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FEMINIST CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDY OF MEN AS SLAVES TO WOMEN'S MANIPULATIVE STRATEGIES

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Abstract: *This study examines the complex dynamics of power and control relationships, challenging the notion of a patriarchal society. Through a critical discourse analysis of various texts, including a Nollywood movie, the Bible, and Half of a Yellow Sun, this research reveals how women employ manipulative strategies to navigate and subvert patriarchal structures. The findings highlight the ways in which women use emotional manipulation, marriage, sex, and kitchen dynamics to exert control and agency in their relationships. By shedding light on these subtle yet significant power dynamics, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of gender relations and encourages a reevaluation of traditional patriarchal narratives. The study, therefore, concludes that most societies worldwide are indirectly matriarchal due to the manipulative power wielded by women.*

Key words: *Feminism, Critical Discourse, Slave, Patriarchy, Matriarchy*

1. Introduction

In today's modern world, particularly in African culture, women find it difficult to exercise their full rights in their homes due to how society perceives them. Women are perceived as subordinates, objects of sexual satisfaction, and homemakers. Women are also suppressed irrespective of their educational background, religious, and socio-economic groups they belong to in society. The society, according to Craig (2002), cited in Adesina and Jegede (2019), is a group of individuals involved in persistent social interaction, or a large social group sharing the same geographical or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.

Social, cultural, or political patterns mainly stratify societies. These patterns are also known as societal norms (Adesina and Jegede 2019). African society, in particular, is replete with diverse patterns and norms. One is that men are usually in charge of every role in every situation. Women, on the other hand, are seen as objects to be used and discarded when they are no longer helpful. Husbands (fathers) are assumed to have "natural" authority over their wives and children. Several works have been written in the past that showed how men were able to control certain women and give them to others as wives. Sarah Delius, in her writing, reveals that the way and manner in which women, particularly girls, were distributed and enslaved was part of the political economy of warfare. She further shows in her book that the British-led West African Frontier Force (WAFF) in Sierra Leone was accused of taking wives and slaves away from the elite, while some of the escaped slaves became the wives of African members of WAFF. Also, Toni Smith explains how colonial practices reproduced features such as the pre-colonial slavery system in Kasai, which led to women and girls being abducted and forced to have sex with Europeans and become wives to the men and boys.

Women have been stereotyped in a male-dominated society, which has really affected their world views. Lindsay (2004) and Eisend (2009) argue in defense of women that restricting and stereotyping women, particularly in Africa, significantly affect how they (women) are seen in society and how they perceive themselves. They further posit that any society that perceives women as subordinate is blind.

Today, some studies have questioned that patriarchal structure. One such study is the book by German writer Esther Villar (1971), entitled “The Manipulated Man”. The book explains how women in the past have manipulated the male folk and turned them into their own slaves. She further explains in the book how a woman tricks a man in courtship and marriage. This act summarizes the saying “a man chases a woman until she catches him”. The book also reveals how the man is manipulated to take care of the woman and her siblings throughout his life, even in the face of hardship, only to be rewarded with a few minutes of sex. Esther Villar portrays women as lazy and deceitful, manipulating men for their own benefit, while men are depicted as innocent victims in the book.

The sentiments shared by Esther Villar in her book are also captured by Nigerian poet, critic, and writer Chinweizu Ibekwe in his book “The Anatomy of Female Power” and by Will Farrett in “The Predatory Female”. The two works also argue in favour of Esther Villar’s sentiments about men being slaves to women. They postulate that all societies are matriarchal and not patriarchal. Chinweizu describes “dating” and “courtship” as training. Chinweizu further explains that older matriarchs train women to control men through the kitchen. By this, they determine when the man eats at home.

The above sentiments have also included discussions and conversations on gender equality. Gender equality means equal enjoyment by women and men of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources, and rewards (Kemi 2016). In other words, it refers to equal access to social goods, services, and resources, as well as equal opportunities in all spheres of life (Kemi 2016). On the contrary, inequality mainly leaves women vulnerable to suppression. Though in gender inequality, indeed, women are usually the ones affected, this does not mean men are exempt from it. Gender inequality also affects men in that men are generally put under pressure to take care of their wives and children, as society demands. In most cases, men leave their homes in search of better job opportunities to support their families, depriving them of the opportunity to train and stay close to their children. In this kind of situation, women take it all, and by extension, men are automatically considered slaves to their wives at home.

Based on the existing construct, structure, and literature, this study argues against the prevailing templates regarding women's perceptions and roles as subordinates in society. This study identifies and examines instances of discourse use that portray men as slaves to women’s manipulative strategies in different societies of the world, particularly in Africa. In unveiling this, attention is given to instances of discourse use in a Nollywood movie, the Bible (Genesis chapter 3:12), and *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

2. The Patriarchal System

Patriarchy is a structure that allows men to dominate and rule over women and be in charge of political leadership, moral authority, and property control. This system will enable fathers and male children to inherit property and exercise authority and power over their female counterparts. The patriarchal system is rooted in the cultures, norms, and traditions of a people. It limits women from exercising their full rights in society and reduces them to taking care of their husbands and children at home. Today, some societies still hold on to a patriarchal system, particularly in African societies, while some societies frown at it and have

moved toward gender equality. It is the feminist movements that challenge these structures in promoting equal opportunities for all genders.

3.1.Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse (i.e., texts and other instances of language use) that views language as a form of social practice involving women (Lazar 2002:204). FCDA focuses on how language use helps to establish and reinforce societal gender relations. It also focuses on the marginalization, manipulation, exploitation, and bias against women in areas such as media, education, culture, and politics (Millet 1977), cited in Para-Mallam (2010). FCDA helps to deconstruct the patriarchal system. Patriarchy is a hegemonic value system of male hierarchy over women. It is a social construct that places men above women, which runs through all political, social, and economic forms. Patriarchy is a social system in which males hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property (Adesina and Jegede 2019). In a family setting, fathers hold authority over their wives and children. They are seen as lords of the house. Most patriarchal societies worldwide are patrilineal (meaning property and title are usually passed down through the male line rather than the female).

3.2.Relevant Studies on Gender Discourse

Kemi (2016) assesses and discusses gender equality and gender equity. It further examines and explains attributes of gender equality. The study reveals that Nigerian women face a lot of challenges at the hands of men due to the patriarchal structure of Nigerian society, which shows gender disparity and inequality. In addition, Helen Fisher carried out research on ancient human societies and wrote a book in the process entitled: "The Sex Contract and The Evolution of Human Behaviour (1982). The text concludes that marriage is a selfish idea created to please the woman, where she uses sex and the kitchen to manipulate the man into taking care of her and her siblings.

Adesina and Jegede (2019) investigate ideological issues in African society, particularly in the Igbo society of Nigeria, in Buchi Emecheta's "The Joy of Motherhood". The study adopted a qualitative research method and employed the feminist critical discourse analysis theory. Findings of the study reveal that feminist ideological issues such as gender inequality, sex-role distinctions, wife inheritance, gender violence, men's dominance and control, bride price, daughters seen as a source of wealth, choosing of husbands for female children, early child marriage, infringement of women's freedom, and women as objects of sacrifice were prevalent in the text. The study, therefore, concludes that understanding factors affecting women in the African society was made possible through the application of a feminist critical discourse analytical framework.

Grieve and March (2019) explicate the influence of gender roles on trait emotional manipulation. The study included 435 females and 139 males to determine the extent of emotional influence between the two sexes. The study also reveals that female gender roles have a highly significant impact on emotional manipulation on their male counterparts.

Ghani (2011) explores perceptions of men and women regarding player identity and gendered emotional manipulation. The study focuses mainly on three areas: the existence and relevance of player identity, the player's relation to emotionally manipulative behaviour, and the connection between socially constructed gender and player identity. Participants involved in this study were six males and six females. Findings of the study reveal that perceptions of emotional manipulation of both male and female participants show the existence and relevance of the player identity in romantic relationships.

3.3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were sourced from the Internet, including a Nollywood movie, the *Bible*, and *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Adichie Chinmamanda Ngozi. Three wedding invitation cards were also extracted from the internet, a screenshot was taken from a Nollywood movie, and a verse was taken from the Bible, “Genesis 3:12,” and four extracts were taken from *Half of a Yellow Sun* (see pages 122, 37, and 276). A total of nine data points were selected for analysis in this study. The selected data were analysed using Fairclough’s approach to CDA. Secondary data sources included books, Internet databases, and relevant Journal articles.

Given the nature of this research, the article employs Critical Discourse Analysis, a theory concerned with the study of written and spoken discourse. It also focuses on context and the interpretation of language use. It explains the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and abuse in discourse (van Dijk 1988). CDA requires a multidisciplinary approach and an account of intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society, and culture.

This present study adopts Fairclough’s approach. In Fairclough’s analytical approach, there are three parts to any discourse analysis: text, discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice. For the purpose of this study, attention is paid to text only. Text analyses linguistic features like grammar, semantics, sounds, and cohesion (Fairclough 1995:57). Fairclough discussion of text follows systemic functional grammar. In explaining discourse of a text, description is very important in textual analysis. This description focuses on the linguistic features of the material including verbal and visual modes which is the focus of this present study.

4.1. Data Presentation and Analysis



Figure 1. Example 1.



Figure 2. Example 2.

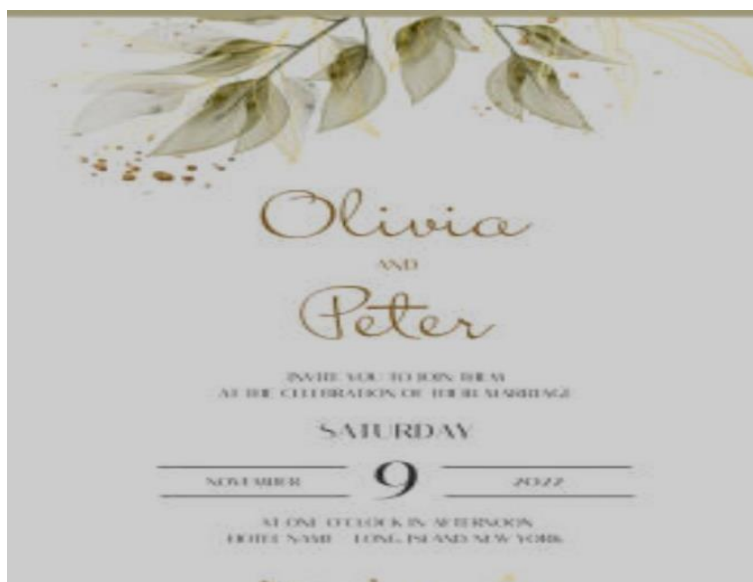


Figure 3. Example 3.

In example 1, the “The Bride and the Groom” are foregrounded in the text. In marriage, the bride is usually the woman, while the “groom” is the man. Placing the woman above the man in a wedding invite, as can be seen in the invitation card above, shows clearly that marriage is a subtle, manipulative strategy used by women to coerce men into it. Similar to this are examples 2 and 3: “Kaitlyne & Michael” and “Olivia & Peter. Examples 2 and 3 above bear the names of the celebrants: “Kaitlyne” and “Olivia”, both female names are placed ahead of “Michael” and “Peter”, the grooms. It is quite apparent from the examples above that a marriage celebration is a celebration of the woman. It is usually seen as a form of victory for the woman.



Figure 4. Example 4.

The example above (Figure 4) also shows how women exploitatively and subtly enslaved men and made them kneel before proposing, irrespective of a man's social, political, economic, and religious positions in society. As shown in the example above, the man kneels before a lady and asks her to marry him. The expression "would you marry me" is a subtle form of begging, while kneeling further underscores and clarifies it. In this context, the woman will either accept or decline. This also means that the woman opens or closes the door to marriage, and the man is usually at her mercy. The manipulative strategy used in the analysis above is a marriage strategy.

4.2. Words/Utterances that Show Women's Manipulative Strategies

Enslavement is the placement of a person into slavery, and the person is called a slave or an enslaved person. A manipulated man is an enslaved person. Women normally use underhanded tactics to manipulate men and get what they want. Women are masters of subtle manipulation. Also, the belief in African culture that real men put women first encourages women in Africa to use that belief as a manipulative tool over their husbands. Men become subservient to them and compete with one another to impress and woo them. The examples below are taken from *Half of a Yellow Sun*, written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie:

Example 5:

Olanna: It is quite tasteless, which is better than bad-tasting. I'll show you how to cook (Adichie 2006:37)

Example 6:

Odenigbo's Mum: what does a boy know about real cooking? Is that not so Amala? Does a boy belong in the kitchen?

Amala: No mama

Odenigbo's Mum: A boy does not belong in the kitchen.

Example 7:

Odenigbo's Mum: I have brought ingredients to make pepper-soup for my son... Amala come and make cocoyam (Adichie 2006:122)

Example 8:

Auntie Ifeka: Odenigbo has done what all men do and has inserted his penis in the first hole he could find when you were away... You must never behave as if your life belongs to a man. Your life belongs to you and you alone. So so gi (Adichie 2006:276)

The expression in example 5, shows class and gender oppression. Olanna sees herself as a teacher, while Ugwu is presented as a servant, with his cooking skills put under scrutiny. Also, Olanna, a woman from a wealthy, educated family, sees herself as someone with refined taste. Her comment explains the authority and power women wield in domestic chores, as well as their ability to nurture and train men with a passion for cooking and other domestic tasks. Olanna arrogantly used the word “tasteless” in example 5 to describe the food prepared by Ugwu, Odenigbo’s house help. She suppressed Ugwu psychologically when she said, “I will show you how to cook”. Shortly after Olanna made the statement, Ugwu angrily left, implying resignation and defeat in the face of Olanna’s domineering language. In addition, the comments in example 5 show authority and expertise. For instance, the declarative mood ‘I will teach you how to cook’ reveals Olanna as a teacher and presents Ugwu as a learner. The use of the phrase “quite tasteless” shows Olanna’s ability to judge or assess Ugwu’s cooking ability. Ugwu through her subtle critique ‘I will teach you how to cook’ promises to help Ugwu.

In example 6, “What does a boy know about real cooking?” implies that cooking is within the jurisdiction of women. It also explains that men ordinarily do not have knowledge of cooking. Culturally, particularly in Igbo culture (one of the three major tribes in Nigeria), the statement reflects the expectations about who is in charge of domestic tasks. The power dynamics in the statement discussed above show how societal constructs around gender and age influence perceptions of capability and authority in everyday tasks.

In addition, some linguistic features are evident in the statements, which include lexical choices and rhetorical questions. The word “boy” as used in the statement implies “youth” and “immaturity”. The use of a rhetorical question, “What does a boy know about real cooking? Conveys a message of dismissal and further shows that a boy is inexperienced or does not have knowledge about cooking. These linguistic features portray attitude and power dynamics, which are crucial in the text. In example 7, she categorically said that a boy does not belong in the kitchen. The word “kitchen” here is used to ridicule the male folk, in that a man is of no use in the kitchen. This is clearly a feminist belief used by women to control or manipulate men; they use it to dictate what goes into a man’s stomach. The manipulative strategy used in the example above is the kitchen strategy.

Example 8 is very important to this study. Auntie Ifeka encourages Olanna to be independent and own herself. The author, through the character of Auntie Ifeka, describes the male folk as promiscuous in nature:

“Odenigbo has done what all men do and he has inserted his penis in the first hole he could find when you were away” (Adichie 2006:276).

In addition, the author, through the character of Olanna, took revenge on Odenigbo when she (Olanna) had sexual intercourse with Richard. When Odenigbo received the news about Olanna’s sexual affair, he went to Richard’s house and warned him to stay away from his fiancée. The manipulative strategy used here is a sex strategy.

Example 9: **Biblical Reference - Genesis 3:12:**

The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12 NKV).

The expression above shows different layers of power dynamics and a change of responsibility. That is, the statement reveals the complexity of power and responsibility. It also shows how individuals may deflect accountability by not owning their decisions and actions. It further shows how hierarchical relationships can distort blame and affect interpersonal relationships. This is obvious in the way Adam blames Eve in the above statement, claiming that her action led to his transgression. Also, Adam subtly shifts the blame to God for giving him Eve, who made him sin. The power dynamics further show women as manipulators.

5. Conclusion

This present study has investigated manipulative strategies used by women to control men and make them slaves. Some of the manipulative strategies discussed include: emotional manipulation, marriage, sex, and the kitchen. The data selected greatly revealed all these manipulative strategies and further showed how they subtly made men slaves to women. This analysis was made possible through the application of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach. In addition, the study explained how men are humbled or subdued during dating, courtship, marriage, and, exceptionally, during a marriage proposal when a man kneels to propose to a lady. Also, the study revealed how women are trained by their old matriarchs to manipulate men at home after marriage and control their sex life. In other words, women determine when food will be ready from the kitchen, and most times determine when their husbands will have sex with them. The study, therefore, concluded that most societies of the world are indirectly matriarchal due to the manipulative power wielded by women in controlling or manipulating men.

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Peace Ngozi OGARAKU is the co-author of this article. She assisted in collecting the data used for the study. She also contributed significantly to the typing and proofreading of the work.