from affluent families to those from poor families. Kasemiire's father, Kyamanywa, laments of how he is already financially-constrained in his attempt to pay for his children's education. He has literally sold off everything on a cheap so that he raises the school fees for his brilliant daughter. Moreover, he fears that some of Kasemiire's siblings may have to first withdraw from school so that he first concentrates on Kasemiire's education. While in school, however, the girls do not care about Kasemiire's humble financial background. They, for instance, mock and even throw to the dustbin her wooden suitcase, calling it a "coffin" that would bring bad omens in their hostel (33). Although Kasemiire inwardly thinks that these school girls could have probably gone through a similar experience when they also joined the school, this act of economic intolerance breaks her down to the extent that she even fears going out for supper. She is so devastated that when she laid down her bed and feigned sleep in fear of more abuse, she eventually fell asleep,

only to be harshly awakened by another of her tormentors. She is forced into “room number four” where all the “Njukas” were being subjected to despicable forms of teasing and bullying. The narrator describes Kasemiire’s oppression in room number four as below:

“Take off your clothes,” they ordered her. “My God!” Kasemiire thought. She could not afford to be seen naked by strangers! As she was contemplating what to do, a group of angry girls fell on her and tore her clothes. They forced her to walk to the extreme end of the dormitory and back, amidst laughter from the spectators. Some girls even pinched her buttocks as they commented on her figure and some even poured cold water on her. (34)

The above quotation offers a vivid description of the indifference, spite and inhumanity with which new students at Duhaga Secondary School would be treated. The so-called room number four is portrayed as a sort of torture-chamber for the new girls that clearly shows a new version gendered inequality. Kasemiire and other “Njukas”, probably a social-register for the newcomers, are forced through a very oppressive and demeaning form of school orientation by utterly bullish girls. The irony is that when Kasemiire’s mother, Abwooli, was bidding her farewell, she only cautioned her to behave well and beware of the likely danger from school boys. She, like most female activists, obviously did not anticipate oppression and danger for her daughter from school girls. Instead, Kasemiire and her fellow newcomers encountered oppression from fellow girls. This sort of marginalisation, torture and oppression that Kasemiire and other girls experience in *The First Daughter* adhere to Alphonse Dorian Makosso’s (2022) argument that contemporary African women writers have ended up creating a “new woman” who is ruthlessly oppressive to other women.

Anita’s betrayal of her friend, Kasemiire, is another manifestation of woman oppression on a fellow woman in Gorette Kyomuhendo’s *The First Daughter*. It

should be remembered that Anita and Kasemiire were very close friends in school. Despite coming from different economic backgrounds, the two were so inseparable that Anita would even visit Kasemiire's family during the holidays. Although she had played a very big role in mediating between Kasemiire and Steven for their earlier petty misunderstandings, Anita attempts, although in vain, to seduce Steven for herself at a time when her friend, Kasemiire, was pregnant and going through a lot of suffering. From the later dialogue between Kasemiire and Steven, it is later on revealed to us that Steven had always sought to be in touch with Kasemiire and probably help her out, but Anita had always been the stumbling-block because she had kept on lying to him that Kasemiire could not be reached because she had been deported to a very distant relative. For a young pregnant girl who was going through traumatizing experiences, the last thing she deserved was being selfishly kept off from someone who could have been of great support and help, her boyfriend, Steven. Perhaps if Anita had been sincere to Steven about Kasemiire's whereabouts, Kasemiire would not have gone through the numerous trials and tribulations during her pregnancy. May be Steven would have come to her rescue. One could argue that Anita's suicide after failing to win Steven for a partner was probably because of the shame and guilt she could have felt betraying a close friend in vain.

Lastly, Mrs. Mutyaba's initial gesture of sympathy, compassion and generosity towards the helpless Kasemiire does not count much when she angrily decides to chase away Kasemiire from her home on accusations that the young girl was plotting to steal the former's husband. Having lived with the Mutyabas for one and half years, Kasemiire had gotten a new lease of life as she could even send money to help her mother and siblings at home. She was loved by the Mutyabas that they

had to make a big decision to send Michael, their son whose affections for Kasemiire had been unrequited, to go and stay with a relative so that Kasemiire could be happy in the home. Although we later on realise that Mr. Mutyaba's decision to push Michael out of the house was to have the unsuspecting girl for himself, Kasemiire is unfairly accused of seducing Mr. Mutyaba and thrown out of the home without being given a chance to explain her side of the story. From the remarkable turn of events and feelings between Mrs. Mutyaba and Kasemiire, one can argue that a woman's sympathy and trust for a fellow woman is so fragile and temporary that it can explode anytime with devastating consequences.

2.4 Power, Envy and Hatred in Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*

Lola Shoneyin's novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, also offers an insightful highlight of how women, such as those in polygamous marriage relations, can be the worst of enemies to each other, especially in their quest for a man's love and favour. Therefore, the various aspects of male oppression to females in the novel notwithstanding, this sub-section centres on Shoneyin's portrait of the new aspect of patriarchal subjugation of women by giving a critical highlight of how women entrusted with some power (authority) in a patriarchal society can strangely be decisive in their hate, spite, discrimination and oppression of those without power, especially when they tend to compete for similar interests and favours. Allen Amy (2022), in "Feminist Perspectives on Power", argues that understanding the concept of "power" is very important for an insightful feminist critique of both women oppression, and the intersection between sexism and other forms of female subjugation in patriarchal societies. Acknowledging that power itself can mean different things to different people, but with "domination" as the

core of everything to do with power, she assents to the idea that power is such a resource and positive social good, although usually unequally distributed among both women and men. Viewing how scarce, complex and important power means for both men and women in the modern global society, she calls for the continuous refinement of the feminist conceptions of “domination” to cater for the rapidly evolving socio-cultural, historical and political global trends. By this assertion, Allen seems suggestive that because of the currently rapid global trends on gender, power and oppression, the gender and patriarchy discourses need a broad-based rethink to accommodate the new changes, a gap that this study fills by analysing the new form of patriarchal oppression on women by fellow women, especially those with some power.

Although it is evident that Shoneyin’s major rationale for writing the novel is to portray the untold suffering, degradation and subjugation that women under patriarchy, especially those in polygamous marriages, go through, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*, also offers a grim depiction of women oppression on their fellow women. Married to the same man, Mr. Atanda Alao, popularly known as Baba Segi, the relationship between the four wives, Iya Segi, Iya Tope, Iya Femi and Bolanle leave a lot to be desired as far as gender inequality and patriarchal oppression of women are concerned. All seems to be well among the three co-wives of Baba Segi until the beautiful, youthful graduate, Bolanle, is brought as Baba Segi’s fourth wife. Here, Shoneyin paints a grim picture of the repressive nature of jealous (envy) among co-wives in a patriarchal household. Initially, all the three co-wives (Iya Segi, Iya Tope and Iya Femi) express open presentiment and hatred for the young Bolanle. Although Iya Femi and her children later on try to embrace Bolanle, Iya Segi and Iya Tope go miles to bring her down. In one of

the passages in the novel, Bolanle recounts the hatred Iya Segi and Iya Femi have for her.

The other two are a different story: they still have not forgiven me for the affection Baba Segi has for me. Iya Segi and Iya Femi shout, hiss and spit. They sweep the floor, all the time singing satirical songs to ridicule me. But it's not their fault that they are so uncouth. Living with them has taught me the value of education, of enlightenment. I have seen the dark side of illiteracy. So deep-seated is their disdain for my university degree that they smear my books with palm oil and hide them under the kitchen cupboards. I have often found missing pages from my novels in the dustbin, the words scribbled over with charcoal. (25)

The above excerpt offers a clear illustration of the jealous-linked hatred and discrimination that women in polygamous marriages subject each other to in their competition for their husband's love and favour. The traditional view that patriarchy only favours men and subjugates women would imply that women should then have an unconditional (natural) liking and love for fellow women since they are perceived equal partners in male-centric (patriarchal) oppression. But as this study sought to investigate, both patriarchy and gender inequality have indeed been evolving with time. It is not only Iya Segi and Iya Femi with hatred for a fellow woman, Bolanle, too, sounds condescending to her uneducated co-wives. As a youth and university graduate, she seems to have very little expectations from illiterate housewives, although she claims she holds no issues with any of the co-wives and their children.

Even when the co-wives are well-aware that their culture and tradition actually allow their husband, Baba Segi, to marry as many wives as he can afford, they hold great grudge and discriminate against the new wives. For instance, when Bolanle arrives at Baba Segi's home, she tries to greet her co-wives, but her greetings are shunned because the co-wives see her as an agent of fraud who is probably only

about their husband's wealth. The co-wives, especially Iya Segi and Iya Femi, distaste Bolanle so much that they engage in a dangerous scheme to throw her out of Baba Segi's household which, unfortunately, ends up with the death of the innocent Segi, Iya Segi's first daughter. In a plot to maliciously implicate Bolanle in acts of witchcraft so that she would be thrown out of the house by Baba Segi, Iya Segi is so threatening and intimidating to the seemingly innocent Iya Tope, who recounts her sad experience as:

Iya Segi shook her head and belched. "Listen to the fool who begs for crumbs from Bolanle's table! The lickspittle! It is all right for you to say you do not want to be part of us, after you have benefitted from my wisdom all these years. Now you wish to remove yourself? Well, you can't! You are bound to us. We are all bound together! And if you dare to open that stupid mouth of yours, I will ruin you myself. I will tell my husband things that will make him wring your neck in your sleep. Go! Take your small brain out of my sight. Imbecile!" (51)

Being Baba Segi's first wife, Iya Segi, is the traditionally-assigned "Mother of the Home", and she is, therefore, the most powerful and respectful of the four co-wives. Although she is generally a good wife, and also relates well with the other co-wives, except Bolanle whom she really hates and wants out of the home, she is depicted as an epitome of the danger of unequal power-relations among traditionally marginalised groups. At some point, she boasts that as the first wife of Baba Segi, she controls the entire household, and so she feels at liberty to abuse and even beat up a co-wife if her whims and wishes are seen to be disrespected. As Allen Amy (2022) argues, Iya Segi's view of power (authority) is total domination of her co-wives and children, even when these results into acts that would make her lose her first daughter, Segi, that plunges the entire Baba Segi household into grief.

The co-wives use language to promote inequality in their attempt to win Baba Segi's affection in Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. Motivated by jealous, hatred and spite, the co-wives use harsh and oppressive language in their attempt to assert their importance and power in the Baba Segi's household. For instance, Iya Femi's demeaning remarks to Bolanle. Narrating that their husband had wanted them to dress as his "queens" during the celebration of a neighbour's birthday, she thinks Bolanle looked like "a toad and scrawny rabbit" (61) in her "aso ebi", and wondered why her husband could even marry such a woman if he was genuinely interested in marrying queens. Iya Tope is described by Iya Segi as the "lickspittle" with a stupid mouth, small brain and, generally, an idiot. Apart from the co-wives, other women use very demeaning language to their fellow women. For example, Segun's mother's cynical giggles and laughter after Bolanle had told her that she intended to go back to the university and pursue a master's degree if she did not get a job soon. Through language, the women in the novel demean and discriminate against each other, thereby widening the gender-inequality gap in patriarchal societies.

In the novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, women are, further, oppressed by fellow women as children in their families, as well as through harsh and exploitative domestic labour terms and conditions. Although initially abused by Tunde, Grandma's first son, Baba Segi's third wife, Iya Femi, recounts of the discrimination and oppression she was subjected to as a housemaid in the Adeigbe family. She was told of how "lowly" she was to refer to her domestic female boss as "mummy". She describes her experience as a housemaid as:

I served the Adeigbe family for fifteen years. I served Grandma and her husband; I served their children and then their children's children. From the day I got there, I was a house girl and my status did not change. They pillaged the most fruitful years of my life, all the time treating me as if they'd found me in a pit latrine. Grandma slapped me if a drop of oil fell from the ladle to the cooker. If I didn't answer the first time she yelled my name, she shaved every strand of hair on my head. If I ever overslept, she would cut me all over with a blade and rub chili powder into the wounds. (101)

The above excerpt shows how Iya Femi was subjected to discrimination, exploitation and oppression at the hands of a Grandma, a woman. As a housemaid, she was seen as less of a human being who could just be subjected to any treatment. All that mattered was that she ensures perfection in whatever was prescribed as her duty. Her working conditions were not even good, compared to the lots of responsibilities she had to do. That female-inflicted oppression is in addition to the various oppressions she had earlier endured while still a child at home. She still fondly remembers how her own biological mother would knock her head with a wooden spoon whenever she made a mistake while preparing a meal. Her uncle's wife had mistreated her and connived with her uncle to deny her a chance to study. She, together with her uncle, had even maliciously cautioned Grandma to keep a watchful eye of her, "lest my madness drive me to bite the bark off neighborhood trees" (101). The exploitation, discrimination and oppression that Iya Femi was subjected to haunted her so much that she one day decided to go back home and burnt down the house where her now frail uncle and his wife were residing.

2.5 Reinforcement of Patriarchal norms in Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*

Although the narrative in Nawal El Saadawi's novel, *Woman at Point Zero*, mainly centres on the heavy condemnation of the mistreatment of the Egyptian woman under an unfair patriarchal code, the novel is also unique in its depiction of the

emerging trends on the question of patriarchy and gender inequality, especially on the question of women subjugation under patriarchy. Using the life and experiences of the protagonist, Firdaus, and other characters in the novel, this sub-section, therefore, offers a critical analysis of the unique depiction of female repression on fellow females, and how this depiction reinforces the view that women repression has evolved, with women becoming key actors in their own repression in society.

The first manifestation of feminine repression of women in the novel is seen on the issue of “Clitoridectomy”, an Egyptian form of genital mutilation that involved the removal of the girl’s clitoris to inhibit her sexual pleasure so that she could probably keep her virginity up to the time of marriage. Although such a practice could arguably be part of the woman-repressive Egyptian patriarchal system, the painful act is actually performed by Firdaus’ own mother, with the help of another woman. Of this very painful procedure, the narrator tells us:

... So one day I asked my mother about him. How was it that she had given birth to me without a father? First she beat me. Then she brought a woman who was carrying a small knife or maybe a razor blade. They cut off a piece of flesh from between my thighs. I cried all night. Next morning my mother did not send me to the fields. She usually made me carry a load of manure on my head and take it to the fields. (16)

The above quotation shows the cultural oppression that Firdaus lives through right from childhood, surprisingly at the hands of her own mother and an unnamed woman. Her mother is presented strangely as a domestic tyrant that does not entertain any questioning from an inquisitive and curious young mind like Firdaus. The removal of Firdaus’ clitoris is obviously very painful to the young girl to the extent that she cries out the pain for the entire night. Her tough mother could not even send her to the field the following morning. In addition, this local surgery on Firdaus interferes with her sexual sensation as she grows up. In such a patriarchal

society, one would expect a mother to be friendly and loving to her own daughter, but Firdaus' mother does the exact opposite by subjecting her own daughter to harsh domestic labour. The fact that she recounts the experience of carrying loads of manure is proof that she did not like such nature of domestic work.

After the death of Firdaus' parents, she is taken up for care by her uncle, who takes her with him to Cairo where she is immediately sent to school. Despite some instances of sexual abuse from her uncle, everything between the two seems to be going on well until when her uncle brings a wife home. Her uncle's wife's hatred for Firdaus is so shocking that she actually lures her uncle into marrying her off to Sheik Mahmoud, a despicably old and facially-deformed man (about sixty years). To make matters very worse for Firdaus, Sheik Mahmoud is very selfish, stingy and subjects her to domestic abuse. One day, when the said husband beats Firdaus, she runs away rightly seeking for shelter in her uncle's home. Her uncle's wife, however, is not welcoming to Firdaus. She shockingly tells her to the face that woman-beating (domestic abuse) is part of the Egyptian marital culture, preserved by their religion. Her uncle's wife's view was that a "virtuous woman was not supposed to complain about her husband. Her duty was perfect obedience (65). Moreover, she had previously beaten Firdaus when she had entered her room and found Firdaus sleeping with the housemaid because of the coldness of the floor where the young maid used to sleep. Firdaus' uncle's wife embodies the new woman in African literature whose authority over a young person like Firdaus makes her to easily unleash oppression on those under her dominion.

After running away again from her aggressive and despicable old husband, Firdaus wanders again in the streets as a destitute. She is initially rescued by Bayoumi, a coffee owner and seller, but later on subjects her to untold abuses, including

bringing his friends to sexually-exploit Firdaus at night. Firdaus manages to run away from Bayoumi's house. Tired and almost lifeless, she sits aimlessly at the bank of the Nile, only to be "rescued" by Sharifa Salah el Dine, a serial sex-worker who has accumulated a lot of material possessions and money that Firdaus herself admires. Although Sharifa flatters Firdaus as her mother or even siblings and literary cares about her, she is only interested to sexually-exploit her. She lures Firdaus into prostitution only because she hopes to make a lot of money by having her sleep with all categories of men in Cairo. Sharifa openly tells Firdaus that although her skin is soft, her heart is so cruel that her bite is as deadly as snake.

The narrator recounts Firdaus' sexual-exploitation as thus:

I never used to leave the house. In fact, I never even left the bedroom. Day and night I lay on the bed, crucified, and every hour a man would come in. There were so many of them. I did not understand where they could possibly have come from. For they were all married, all educated, all carrying swollen leather bags, and swollen leather wallets in their inner pockets. (82)

Although Sharifa had encouraged Firdaus to engage in prostitution as the only plausible means for a woman like her to earn her living, Firdaus was, in fact, Sharifa's sex-worker. She only gets to understand that she is being exploited by Fawzy who tells her that "Sharifa is fooling you and making money out of you, while all you get out is pain" (84). Moreover, Firdaus overhears a scuffle between Sharifa and Fawzy over her ownership. In addition, Firdaus is mocked by school girls in the streets when she told them that she had both primary and secondary school certificates. In short, much as Firdaus experiences numerous discrimination and oppression from men, she nonetheless is also greatly mistreated and oppressed by the female gender in manifestation of the new trends of women oppression under patriarchy.

2.6 Internalized Patriarchy in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

Benon Tugume (2022), in “Depiction of Women’s Oppression and Gender-based Domestic Violence against Girls in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*”, argues that the novel is a psychological depiction of women oppression with a better treatment of the question of gender inequality, compared to Frantz Fanon’s polemical work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, whose preface by Jean-Paul Satre actually provides the title for Dangarembga’s novel. Drawing from the life struggles against the Shona patriarchal domination and oppression of the protagonist, Tambudzai (Tambu), and other female characters in the novel, such as Ma’ Shingayi, Maiguru, Lucia and Nyasha, Tugume explicitly stresses the huge burdens that such a patriarchal culture subjects to womanhood. He, however, contrasts the patriarchal oppression of women with the undue privileges that men, such as Mukoma, Babamukuru and Nhamo, enjoy in a similar social structure. Unlike Tugume’s insightful analysis of the patriarchal oppression of female characters in the novel, this sub-section offers a new dimension of women under patriarchy. Specifically, the analysis centres on women oppression of fellow women as a manifestation of the rapidly changing global trends on both patriarchy and gender inequality.

The first strange aspect of the bizarre women oppression of fellow women is seen in the manner in which Tambu’s mother, Ma’ Shingayi, literally prepares her for a disappointed life in the world of *Nervous Conditions*. Although the novel commendably paints a very grim situation for a woman who has to contend with both patriarchal subjugation and British colonial oppression, the female protagonist, Tambu, is depicted as having great aspirations for life, especially through education, which she firmly believes has the power to change her fortune

for the better. Despite the fact that most of the males in the novel view education as a preserve for the male gender, Tambu's mother, Ma' Shingayi, seems complicit in silencing female voices' agitation for education opportunities. The narrator remarks:

My mother was too old to be disturbed by my childish nonsense, she tried to diffuse some of it by telling me many things, by explaining that my father was right because even Maiguru knew how to cook and clean and grow vegetables. "This business of womanhood is a heavy burden," she said. "How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is better later on" (16).

The above quotation can obviously be interpreted by different people to mean different things. This study, however, argues that in as much as Ma' Shingayi's claim that it is the female gender who has to make a sacrifice when the finances are inadequate is plausible, she, nonetheless inculcates a very submissive mentality in her daughter, pretty much like the male-chauvinistic characters in the novel. Unlike Tambu who seeks to question this patriarchal subjugation of women in this colonial Shona society of *Nervous Conditions*, her mother, Ma' Shingayi, seems to have moved on with the patriarchal oppression, and by extension, encourages her daughter to equally let things be, no matter how bad Tambu sees and feels them. Ma' Shingayi's decision to prepare Tambu for a life of disappointment is a demonstration of the evolving trends in the patriarchy and equality question where a woman ironically becomes an agent who instills the oppressive patriarchal creed in a young female like Tambu. Whether this could be a creative flaw on the side of the novelist, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Ma' Shingayi's message to her daughter makes her complicit in feminine repression because she essentially teaches her to be

obedient to the patriarchal ideals that would endanger her daughter's future. Moreover, she is very distasteful of her daughter's progressive thoughts, especially when she comes back to the village and realizes grim poverty in the household, characterised by her concern over the caving roof and eventual decision to clean the filthy latrine, instead she calls her daughter haughty and judgmental.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of a woman's verbal aggression on a fellow woman is depicted by Ma' Shingayi's outbursts in the kitchen in her attempt to comment on the apparent unfairness of men in trying (judging) those involved in acts of transgression, especially when they are women. Takesure, Babamukuru's distant cousin, has had a sexual affair with Lucia, Ma' Shingayi's sister, and the latter has become pregnant in the process. However, instead of getting married to Takesure, as the Shona tradition dictated, she again sleeps with her brother-in-law, Jeremiah in the hope to stay around. This act of transgression committed by Takesure and Lucia annoys Babamukuru so much and a meeting is summoned to decide the fate of the offending party. The meeting, obviously, includes only men, and although Ma' Shingayi rightly feels that it is not good to decide a case without hearing from both sides (Lucia inclusive), she becomes very furious to almost every woman in the kitchen, and most harshly to her seemingly innocent sister-in-law, Maiguru, who decides to take no any part in the kitchen tirade against the men. Ma' Shingayi feels that Maiguru's decision to distance herself from their kitchen discussion as betrayal emanating from social class differences between her, a mere house-wife, and the other one (Maiguru), a highly-educated woman. In her fury, Ma' Shingayi utters a series of attacks and accusations to the women in the kitchen. She, for instance, falsely accuses Maiguru of killing her son, Nhamo, and when her daughter, Tambu, and sister, Lucia, tried to cool her down, she is equally verbally

oppressive: she curses Tambu whom she feels has betrayed her for “affluence” by siding with Maiguru. Lucia is given a mouthful for her sexual recklessness with both Takesure and Jeremiah. The baseless allegations of hatred and murder levied against Maiguru are emotionally-depressive to her daughter, Nyasha, to the extent that Tambu has to try to comfort her cousin. In short, the verbal attacks in the kitchen by Ma’ Shingayi to her fellow female are too emotionally draining to them that it paints a dire picture of division and distrust among women going through a lot of patriarchal oppression.

2.7 Conclusion

As already stressed, since the selected novelists, Goretta Kyomuhendo, Lola Shoneyin, Nawal El Saadawi and Tsitsi Dangarembga, are among the leading campaigners for the emancipation of women and the girl-child on the African continent, they may not have consciously set up to write stories about women aggression on fellow women. However, a broad-based critique of their novels actually affirms the view that with the rapidly emerging global trends, the discourse on patriarchy and gender inequality has also been changing, and so gender inequality and oppression of women has taken a new paradigm where the new woman is ruthless in her oppression of a fellow woman. This is what the four writers whose works have been analysed have depicted, especially considering the attitude of the female characters to fellow women in the text.

CHAPTER THREE

MALE REPRESSION BY WOMEN AND PATRIARCHY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers the second critical insight on the continuous evolution of the questions of patriarchy and gender inequality in the selected African novels. The analysis demystifies, further, the traditional notion that patriarchy only privileges men and oppresses women by highlighting evidence of women oppression of men, and some men struggling under the strict norms of African patriarchy in the selected African novels.

Waruni Tennakoon (2021), in “Men’s Tears Also Matter: A Study on the Patriarchal Oppression of Men in Literature”, argues that all patriarchal societies have a strict code of conduct for every person (men and women) in society, and that this has promoted gender stereotypes that have in turn increased gender inequality. He, further, argues that even when men and women may not necessarily be affected by this strict patriarchal code in the same way, not everyone is either free from, or affected by its effects. This, in his view, challenges the popular gender “conspiracy theory” that condemns all men (whatever the age, class and status) as the privileged, and oppressive entity, while regarding all women as the oppressed and disadvantaged party, yet men who fall sort of the strict patriarchal standards have also been victims of the same patriarchal system, much as people tend to be quiet on it. Waruni fears that such silence on the oppression of the male gender has made man the “forgotten sex” even when he has experienced enormous suffering under the same system.

The continuously evolving trends in the patriarchy and gender inequality discourses are, further, stressed by Taka Catherine Arrey-Ngang (2020), in “The Changing Perception of the African Woman towards Patriarchy and Masculinity”. Her argument is that although feminists are significantly concerned about the study of men and masculinities thinking that this might hinder people’s response to women and inequality issues, broadening the scope of the gender and inequality (oppression) discourses to include men and masculinity is vital in both widening and validating the understanding of power and inequality between men and women in society. Her conclusion is that the tendency to always view women as the victims of patriarchy and male oppression (violence) is gradually losing legitimacy in gender discourse because the traditionally held opinions about the African woman as merely silent and relegated to the lower social order have been changing. She notes that most African women have now challenged patriarchal norms by being educated, owning houses, running their own homes and businesses, and have, therefore, moved from the peripheral boundaries of society. Moreover, Taka contends, further, some African women have developed a “domineering attitude” over men, known as “Female Chauvinism” (7). From the background laid by both Waruni Tennakoon and Taka Catherine Arrey-Ngang and others, the study argues that bringing to the limelight the oppression of men by women and certain African patriarchal norms has been long overdue, and yet a lot has changed regarding patriarchy and gender inequality in Africa. The subsequent sub-sections, therefore, centre on the analysis of how man has endured a lot of oppression from women and patriarchy.

3.2 Male Oppression by Women and Patriarchy in *The First Daughter*

Much as Abasi Kiyimba (2008), in “Male Identity and Female Space in the Fiction of Ugandan Female Writers”, is, to some extent, right in regarding Goretti Kyomuhendo’s novel, *The First Daughter*, as an examination of the peripheral role and place of a woman in a very conservative (patriarchal) African society, characterised by man’s domination and violence against women, the novel also reflects the nuanced trends regarding gender inequality and patriarchy in Africa by depicting a number of instances where male characters (men) are presented as victims of discrimination (inequality) and oppression by both women and the strict patriarchal system of the Bunyoro society. Strangely, though, this flipside of the novel is not usually underscored by scholars of patriarchy and gender equality, yet the quest for woman emancipation (liberation) should not happen at the expense of the male gender, if the rationale for gender activism is a full realisation of a truly egalitarian African society.

Kyamanywa, the husband to Ngozi and father to Kasemiire, is one of the characters in *The First Daughter* that embody the numerous challenges, limitations and sufferings that certain categories of men face under a very strict African patriarchal system. Although his peers (“drink-mates”) are quintessentially male-chauvinists who have no regard for women, Kyamanywa, and perhaps like his drinking-peers, is portrayed as a man whose professional background is only limited to mere hunting and peasantry. True to African patriarchal ideals, Kyamanywa is a very hardworking and responsible polygamist. We are told that his “two wives never went naked, neither did they want for soap, sugar, paraffin or other necessities” (6). Although he owned many acres of land and reared some animals, such as goats and cows, he was nonetheless a poor man who, on numerous occasions, faces the

harsh realities of a patriarchal Bunyoro society. For instance, he is ridiculed by his beer-drinking friends for his decision to send his female children, especially Kasemiire, to school. After sending his daughter to school, we never hear of these friends of him: perhaps he loses them afterwards because of such a decision. While at Duhaga Secondary School, we learn that Kyamanywa does not have enough money for all the school requirements, notably, money for at least a roll of toilet papers. His ridiculous suggestion that Kasemiire can use leaves in the toilet is met with embarrassing mockery from the school girls who seem to be coming from very affluent families. The fact that he could not realise how his daughter was going to be embarrassed by the wooden suitcase at school shows how financially-constrained Kyamanywa was. The jeers and mockery that Kasemiire suffers for the “coffin-like” suitcase is implicitly directed to her father. Earlier on, Kyamanywa endures these insults when the men in the village express their skepticism towards his decision to send a girl child to school. In a patriarchal system, what men despise is despised by women too. Therefore, as a victim of such stigmatization, it will only be too devastating for a girl sent to school by a father like Kyamanywa to disappoint him by getting pregnant. The afore is exactly the tragedy that befalls Kasemiire and the father. Kasemiire becomes pregnant while at school. This leaves Kyamanywa too disappointed to ever forgive her. In short, Kyamanywa’s struggles serve to teach us that merely being a man does not guarantee privileges, success and happiness in the African patriarchal society. Therefore, much as the patriarchal system is very discriminative and oppressive to poor men like Kyamanywa, and some women, such as Kasemiire and her mother, girls from rich families seem, however, to be enjoying themselves in such a society.

Kasemiire's elder brother, Mugabi (which ironically means "God is the giver" in Runyoro), for all his being a male child has nothing, whatsoever, to enjoy in the patriarchal Bunyoro society that Goretti Kyomuhendo presents in her novel, *The First Daughter*. Apart from just being a boy (male), Mugabi is almost non-existence in the story. In fact, he is so ridiculous that he almost only serves as the foil for Kasemiire's brilliance, hardwork and eventual success by the end of the novel. The age-old notion that patriarchy privileges all males (boys and men) is mystified by the depiction of Mugabi and his other male siblings. For instance, he even has to share a basin of bathing water with his young sister, Kasemiire. And when Kasemiire cries in protest that Mugabi has finished all the water, he is not even allowed by his mother to given his own side of the story. Moreover, he, too, is bitten by their mother, Ngonzi, in addition to having been verbally-abused by Kasemiire. He is depicted as being too dull to do well in academics, and as a result had neither joined secondary school education, nor secured a job of his own. The narrator says:

Her elder brother, Mugabi, envied her so much, for he had failed to join a secondary school and could not even secure a job in town. His father was always pestering him to start farming, get married and have plenty of children. (28)

The above quotation presents a weird puzzle about the prospects of both male and female children under a patriarchal society. The boy-child, Mugabi, is reduced to a failed student who only has to admire his young sister's excellent academic performance and prospective bright future. Ironically, the sister, Kasemiire, despite the numerous challenges that she apparently faces now and will face again in the future, is everyone's source of joy and pride: a true family celebrity. If patriarchy is, indeed, designed for the benefit of the male gender, how come Mugabi, the boy-child, is such a miserable failure, while Kasemiire, the girl-child, an exciting

success and source of pride? Whether this was deliberate, or simply an artistic flaw, the novel, *The First Daughter*, affirms the on-going dynamics and complexities on the question of patriarchy and gender inequality in Africa, necessitating a new perspective that comprehensively takes into consideration of the existing dynamics that bring the oppression of the male gender into the limelight for purposes of attaining true gender equality.

The First Daughter also offers another form of inequality and rage between the male members of its Bunyoro patriarchal society. Specifically, the novel depicts how the rich members of this society sleep with other men's wives and children with impunity. A notable example is Mr. Rwakaikara, a very rich man who has been oppressing the poor male members of society, such as Mr. Byaruhanga, by sleeping with their wives. Known for his great sexual immorality in this society, the girls have even nicknamed him "Ka-skirt" (3). One of the women remarks:

But another woman cut her off. "Rwakaikara!" she said surprised. "You just don't know him. The other day, he was winking at me and even tried to tickle my ribs! Imagine me, a married woman and ... in fact nothing in a skirt can by-pass him. (3)

The novel presents the Bunyoro patriarchal society in such a way that even people of the same gender are treated differently because of many reasons. For the case of Mr. Rwakaikara, having wealth and status makes him think he can sleep around with any woman, whether married, or even poor people's young daughters, and go away with it. He has not respect for fellow men, especially those who are not of the same financial status. Through the character of Mr. Rwakaikara and Mr. Byaruhanga, Goretti Kyomuhendo seems to affirm the glaring sub-inequalities in patriarchal societies, even among members of the same sex and gender. In other words, her idea is that patriarchy treats similar genders unequally, depending on

their age and socio-economic statuses. Therefore, to suggest that all men are privileged by the patriarchal code of conduct, or that all women are victims of patriarchy is to simply give only one side of the story, which is dangerous, especially in attempt to attain full gender equality in society.

Relatedly, the abrupt and mysterious death of Kalisa, Kasemiire's uncle, also invalidates the claim that all is well for the male gender. We are told that Kalisa was "as healthy as a bull" (74), but his death was so quick and shocking. Typical of any death in an African setting, the women try to gossip about this death. According to Amooti, one of the female gossips in the novel, the deceased had wanted to marry the widow of Mbabazi and this had envied his wife who decided to kill him by poisoning. According to the narrator, a jealousy woman would rather lose a husband than share him with another woman. This is because polygamous marriages which are very common in the Bunyoro patriarchal set-up promotes a lot discrimination and oppression among the co-wives. The death of Kalisa offers two perspectives on the new view of patriarchal-based gender inequality: firstly, it shows how unsafe and insecure some men are under polygamous marriages because their wives can simply finish them off anytime. The implication is that women, instead of men, hold the power to oppress and even kill. Secondly, it also shows that women naturally hate each. Even when they may marry the same man and even live under the same house, it does not mean that they like each other.

Male oppression under patriarchy in *The First Daughter* is, further, seen in the way Mr. and Mrs. Mutyaba literally throw their own son, Michael, out of their own house under the pretense that Kasemiire is feeling uncomfortable by his constant love advances. Although the Mutyabas should be appreciated for having given shelter to Kasemiire who was in destitution, the decision to ask Michael to leave

the house and go stay with a distant relative is shocking in as far as patriarchy and gender inequality are concerned. First of all, Michael and Kasemiire were almost age mates, and so being in love was not that immoral. Of course, we later realise that Mr. Mutyaba wanted the girl for himself. Although Mrs. Mutyaba's eventual throwing of Kasemiire from the house after the alleged seduction of her husband is highly pitiable, the decision to send Michael out of the house is equally psychologically sad, and serves to reinforce the idea that not every male has his way in a patriarchal setting.

3.3 Male Vulnerability in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*

Gift T. Baloyi (2019), in "An African Woman's Dilemma in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*: A Bosadi Perspective on the Challenges and Pains of Infertility", examines the cultural predicaments that the African woman grapples with under patriarchy in Shoneyin's novel. Specifically, he enumerates the dilemmas, challenges and unbearable pains that women in polygamous marriages face, such as being blamed for infertility as if only a woman can be infertile. This is in addition to the patriarchal prejudices against a woman's sexuality, regarding childless ("infertile") women as almost being useless, while viewing men as agents, and women as mere objects in a marriage relationship. In conclusion, he argues that much as the African family unit is mainly built on gender discrimination, especially discrimination against women, he thinks women, too, were created by God to be fully active human beings. Although Baloyi raises very fundamental views regarding the discrimination and oppression of the African woman, especially in polygamous marriages in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, he is deliberately blind to the numerous instances of male oppression by women and patriarchy itself. This sub-section, therefore, widens the scope of

gender inequality and oppression under patriarchy by highlighting the oppression that men grapple under patriarchy, a system that is alleged to be pro-males. Moreover, Adekoya Olusegun (2014), in “Love’s Metamorphosis in Third-Generation African Women’s Writing: The Example of Lola Shoneyin’s *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*”, cites the novel as the best example of radical feminist writing that cast overboard the traditional values that are said to subjugate women and instead celebrate shocking novelties under the guise of gender equality, women emancipation and social justice. According to Adekoya,

Symbolic of male supremacy in misogynous, phallogocentric writing, the figure of the penis is deconstructed and its connotations of machismo and intellectual, moral, and physical superiority are negated. Through image-inversion, the pen is appropriated by the novelist and man is rendered powerless. (1)

In the above quotation, Adekoya argues that under the pretext of condemning patriarchal norms that perpetuate gender inequality and women oppression, Lola Shoneyin adopted a radically-feministic narrative whose activism for equality, woman emancipation and social justice literally weakens man and leaves him in a dire state of oppression, powerlessness and pity that necessitates a paradigm shift that would broaden the discourse on patriarchy and gender inequality if true egalitarianism is to be achieved.

The first instance of patriarchal oppression of man in Lola Shoneyin’s novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*, is reflected in the unfair laws designed to curb domestic violence that have made women, especially educated women almost untouchable, at the expense of their husbands. Concerned of Bolanle’s “bareness”, Baba Segi decides to pay a visit to his friend, Teacher, and others for some advice. When advised by Atanda to drug the woman to a medicine man so that they could be help, Baba Segi is cautioned by Olaopa, thus:

Atanda! You want to land Baba Segi in jail? Who would dare to drag a graduate? When she opens her mouth and English begins to pour from it like heated palm oil, the constable will be so captivated, he will throw our friend behind bars!” Olaopa was a retired police sergeant and he knew, more than anyone else, that domestic violence was widely perceived as a waste of police resources. (12-13)

From Olaopa’s warnings in the above extract, it is clear that this so-called patriarchal society actually has tough laws against women oppression, but whose safe-guards actually discriminate and oppress men, especially illiterate men like Baba Segi and his colleagues. This also means that in such a society, illiterate and poor men did not have much say. It can, therefore, be argued that the oppression that Shoneyin depicts in her novel is complex and multifaceted. The novel’s patriarchal society is equally repressive to men, as it is to women in one way or the other.

The patriarchal society in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives* also sustains inequality and oppression to sexually-impotent and infertile men by its reverence for virility and the production of children. Although Baba Segi is presented as someone with an admirable sexual prowess and a polygamist, he, nonetheless, is infertile and considered worthless by the dictates of patriarchy. For example, when he jokingly calls Olaopa too slight to manhandle a woman, the former mockingly asks, “Yes, but whose wife’s belly is as flat as a pauper’s footstool? I may be slight but I get the job done” (12). This derisive statement from Olaopa foreshadows the eventual medical revelations about Baba Segi’s inability to make any of his women pregnant because of his low sperm count (infertility). Because of this sexual infertility, Taju, Baba Segi’s personal driver sleeps with one of his wives and actually has sired all the children with her. Although he is his employee, Taju harbors an inward disrespect for Baba Segi’s infertility, no wonder he keeps his

lecherous eyes at the young and beautiful Bolanle. He probably pities the young graduate for being married to someone infertile.

In her initial encounters with Baba Segi at the workshop, the beautiful young graduate, Bolanle, is actually very indifferent to the old man. In fact, as Baba Segi tries to ask for her hand in a relation (marriage), Bolanle tries to ignore him by reading a novel while Baba Segi was still talking to her. Bolanle also recounts that her mother disliked her engagement and eventual marriage to Baba Segi, abusively calling him “an overfed orangutan”, while Bolanle’s friends called him a “polygamist ogre” (21). Much as Baba Segi is the envy of his own village for adding a young graduate to his other three wives, it is more of a marriage of convenience from Bolanle’s point of view. She makes this crystal clear when she says:

Somehow, it all made perfect sense when I met Baba Segi. At last, I would be able to empty myself of my sorrow. I would be with a man who accepted me, one who didn’t ask questions or find my quietness unsettling. I knew Baba Segi wouldn’t be like younger men who demanded explanations for the faraway look in my eye. Baba Segi was content when I said nothing.

So, yes. I chose this home. Not for the monthly allowance, not for the lace skirt suits, and not for the coral bracelets. Those things mean nothing to me. I chose this family to regain my life, to heal in anonymity. (21)

As already mentioned, Bolanle’s decision to marry Baba Segi, a man old enough to be her own father, is not principally for love and affection. She simply needs a new lease of life that being the youngest wife to an old man would accord her. Like most young beauties, Bolanle is shrewd and highly calculative. Even when her mother and friends mock her lover, she is intent on the marriage because she knows that Baba Segi would treat her as a trophy. Indeed, in the initial stages of her marriage, she is everything for Baba Segi and even the co-wives, especially Iya

Segi and Iya Femi, are so scared of her that they think something should be done before she gets them thrown out of the marriage. Bolanle is even free to walk away from the marriage after finding out that Baba Segi cannot impregnate her, even though Baba Segi would have loved that stays. Shoneyin depicts a patriarchal society that does give into inadequacies, despite one's gender.

Related to the above, Iya Femi is another character whose marriage is another form of escape because of her suffering in the hands of her uncle who dispossessed her because of the nature of lineage and family arrangement in Africa, where the idea of a nuclear family is never allowed to solidify in a clear cut more traditional form. Chioma Emelone (2020) in "Marriage and Procreation in Africa" quotes Quayson (2007) arguing that in practice there is always an overlap between the nuclear arrangements and the claims of extended families (42). It is the claims from her extended family that pushes her into grandma's house where she is tortured in every sense of it. She states in her own words that:

From the day I got here, I was a house girl and my status didn't change. They pillaged the most fruitful years of my life, all the time treating me as if they had found me in a pit latrine. Grandma slapped me if a drop of oil fell from the ladle to the cooker... (The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives, pg. 124)

She equally loses her virginity to Tunde, grandma's only child who eases his stress between her thighs. It is he who gives her idea of escaping to freedom. Her encounter with Baba Segi provides her the opportunity she desperately needs that time and she perfectly utilizes it. Marriage becomes a place of refuge for her when the wicked of the society are ready to swallow up her whole; a base from which she can call in her debts, for the society owes her a lot. It can clearly be seen that Iya Femi does not go into marriage because of love but rather she escapes from the harsh realities of the society which does not largely seek the common good of

women. Consequently, Baba Segi becomes not only the receiver of such a wife but suffers from marrying a woman who does not marry for love but to reconstruct her life at the expense of her husband. Whether she does it consciously or unconsciously, the effect upon her husband eventually results into a form of oppression against a man.

Finally, the decision for Baba Segi's three wives, Iya Segi, Iya Tope and Iya Femi, to bear children out of wedlock and superimpose them on Baba Segi is so humiliating to the male gender in a patriarchal society. Although the novel was obviously tailor-made to satirize the emptiness of male chauvinism, it is so demeaning to the male gender. Baba Segi is portrayed as a cartoon-figure of a husband. While his wives can bear children behind his back, he is too dull to find out as a man his own fate without necessarily getting everyone involved and tarnish his reputation in this very demanding patriarchal society. Even when he finally finds out that he is not the biological father of any of the children he has always bragged about, he does not act as a typical patriarchal man would have acted. He is so embarrassed and weak that he caves in to the women's whims because he knows the implication to the man for the inability to sire children. In the end, he compromises his own esteem and accepts to father children who will definitely walk away one day after realizing that he is not their own biological father. Baba Segi's struggles throughout the novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, initially with a "bellyache", and at the end with the embarrassment of her having to keep women who have constantly cheated on him show how patriarchy can be so oppressive to even men.

3.4 Manipulation and Exploitation in *Woman at Point Zero*

Benon Tugume (2021), in “Interrogating the Male-Female Gender Dichotomy in Nawal El Saadawi’s *Woman at Point Zero*”, offers an insightful examination of the existing dichotomy between the female and male genders in the novel. Drawing from the protagonist’s own postulation that women are “prostitutes”, while men are “criminals”, he highlights the grim situation in which the Egyptian women are both powerless and subordinate to male authority, thereby silencing their voices in society. Women like Firdaus, Tugume stresses, further, are oppressed, harassed and abused sexually by male chauvinists, and “liberative violence” against men becomes the only viable option to liberate themselves from the oppressively patriarchal Egyptian society, although at the cost of death. Although Tugume offers a very insightful analysis on the grim situation for a woman under the oppressive laws of Egyptian patriarchy, he, like most other scholars on the subject of patriarchy and gender inequality in Africa, keeps the discourse on the traditional notions of patriarchy as all privileging man, even when the novel offers instances where men are also struggling, although not at the level of women. Although much of the story centres on the challenges and oppression subjected to the women, Nawal El Saadawi’s *Woman at Point Zero* also offers broader issues that culminate into the suffering and oppression of humanity, men inclusive, in the patriarchal Egyptian society of her time. This sub-section, therefore, argues that while claiming to privilege man, patriarchy actually ends up nurturing a dark-hearted and oppressive woman that manifests a nuanced and complex view on the question of patriarchy and gender inequality which demands a more comprehensive analysis so that the struggles of both genders under patriarchy are attended to.

To begin with, Firdaus, the protagonist of the novel, takes the law into her own hands on two occasions. Firstly, she frights and eventually kills Marzouk, the pimp for trying to over-control her life. Secondly, shortly after killing the pimp, she engages in a sexual act with an Arab prince, and despite being paid \$3,000, Firdaus tears up the money and slaps him into panic and screams, which makes the police to come and have her arrested, charged and given a death sentence. First of all, it is important to stress that everyone understands the tough struggles that Firdaus has been through since her childhood, and so her attempt to challenge the power dynamics that seek to promote and sustain gender inequality and the oppression of women in the patriarchal Egyptian society is actually admirable. The only problem is whether her activism for self-emancipation should be allowed to happen at the expense of other people's lives. Like women's lives, men's lives matter, too. This is not to exonerate Marzouk's oppressive acts to Firdaus. It is simply to argue that patriarchy does not necessarily grant immunity to all men, and that some women actually engage in oppressive and even murderous acts against men under patriarchy, although this is always downplayed by radical feminists who always think it has to always be a woman, and yet a man is also going through a lot under the same system. In any case for Firdaus, she is subjected to a due legal process of being arrested, charged and handed a sentence. She is even asked if she would like to appeal the sentence, and she chose not. But for the pimp's case, she murders him in cold blood.

The manipulation and utter exploitation of Firdaus' uncle by his wife is another manifestation of man's struggles under feminine power and patriarchy. Although it is often claimed that patriarchy means male domination over females, the case different in Firdaus's uncle's situation. Before marriage, Firdaus' uncle is

presented as a very good-hearted, loving and caring man who even decides to take Firdaus under his care. Moving with her to Cairo, Firdaus' uncle wants her to study. But when he brings a wife home, hell breaks loose for Firdaus as the once loving and caring uncle succumbs to the whims, lies and manipulations of his wife. How she manipulated Firdaus' uncle into not sending her to school and marrying her to a despicable old man, Sheik Mahmoud. Firdaus' uncle could not make any decision of his own, could not even help his own people. He is depicted as a man under his wife's captivity and oppression, totally powerless, for even his own good.

Sheik Mahmoud also represents the category of men enduring struggling to fit and belong and belong in the Egyptian patriarchal society of the novel, *Woman at Point Zero*. Although he subjects his young wife, Firdaus, to lots of oppression and discrimination, he also suffers psychological torture due to his physical deformities. Even when Firdaus is suggested for him by Firdaus' uncle's wife, Firdaus' uncle expresses great concern over his old age and facial deformities. In as much as he is eventually outsmarted by his wife, her uncle only sanctions the marriage to the old sheik primarily because of his financial status, and not on the grounds of being the ideal husband to Firdaus. Much as the action mainly centres on the oppression that Sheik Mahmoud perpetuates to Firdaus, the novel, also offers highlights of the bleak future for men with physical deformities, especially in relation to marriage. No wonder at one point in the novel Sheik Mahmoud actually complains that Firdaus avoids him, ironically wondering whether his face smells. Therefore, through a caricatured depiction of Sheik Mahmoud, characterised by his facial deformities and the beastly manner in which he oppresses Firdaus, is suggestive of discrimination and psychological torture that

the old and physically-deformed do not have much say in a patriarchal society, men as they may be.

3.5 Masculinity and Power Dynamics in *Nervous Condition*

In this sub-section, the study argues that much as Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel, *Nervous Conditions*, mainly examines the harsh realities that women experience under the patriarchal Shona (Rhodesian) society, a more comprehensive analysis, in lieu of the continuously emerging trends on patriarchy and gender discourses, affirms the existence of certain patriarchal ideals that are very discriminative and oppressive to men (males), thereby necessitating a new and broadened perspective on the subject.

Mr. Matimba, the school teacher, experiences a lot of resistance and verbal attacks from different categories of members of the male gender in *Nervous Conditions* as he attempts to help Tambu sell her maize so that she raises money for her studies. Initially, Jeremiah suspects that he has an ulterior motive in his decision to offer his younger daughter a ride to Umtali, Rhodesia's third largest town, to sell the maize, such as taking Tambu to become his domestic worker, or even engaging in some sexual exploitation of the girl. The narrator tells us:

My father said Mr. Matimba was behaving irresponsibly and interfering in matters that do not concern him. "Does he think he is your father?" he enquired. "He thinks that because he has chewed more letters than I have, he can take over my children. And you, you think he is better than me. He wants somebody to work in his garden, that's what he wants. I forbid you to go" (24).

Much as the reader appreciates Mr. Matimba's honest concern about Tambu's plight in regard to her aspirations for education, a fellow man, Jeremiah, thinks otherwise. He is unfairly thought of trying to use his education and social status to exploit the child of a poor man, and that is why Tambu's father thinks she is

forbidden from going with him to Umtali. Moreover, while in Umtali, the teacher has to endure a series of racial slurs from George, the husband of the compassionate white lady, Doris, who initially suspects that Mr. Matimba is engaging Tambu in child labour. In addition, George calls Mr. Matimba and the entire African folks good for nothing “Kaffirs” (28). In fact, when Doris gives Mr. Matimba money amounting to ten pounds meant to help Tambu go to school, the husband is very annoyed, remarking, “That’s more than two crates of Shumba. Wasted on a kaffir!” (28). Even when he does the best thing by paying the money directly to school, instead of giving it to the young to take it home, Mr. Matimba has to endure the wrath of Jeremiah. Although he is initially dismissive of her daughter’s story about the money, Jeremiah goes to the school and confronts the school head for the decision to keep the money, instead of giving it to Tambu to bring home to him. After the conversation between the headmaster and Tambu’s father becomes so heated, Mr. Matimba is called to come and clarify things. He is called the “real thief” who influenced the headmaster to keep the money. Like Ma’ Shingayi’s baseless attacks on Maiguru and the rest of her female colleagues, Jeremiah, rather than expressing gratitude for what Mr. Matimba has done for his daughter’s education aspirations, is very disrespectful and abusive.

The fight at school between Tambu and her brother, Nhamo, after the latter is accused of stealing the former’s maize cobs also manifests a physical assault of a male by a female in Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*. Having labored a lot in her desire to raise funds to support her education aspirations, and moreover against the wishes of both her mother, Ma’ Shingayi, and father, Jeremiah, Tambu had cultivated a sizeable maize garden and the mealies were quite impressive. However, her brother, Nhamo, has always escaped to the garden with his peers and

stolen his poor sister's maize cobs. Learning that her brother has done that to her, Tambu becomes overcome with rage and engages in a very fierce fight in which she mercilessly beat her sibling. The narrator remarks:

They told me I took off from the pada game like a dog after a buck. I remember at one moment playing pada, the next Nhamo and I rolling about in the dirt of the football pitch, a group of excited boys egging us on. They said I went straight for my brother and brought him down in a single charge. The element of surprise was on my side. I sat on top of him, banged his head into the ground, screamed and spat and cursed. Nhamo heaved (22-23).

The quotation above demystifies the notion that boys, and indeed, the male gender, always have it their way in a patriarchal society. Perhaps misled by his masculine identity, Nhamo and his male peers make a grave mistake of stealing Tambu's mealies, and he reservedly pays dearly for it. Given the tendency by many feminists to believe that a male always has his way in such a society, Tambu's merciless physical assault on her brother is not only fierce, but also shocking. The way she ragingly rolls her brother on the dirty school pitch is nothing sort of a spectacle that necessitates the intervention of an elder, ironically a male elder, Mr. Matimba, whose approach is one of listening to both sides of the story and ensure that justice is dispensed to both parties, and on time. In a clear manifestation of the changing trends regarding patriarchal gender oppression, even the female reader is appalled by Tambu's rage at her brother, while being astonished with Mr. Matimba's impartiality in ending the scuffle between the two siblings.

3.6 Conclusion

The widely-held view that patriarchal systems privilege the male gender, while at the same time perpetuating discrimination and oppression of the female gender notwithstanding, this chapter offers an insightful perspective that broadens, further, the scope of the gender-based inequalities and oppressions in African patriarchal

societies. Motivated by the continuously emerging and complex global trends on patriarchy and gender that previous studies on the subject have not fully captured, the chapter addresses such a gap by highlighting how certain patriarchal ideals are both discriminatory and oppressive to men as well. Also, the highlighted instances of female oppression of men debunk the traditional feminist notion that gender-based inequality and oppression are only done by men. The intention for such a paradigm shift on the discourse is to instigate a more holistic engagement in the attempts to address the existing gender-based inequalities and oppressions in most African societies that seem so focused on only one gender.

CHAPTER FOUR

MALE ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN EMANCIPATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter offers the third and last critical insight for the study on the evolution of patriarchy and gender inequality in the selected African novels. Specifically, the chapter presents a detailed analysis of a major paradigm shift on the subject by highlighting numerous instances from the selected novels in which the male gender, either consciously, or otherwise, engages in acts that presuppose advocacy for the emancipation of the female gender from her apparent patriarchal subjugation. The analysis, however, does not seek to downplay some acts of bigotry, inequality, oppression and marginalization that some women in many patriarchal African societies have sometimes grappled with. Rather, the intention of the analysis is geared towards a broadened scope in the advocacy for women emancipation that underscores the vital role played by the male gender in the womanist cause for liberation which arises from the continuous evolution of patriarchy and gender inequality in Africa that, unfortunately, is often not highlighted by many gender activists and feminist scholars. In this study, male advocacy for the emancipation of women is used to refer to the various instances in the selected novels where men and boys engage in acts that offer support and help womenfolk.

Onyekachi Peter Onuoha (2021), in “Masculinity Care & Paternity in Shoneyin’s *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*”, asserts that despite the tendency by feminist studies to view masculinity (maleness) as being a mere toxic-preoccupation with male power and privilege, and by extension, devoid of bonding and care for femininity, the aspect of masculinity is fluid and that men should be

viewed as being more than just female-oppressors, as they have been tagged by many feminist writings. Moreover, Onyekachi argues further, since feminists have started to recognise the wanton oppression of women by fellow women, the representation of masculine care in the world of African prose fiction, especially by female writers, necessitates re-examination of the age-long single-story narrative of patriarchy as being totally a system that perpetrates female repression on one hand, and male privilege on the other hand. Basically, his argument is that in light of the continuously emerging realities (trends) on the subject of patriarchy and gender inequality, some men, as opposed to being women oppressors, have instead offered numerous care, love and support for women in their quest for liberation from patriarchal subjugation.

4.1 Male Advocacy for Women Emancipation in Kyomuhendo's *The First Daughter*

R.W. Connell (2003), in “The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality”, stresses the recognition of gender equality in international law and its inclusion in various documents of the United Nations. He, further, argues that much as women have played a major role in the agitation for gender equality in the public domain, men and boys have increasingly become unavoidably involved in the gender issues due to the continuous evolution and complexity of gender relations, seen almost at every level of human life, such as, individual and interpersonal relationships, economic organization, culture and the state. He asserts:

Research has repeatedly shown that patterns of gender inequality are interwoven with social definitions of masculinity and men's gender identities. To move towards a gender-equal society often requires men and boys to think and act in new ways, to reconsider traditional images of manhood, and to reshape their relationships with women and girls. Changes of this kind are already happening in many parts of the world, but not in all situations, or with all men and boys (4).

In the above quotation, Connell attempts to broaden the patriarchy and gender discourse by acknowledging the continuous evolution and complexity of the existing gender issues. Although he does not underestimate the important role played by women activists in their quest for gender equality, he thinks that the male gender (men and boys) can and are playing an equally important role to bring about gender equality in the entire globe. In other words, the quest for women emancipation is not a copyright for only women, given the various ways through which men and boys have advocated for the emancipation of women and girls in many patriarchal African societies. This sub-section, therefore, offers a highlight of various instances of male support for women emancipation in Goretti Kyomuhendo's novel, *The First Daughter*.

Despite his limited financial status and apparent male-centrism, Mr. Kyamanywa's decision to send his daughters, especially Kasemiire, to school manifests remarkable male advocacy for women emancipation. Kyomuhendo's novel, *The First Daughter*, offers a scathing depiction of a Bunyoro society that is predominantly patriarchal against women, but Mr. Kyamanywa's support for his daughters' education highlights the continuous evolution and complexities of patriarchy and gender inequality in Africa. Even when he is portrayed as very tough and uncompromising, especially to his wives and children, Mr. Kyamanywa's dedication in his attempt to secure the future of his children, especially the female-children (daughters), through education should be appreciated by anyone with a

genuine belief in the liberation of women from the shackles of patriarchy. This is because Kyamanywa's support for his daughters' education as an act of emancipation, for instance, costs him dearly, both economically and socially among his peers. His village alcohol drinking-mates regard him as being "foolish" to send his daughters to school, and we never hear about them (his village peer) in the course of the novel—he probably loses them. Economically, Kyamanywa literally sells off everything to fund Kasemiire's secondary school studies. In one dialogue, tells his wife that:

“I have decided to send your daughter to a secondary school,” he began after his wife had pulled out a mat and sat down. “It has cost me all my savings and I even had to sell off that heifer at a give-away price! Moreover, that covered school fees for only one year! Now, what about requirements? It means that I will have to get out some of the young ones from school.” Abwooli just sat there saying nothing. This is what she had prayed for all her life! (26-27).

The above quotation highlights the economic strain that funding Kasemiire and her other siblings' studies have on Mr. Kyamanywa, a merely poor and polygamous peasant. Even when he demonstrates toughness to his wives and children, he is well-intentioned when it comes to the future of his daughters. Unlike other men in this patriarchal Bunyoro society, he is willing to make both economic and social sacrifices to have his daughters access school, believing in hindsight that they will one day be economically and socially liberated. Therefore, Mr. Kyamanywa should be viewed in a broader spectrum, rather than in the usual single-story narrative espoused by many feminist scholars: like any other men living in such a patriarchal setting, he was bound to demonstrate some masculine traits that were obviously undesirable for both women (wives) and children. Conversely, though, as a progressive and well-intentioned husband and father, Kyamanywa's readiness to make both economic and social sacrifices so that his daughters attain a brighter

future through education is admirable. Kyamanywa's rage at Kasemiire's pregnancy and subsequent dropping out of school is, in a way, a forgivable act. As an economically-constrained, but responsible parent, he always had the best at heart for his daughter, Kasemiire, whose pregnancy is so disappointingly-heartbreaking. Hence, Kyamanywa's multifaceted depiction is points to the continuous and complex dynamics in the patriarchy and gender discourse that necessitate a more broad-based mode of critical analysis that is accommodative of the continuously emerging global trends on the debate.

In addition, Kyamanywa saved his eventual wife, Ngonzi Abwooli, from a great embarrassment and wrath of her parents when he decided to atone their one evening act of sexual transgression by eventually marrying her. Having gone with her mother to fetch firewood, Abwooli was furiously left behind by her mother because of her sluggishness in the way she went about the firewood collection task. As she struggled to close-in to her very quick-footed mother from the bush, she encountered a pack of barking-dogs, and very frightened, took off to her heels and was subsequently pursued by the angry dogs, only to be rescued by Kyamanywa, then young and appearing from a hunting expedition. The narrator says:

... She was so terribly afraid of dogs she broke into a run. ... A young man appeared from the nearby bushes and whistled to the dogs. Abruptly they came to a stop and the young man ordered them to move away. He beckoned her into his outstretched arms. She was by this time sobbing and shaking terribly. "There, there," the young man said soothingly, "they will not harm you anymore" (12).

In the above quotation, the narrator tells us of the strange first encounter between Mr. Kyamanywa and one of his wives, Ngonzi Abwooli. Kyamanywa is presented as a calm, caring, loving and soothing to Abwooli. Stranger as he appears to her at this very moment, he offers Abwooli an atmosphere of both security and protection

from the raging hunting dogs. Although it can be argued that Kyamanywa probably takes advantage of a desperate Abwooli and subsequently entices her into a sexual act in his hat that very evening, the former's interest and motive seem pure, genuine and mutually marriage-bound. Moreover, when Abwooli reaches home very late and is being scolded and embarrassed by his parents, Kyamanywa stands by her and actually comes to her rescue, once again, by voluntarily agreeing to marry her and even pay for the required bride price. Kyamanywa, again soothingly, tells her:

“I am sorry to have caused you such suffering and embarrassment. But don't worry, everything will be okay,” he said confidently. Two weeks later, the hunter, together with his uncles and other relatives, came to claim his wife and pay the bride price. He was ready to pay everything they asked without any negotiation or bargaining. Her father was elated. ... (16).

The above quotation shows Kyamanywa as a genuinely remorseful, loving and caring lover. Unlike other patriarchal men, he knows the costly implication of a pre-marital sexual affair and the subsequent loss of virginity, especially on the side of the girl. His decision to come and marry Abwooli after they had sex on their short first encounter shows that he always had the best interests for women, even though he was living at a time where most men of his age would not care that much for women and girls. No wonder, of all his children, both boys and girls inclusive, we are told that Kasemiire, his first daughter, was Kyamanywa's favorite, which is a complete departure from the norm of real patriarchal families where the male children, irrespective of what they are, are seen as the natural parental favorites. In short, Kyamanywa, despite his small failings as a husband and parent, advocates, in admirably many ways, for the rights and position of women, especially through legal traditional marriage and the passion for the education of his female children, notably, Kasemiire.

In the novel, *The First Daughter*, the question of male advocacy for the emancipation of women is also depicted in the way the Headmaster of Kasemiire's former primary school goes to the latter's home to offer his congratulations and best wishes on her excellent academic performance. Kyamanywa's neighbours, too, probably men (males), also come to express their happiness and best of luck wishes to both Kyamanywa and Kasemiire. Moreover, while still with her dad on her first day at Duhaga Secondary School, the Headmaster offers wise counsel and caution to Kasemiire that bright girls tend to lose focus when they give in too much of their time to the boys. On the contrary, Kasemiire's uncle's wife is not happy at all of Kasemiire's academic excellence. She, instead, sulkily tells Kasemiire's mother, Abwooli, of how lucky she is having her own daughter join secondary education, saying, "Now you can be sure that you will never lack salt" (28).

Lastly, *The First Daughter* also depicts male advocacy for women emancipation in Steven's later dialogue with Kasemiire in a meeting shrewdly arranged by one of her friends, Jean-Marie. It should be recalled that the moment Kasemiire became pregnant, we never heard again of the person responsible for the pregnancy, Kirungi Steven. Through a very lengthy suspense, we watch with pity and sympathy Kasemiire as she struggles with the pressures and challenges associated with teenage-pregnancies in Africa without any intervention, love, care and support from her partner in crime, Steven. All the period of Steven's absence from the action, the reader is almost tempted to conclude that he, a male, has ruined the future of a girl. In the aforementioned dialogue, however, we get to know that Steven has always wanted to reach out to Kasemiire and offer his love, care and support for the pregnancy, but all in vain, strangely due to Anita's love for him. Steven tells Kasemiire, thus:

“I went away after exams, heart-broken. I had no other way of communicating with you.” Steven glanced at her, as if to ask for his permission before continuing. But Kasemiire felt that she was ready to hear all the “lies” and she nodded slightly. “Then when I thought that the baby must have been born, I came to Hoima, together with Anita, because I could not come to your home direct. Anita came back with the same news: you were still living with your relative and your mother did not know whether you had delivered or not because your father had forbidden her to communicate with you” (109).

From the above quotation, the reader clearly sees Steven’s remorse at not having been able to show love, care and support to his high school girlfriend, Kasemiire, when she was going through untold difficulties with the pregnancy. Despite the fact that *The First Daughter* is highly regarded as a feminist work of art, the reader is very appalled by the pitiless lies, dishonesty and betrayal that Anita offers to her once closest high school friend, Kasemiire. Whether this is an artistic-flaw, or a deliberate depiction of a female character carelessly endangering the life and future of a fellow female for selfish reasons, the male’s quest for an improved life and future of the female is evident in the novel. Even Kasemiire comes to the shocking realisation that Steven has always wanted to help her, only to be impeded by her hypocritical friend, Anita. As Connell (2003) asserted, the quest for women emancipation is, indeed, complex and requires intervention from different parties, men and boys inclusive. Since women themselves are capable of ruining fellow women’s future, as aptly demonstrated in Chapter Two, it is important to stress the role of men in the attempt to improve the plight of women, if true equality is to be achieved.

4.2 Humility, Friendship, Care and Love in Shoneyin’s *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*

Amaka Momah-Haruna (2023), in his blog, “For Gender Equality to Thrive, Gender Equity Needs all Hands-on Deck”, expresses his concern of the slow pace

of progress in the attempts to close the existing global disparity between men and women across health, education, political and economic spheres of life. He, however, argues that the advocacy for gender equality requires a concerted effort between “allies”, instead of isolating it to only women and girls. He, specifically, emphasises the importance of men as key allies in the quest for gender equality by stressing that remarkable success has always been registered in instances where men are actively engaged in the woman emancipation campaign. In other words, rather than usual rhetoric that patriarchy makes all men oppressive to women, and that the woman liberation movement is only an affair for women, Amaka, like Connell, see men as having a vital role to play. This sub-section, therefore, offers a highlight of how men attend to the woman’s liberation cause in Lola Shoneyin’s novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*.

The first instance of male advocacy for the emancipation of women in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives* is seen in Baba Segi’s personal reprimand of his village mate, Atanda, on the issue of manhandling women. Very concerned about Bolanle’s “bareness”, Baba Segi goes to confide this sad situation for him in his village peers in Ayikara, a rural village in Ibadan, Nigeria. After revealing his disappointment with Bolanle’s inability to conceive, despite the numerous sexual exploits the couple have been enjoying since their marriage, Baba Segi is ill-advised by the male-chauvinistic Atanda to just “drag” the young wife to an herbalist, even if this could be at Bolanle’s will as a wife. Atanda tells Baba Segi that:

“Baba Segi, I think you should drag her to a medicine man if she doesn’t follow you. You are the husband and she is a mere wife, and the fourth one at that! If you drag her by the hair, she’ll follow you anywhere, I swear it!” (11)

In the above quotation, we are presented with Atanda, one of Baba Segi's peers in Ayikara, and an extreme male-chauvinist whose regard for women is deplorable, as far as the activism for gender equality is concerned. He thinks women are less human and can be subjected to all manners of treatment. Baba Segi, however, does not heed the ill-advice given to him because he has some respect for women, even when he wrongly thinks that the cause of Bolanle's inability to conceive is because of her "infertility". Although Atanda's expression is already rebuked by others, such as, Olaopa, Baba Segi's own response demonstrate the need to respect and protect women. He tells Atanda to "never manhandle our wives" (12). Indeed, Baba Segi does not drag Bolanle to the medicine man as had been suggested by Atanda, instead, the two go to the hospital to find out the possible cause and remedy, even though this decision brings him down as he finds out that he is the problem to the infertility case.

In addition, the advocacy for the image of women in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* is depicted in Bolanle's acknowledgement that Baba Segi is a perfect match (husband) for her, young and educated as she is. He is described as a "large, but kindly, generous soul" (21) by his youngest and educated wife, Bolanle. She, further, reveals of Baba Segi:

After I first met him, I told my sister, Lara, that I'd found the perfect man for me. "You want to marry a polygamist and be part of a big, ugly family? Mama will go crazy! When will you tell her?" she cackled. She knew that for once it would be me on the receiving end of Mama's exasperation. Soon, I said. (21)

Even when he is polygamist, Baba Segi's generosity, kindness, love and care for all his wives remains undiminished. Although it is plausible to argue that the marriage between Bolanle and Baba Segi is one of cross-generation, Baba Segi's attendance to all the needs of Bolanle, much like those of her co-wives, Iya Segi,

Iya Femi and Iya Tope, is admirable. For a young and university-educated female character in a female-authored literary work to applaud, on her own, a male character as being a “perfect match” in marriage is testament enough that Baba Segi is an advocate of female happiness and success, especially in the context of marriage. He, therefore, plays a role in the attempt to emancipate women like Bolanle who had almost lost their integrity and place in a very demanding Nigerian patriarchal society, in acknowledgment of a man’s role in the activism for gender equality and equity in society, as emphasized by Connell (2003), Amaka (2023) and other gender equality activists.

As a newly-married, and moreover, an educated young woman, Bolanle struggles a lot with the question of acceptance by her co-wives, notably, Iya Segi and Iya Femi. The hatred and resentment from these two co-wives is so much that they try everything humanly possible to have her chased out of Baba Segi’s homestead. Even her step-daughters seem not to want to have anything to do with her as they, pretty much like their mothers, see Bolanle as having come to topple their mothers out of Baba Segi’s affection. She, however, receives great love, sympathy, appreciation and acceptance from one of her step-sons, Akin. Bolanle tells us:

Akin is my favorite. He knocks before he enters my room. He comes to help me if I have heavy bags. As he does with all the other wives, he greets me before I greet him. I have told him he was born with decorum. When he asks what decorum means, I tell him to look it up in the dictionary. He does and thanks me the next day (26).

Although mainstream gender discourse is preoccupied with the castigation of all males (both men and boys) under patriarchy as the natural oppressors of all women, Iya Segi’s second-born son, Akin, paints a very different picture. As his own mother, Iya Segi, teams up with her co-wives and even daughters in the abuse, torment and torture of a fellow woman who is so desirous of love and acceptance,

he offers humility, respect, friendship and gratitude to Bolanle. He is always available to offer help and support in domestic work to not only Bolanle, but to all the other women married to Baba Segi, although such good-heartedness and kindness would have probably annoyed his jealousy mother, Iya Segi. Rather oppress women, Baba Segi and Akin actually love and support women in the novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. As the much oppressed and derided Bolanle laments of the numerous suffering, abuse and torture that she receives daily from her fellow women (co-wives), she is always in praise of the men, such as her husband, Baba Segi, for being understanding, kind and generous, as well as her step-son, Akin, for always being there for her whenever needed. It can, therefore, be argued that in as much the novel presents the untold oppression that women go through under the shackles of patriarchy, she also offers a glimpse of what men are capable of doing in the support for the emancipation of women.

Another case for the male support for women in the novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, is further evident in the way Dr. Usman attends to Bolanle with great respect and care during his medical investigation on her “bareness”. He is so professional, patient, understanding and caring that Bolanle feels much at ease even when her husband, Baba Segi, seems to be overcome with rage as he ignorantly suspects that the doctor’s medical procedures expressed in the English language which he does not understand well is designed to lure his wife into an affair with the doctor. The other male doctors are equally kind and helpful to Bolanle, and indeed the rest of the female clients. In a related development, much as Iya Femi goes through untold abuse at the hands of a fellow woman, Grandma, while working as a housemaid to the Adeigbe family, receives some romantically-attached sympathy and care from Tunde, Grandma’s first son. No wonder Iya Femi

and Tunde even keep in close touch, retaining an illicit sexual relationship that makes her produce the children that she gives Baba Segi.

4.3 Liberation, Love and Compassion in El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*

It is crystal clear that El Saadawi's novel, *Woman at Point Zero*, commendably paints a very grim picture in regard to the plight of a woman under the shackles of the Egyptian patriarchy and the urgent need to advocate for woman emancipation. This is illustrated through the life, struggles and actions of the protagonist, Firdaus, and other female characters in the novel. That notwithstanding, though, the novel is also alive to Connell's (2003) and Amaka's (2023) view that men and boys are important actors in the liberation of women from patriarchal subjugation. This subsection, therefore, highlights key instances where some men and boys (the male gender) offer support and comfort to very distressed women in *Woman at Point Zero*, despite the various aspects of abuse that women experience in the male world of the novel. This is geared towards reinforcing the study's key argument that patriarchy and gender have continued to evolve across time and space.

The initial acts of good heartedness, care and love to Firdaus by her uncle shortly after the death of her parents is an indication of the role of the male gender (man) in the drive for women emancipation in El Saadawi's novel, *Woman at Point Zero*. Although Firdaus' uncle, a religious scholar and later civil servant in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, has been accused by some scholars, such as Tugume (2021) and others, as one of the male characters that perpetrate the women-oppressive patriarchal hegemony in the novel, his earlier support and care for the parentless Firdaus was, to a great extent, a well-intentioned gesture at woman empowerment by a man in an extremely patriarchal society. Firdaus recounts that, "My uncle would put a chalk pencil between my fingers and make me write on a slate: Alif,

Ba, Gim, Dal...” (24). Although he lived in the distant Cairo city, Firdaus’ uncle even comes for her, and together they moved to stay in the Egyptian capital after she had lost all her parents. In Cairo, they seem to get on well with each other and Firdaus is even sent to school, obviously in the hope to acquire knowledge, skills and values that would in turn enable her achieve a brighter future. Her uncle treats her so well that he would even sing for her in a sweet voice as she escorted her to the Delta Railway Station. Things only take a worse turn after Firdaus’ uncle’s marriage to an upper-class woman who, ironically, does not like Firdaus, in demonstration of an excessive hatred of a woman by a fellow woman. Although he is finally enticed by his wife to marry off Firdaus to Sheikh Mahmoud, he initially refuses because of the sheikh’s old age and physical deformities. Ironically, the wife thinks that the sheikh is a “virtuous man” (54). In short, Firdaus’ uncle tries his best to support her. He gives her shelter and even education after she had lost all her parents. His uncle, like any other person, is not perfect, and so makes some mistakes along the way that end up affecting Firdaus. However, this turn in the conduct of her uncle starts after he gets married. Without the woman (Firdaus’ uncle’s wife), perhaps Firdaus’ uncle would have remained supportive to her.

Bayoumi, the coffee owner, initially offers help to Firdaus when she was in utter destitution, in a state in which she was “prepared to do anything, even the kind of work that requires no certificates” (68), as she wanders off the streets in her attempt to escape from the domestic abuse in her marital home. It is unfortunate that Bayoumi, probably disappointed that Firdaus wants to leave him, changes into a different person and abuse her. His initial compassion and care for Firdaus is so remarkable that when juxtaposed with her late father, he (Bayoumi) is overwhelmingly preferable. On the way to his house, he makes a stop-over at the

fruit stall and asks Firdaus to make a personal choice of the drink she is to have—choosing between oranges and tangerines. Firdaus says:

“Do you prefer oranges or tangerines?’ I tried to reply but my voice failed me. No one had asked me before whether I preferred oranges or tangerines. My father never bought us fruit. My uncle and my husband used to buy it without asking me what I preferred. As a matter of fact, I myself had never thought whether I preferred oranges to tangerines, or tangerines to oranges. I heard him ask me again, ‘Do you like oranges or tangerines?’” (69)

In the above quotation, Firdaus testifies Bayoumi’s initial compassion and love for her, compared to the other men she had previously experienced in her life, notably her father and the despicable husband, Sheikh Mahmoud. Bayoumi had given her shelter and food at a time when no one was there for her. Bayoumi had probably fallen in love with Firdaus and maybe he thought he had gotten for himself a long-term partner in Firdaus. Therefore, Bayoumi’s eventual resort to violence after Firdaus tells him that she wants to leave, though not condoned, could be interpreted as a manifestation of a deep disappointment and frustration in a man’s failure to win over a woman for a serious marriage partnership, rather than a serious intention to subjugate a woman. His mistakes aside, Bayoumi initially plays his role in rescuing Firdaus from her desperation and destitution. Remember she is only able to start thinking about her life and future after she had been rescued by Bayoumi.

Fawzy, Sharifa’s male friend, offers a strange contribution to Firdaus’ attempt at liberating herself from the shackles of patriarchal oppression in the novel, *Woman at Point Zero*. Realising that Sharifa is making a great fortune off Firdaus’ body, Fawzy becomes very interested in becoming her pimp, and so they engage in a serious fight over the ownership of Firdaus. In the fight between the two friends, Firdaus overhears how she is being sexually and economically exploited by Sharifa. In addition, Fawzy tells her that “Sharifa’s fooling you, she’s making

money out of you” (81). Unlike her other sexual clients, it is Fawzy who feels Firdaus’ pain during intercourse. Hence, despite his own personal moral inadequacies, Fawzy, in a bizarre way, contributes to Firdaus’ escape from the sexual enslavement at the hands of Sharifa. She is able to escape because of the quarrel that Fawzy starts off with Sharifa over who should profit from her body as it gives Firdaus the chance to overhear it and realise how she is being sexually and economically exploited by a fellow woman. Also, Fawzy clears any doubts about Sharifa’s exploitation by telling Firdaus to her face that she is being fooled and exploited by Sharifa while she endures the tedious and painful sexual work. This makes her to run away from such exploitation and degradation in the hope of securing a new lease of life.

Lastly, but not least, the doctor at Qanatir Prison attempts to help the murder-convicted Firdaus by filling for her an appeal form meant to be sent to the head of state so that her sentence could be reduced from death by execution (death penalty) to at least life imprisonment, but Firdaus refuses. She remarks:

They would like to discover that there is after all something which I desire, or fear, or hope for. Then they know they can enslave me once more. Some time ago one of them came to me and said: ‘There’s hope for your release if you send an appeal to the President asking him to pardon you for the crime you committed.’ ‘But I don’t want to be released,’ I said, ‘and I want no pardon for my crime. For what you call my crime was no crime’ (138).

An appeal on a sentence by a court of law is part of the legal and justice system for any democratic society. As the quotation above highlights, it is clear that a male prison doctor at Qanatir Prison, expresses great sympathy for Firdaus, and offers to help her by advising her to appeal her sentence so that she could get a slightly lighter one, life imprisonment, or even later, a pardon of the entire sentence through the president’s prerogative of mercy and actually regain her life and freedom.

Although her refusal to sign the appeal form is lauded by Nawal herself as an unequalled act of “courage” (142), we should not forget that no matter how society has wronged a person, he or she does not have to take the law into their own hands by engaging in a murderous act. It can, therefore, be argued that in as much as the Egyptian society of *Woman at Point Zero* is predominantly patriarchal, there are some men who attempt at the emancipation of women by making some support, care and love. Moreover, the novel also presents women who are very oppressive in many ways to fellow women. Hence, men have a role to play in the quest for women empowerment.

4.4 Education in Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*

As is the case with the other novels selected for this study, *Nervous Conditions*, too, offers a scathing attack on the way patriarchal African societies impede the freedom, liberation and status of women, and by extension, the need to advocate for women emancipation. Although the novel depicts various instances of women oppression by chauvinistic men, there are also instances of male advocacy for the emancipation and success of women in the novel, hence, justifying Connell’s (2003) and Amaka’s (2023) idea of the need for men in the activism for the rights of women in patriarchal societies. This sub-section, therefore, offers a highlight of how, despite some failings, men offer support meant for emancipating women from patriarchal oppression in the novel, *Nervous Conditions*.

Babamukuru, Tambu’s uncle, despite his eventual shortcomings in the course of the novel, sets out as a well-intentioned man for the cause of women emancipation, specifically, through the provision of education opportunities to his family members. Born in an extended Shona family that is still under the yoke of British colonialism, Babamukuru excels at school, both in South Africa and England on

British scholarships, subsequently acquiring a Master's degree. His appointment as the Headteacher of the Mission school enables him to become the ultimate breadwinner of the family. Firmly convinced that education can uplift the status of an individual, as was the case for himself, he initially supports the education of his young and enthusiastic cousin, Nhamo, at the mission school up to the time of his untimely death. After Nhamo's death, he takes up Tambu's education with a firmly believing that education can emancipate a woman from the shackles of Shona patriarchy. In addition, he supports the education of his own family members, notably his wife, Maiguru, to the level of a Master's degree in Psychology, and his children, Nyasha and Chido. Although some scholars, such as Tugume (2022), Holland (2005) and Lincy (2017), among others, have accused him of being a custodian of patriarchal oppression to womenfolk, Babamukuru's contribution to the education of the female members of his family as aforementioned cannot be underestimated. It should also be understood, that Babamukuru's interest in supporting the education of the girl-child was to ensure production of a whole person accepted both in society and the relevant profession. Tambu tells us,

... Lastly, he explained, at the Mission I would not only go to school, but learn ways and habits that would make my parents proud of me. I was an intelligent girl, but I had also to develop into a good woman, he said, stressing both qualities equally and not seeing any contradictions in this. "It is necessary," he told me, "because there is nothing that pleases parents more than to see their own children settled in their own families. I know these things are very far away, but it is never too early to begin to plan for your future" (87).

From the above quotation, we see how Babamukuru's great concern about the future of Tambu, specifically, and the rest of the girl-children in her family, generally is. As a highly educated person, he knows that for one to have a bright future, there is need to plan for it, and that is exactly what he has summoned Tambu for: to guide and counsel her on the nature of education that can make one both

socially-acceptable and successful at their work stations. Not the sort of education that radicalizes a woman and almost makes her a social-misfit, as it becomes the case of her errant daughter, Nyasha. Moreover, the cardinal importance of education, according to sociologists, is to enable the educated fit in society. Hence, the analysis of the character of Babamukuru, much like all the other male characters in the selected novels, should be comprehensive enough to acknowledge both his good and bad aspects.

Mr. Matimba, a teacher at Tambu's village school and Sunday school plays a major role in attempting to empower the education pursuit of the girl-child. He is depicted as a no-nonsense person and a great disciplinarian whose professional ethics is commendably seen in the way he intercepts the fight between Tambu and her one-year older brother, Nhamo, on allegations that the latter had stolen the former's maize-corns ("mealies"). On listening to Tambu's side of the story, he deeply understands her predicament as a young girl from a patriarchal family where priority is usually given to the boy-child. He actually helps Tambu by giving her a lift in in the school truck to Umtali so that she could sell off her maize and raise some money for school fees. Although the corns do not sell that much in Umtali, he manages to present Tambu's case to Doris, a white woman who was bypassing them as the maize-selling had literally failed to materialize. His sincerity, goodwill and compassion are enviously seen in the way he plans for the ten pounds given to him for the girl by taking it directly to the school Headteacher who would be deducting each term's fees for a period of two years, instead of taking it home. The narrator offers a vivid description of Mr. Matimba's lobbying for Tambu's fees from Doris as:

“There is no reason to stay,” he said. “Pack the maize and we will go.” I did as I was told, although I was worried that we had not sold any maize. In the truck, Mr. Matimba explained what had happened, how Doris had accused him of making me work instead of sending me to school and he had told her that I was an orphan, taken in by my father’s brother, being the thirteen child under their roof, had not been sent school for lack of fees. He had said I was very clever, very hardworking and was selling mealies to raise my school fees with his assistance. ... (29).

In the above quotation, we see how well-intentioned Mr. Matimba, a male teacher, is to the emancipation of the girl-child through education, although, initially, Tambu’s father, Jeremiah, does not seem to trust him journeying to Umtali with the girl. As a teacher, he is professional enough to discipline wayward learners. He attentively listens to students’ issues, irrespective of their gender, and attempts to offer solutions within his means. His decision to take Tambu to Umtali so that her hard-earned mealies could be sold and be able to raise some school fees should be applauded as a vital role played by a man in the quest for women empowerment. Moreover, in this incidence he is portrayed as being more parental to Tambu than her own biological father, Jeremiah, who would not have endured the racial insults from Doris’ husband.

4.5 Conclusion

It is very interesting that much as all the selected novels in this study are written by women whose major interest is to critique the age-long patriarchal oppression of women in the many African societies that they depict, a more comprehensive study of the novels reveals that not all men are against the emancipation of women from the shackles of patriarchy, just as not all women mean well for their fellow women. The chapter, therefore, offers an additional and fresh voice to Connell (2003) and Amaka (2023) regarding the role of men in the advocacy for women emancipation in Africa, given the fact that since all women are not the same, men,

too, are different: there are those who oppress women, and those who want women to succeed.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study in line with the research objectives that constitute the threefold content scope of the study: the oppression of women by fellow women in the selected African novels; the oppression of men by both women and patriarchy in the selected African novels; and the male's advocacy for the emancipation of women in the selected African novels.

5.2 Findings and Conclusions

Findings and Conclusion

As already stressed, since the selected novelists, Goretti Kyomuhendo, Lola Shoneyin, Nawal El Saadawi and Tsitsi Dangarembga, are among the leading campaigners for the emancipation of women and the girl-child on the African continent, they may not have consciously set up to write stories about women aggression on fellow women. However, a broad-based critique of their novels actually affirms the view that with the rapidly emerging global trends, the discourse on patriarchy and gender inequality has also been changing, and so gender inequality and oppression of women has taken a new paradigm where the new woman is ruthless in her oppression of a fellow woman. This is what the analysis of the four works of literature in chapter two has yielded, especially, considering the attitude of the female characters to fellow women in the text. In line with the afore stated research objective, the findings of the study richly affirm the continuous and intricate evolution of the patriarchy and gender equality discourse:

as Chapter Two highlights, women are, ironically in many ways, oppressive to fellow women. Notably, these include women in polygamous marriages, as is the case in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, secondary school girls' ruthless teasing and bullying of newly-admitted young girls, as is the case with Goretta Kyomuhendo's *The First Daughter*, mothers', step-mothers' and aunts' repressive tendencies to young girls under the guise for instilling cultural values to the girls, as is mainly the case in both El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. This feminine oppression of women debunks the traditional notion that the oppression of women under patriarchy is solely committed by men and boys—women are, indeed, ruthless to fellow women.

The widely-held view that patriarchal systems privilege the male gender, while at the same time perpetuating discrimination and oppression of the female gender notwithstanding, this research has also found out that the four texts offer an insightful perspective which broadens the scope of the gender-based inequalities and oppressions in African patriarchal societies. Motivated by the continuously emerging and complex global trends on patriarchy and gender that previous studies on the subject have not fully captured, it was further discovered that certain patriarchal ideals are both discriminatory and oppressive to men as well. As Chapter Three highlights, the male gender is, in many ways, a victim of both certain patriarchal norms and women oppression, as opposed to being the sole beneficiary of patriarchal ideals, and being the perpetrators of women oppression. Hence, economically-disadvantaged, illiterate, dull, sexually-inept and low-class men and boys suffer a lot under patriarchy, as they are depicted as being repeatedly marginalized by fellow men and even women in the selected African novels,

thereby invalidating the claim by many feminists that all men under patriarchy are privileged, and that all women are oppressed. Although the novels depict a lot of patriarchal oppression of women and undue male privileges, the female novelists also seem to suggest that patriarchal oppression is so widespread that not even the underprivileged males are spared.

Lastly, as Chapter Four highlights, the selected African novels suggest that the advocacy for female emancipation from patriarchal subjugation requires the contribution of the male gender, especially given the fact that women are not always in good books with each other, and also the fact that certain categories of men are actually victims of the rigid patriarchal norms. Hence, true women liberation should be a concerted effort between men and women so that equality between the two genders is mutually negotiated and agreed upon. Further still, a more comprehensive study of the novels reveals that not all men are against the emancipation of women from the shackles of patriarchy, just as not all women mean well for their fellow women. This line of thought is an additional and fresh voice to Connell (2003) and Amaka (2023) regarding the role of men in the advocacy for women emancipation in Africa, given the fact that not all women are the same, men too, are different: there are those who oppress women, and those who want women to succeed. In a nutshell, the afore arguments affirm the fact that patriarchy may not be the only impediment that feminists have to overcome to accomplish women liberation. It deserves exoneration, although not ultimately, from vicious attacks as the sole responsible perpetrator of social evils committed against women. Emerging trends testify to the fact that women are also increasingly becoming responsible for social evils they suffer.

5.3 Recommendations

This study recommends as follows:

1. Future literary scholarship on gender equality should centre on probing the role of the activism for women emancipation in the marginalisation of the male-gender (men and boys) in contemporary Africa.
2. Global policy-designers should also pay attention to the plight of man and the boy-child, given the fact that the continuously evolving and intricate patriarchal and gender-inequality paradigm in the contemporary global community depicts them as victims, too.

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