

Articulation of Womanism in African Literature: A Reading of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*

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Abstract

Purpose: Womanism, as a subset of African feminism, provides a framework for a comprehensive examination of African female writers' work. The point of this study is that women should get that independence and want to make sure that a woman, her husband, and their children have a real connection in a real environment.

Research Methodology: In this study, Ogunyemi's womanist theory guided the work. Through analysis study, a womanist reading of this novel will be conducted in order to determine the various and comparable ways this novelist communicates womanist ideology in the above-stated novel. The study also seeks to determine whether there is any continuity of womanist issues in the works of female novelists. This study looks at the attitudes and behaviors of the female characters in the novel towards male characters.

Result: Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that Emecheta champions the old patriarchal society. Emecheta's protagonist, Nnu Ego, resounds with womanist promise. The author, on the other hand, wants to make sure that men, women, and kids can all stay alive.

Limitation: The work is basically about one Anglophone female writer and her work called *The Joys of Motherhood*. Discussing the issues of womanist articulation.

Contribution: The study is important because it shows how Nigerian writers have been able to tackle the global issue of human suffering, especially knowing that womanism is geared towards ensuring the survival of all, regardless of gender.

Keywords: *Womanism, African literature, gender, black race, articulation*

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1. Introduction

The *Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta is a feminist novel that advocates the theory of feminism. This gospel, which is customized to the needs of black and African-American people, includes men, women, and children. It also looks at African women's problems holistically, taking into consideration racial, cultural, national, economic, and political challenges, as well as sexist ones, with the ultimate objective of protecting the existence and unity of all black and African groups. Buchi Emecheta accepts this womanist gospel in *The Joys of Motherhood*, addressing sexist treatment of women as well as racial issues, national politics, patriarchal culture, and economic conditions. This novel's multifaceted approach to women's issues underscores the need for men, women, and children to work together to survive at the conclusion.

Resistance to patriarchal behavior, as well as the belief that women may live their lives as they like and be in charge of their own livelihoods and destiny, is a popular subject among African female writers. The feminist protest book reveals the injustices and horrors perpetrated on women by patriarchal traditions, whether Christian, Islamic, or indigenous. In addition to being a protest against patriarchal authority, this novel portrays an autonomous woman. African female authors place a strong emphasis on feminist concepts that create independence, unity, and survival. African writers such as Ama Atta Aidoo, Bessie Head, Calixthe Beyala, Mariama Ba, Buchi Emecheta, Tsitsi Dangaremba, and, most recently, Chimamanda Adichie paved the way.

African feminism

African feminism is characterized as an "abnegation of male protection and a resolve to be resourceful and self-sufficient" (Davies, 2007). To counter the "dominant voice of the feminist movement" (White Female), it has developed (1). To be attentive to black and African women's concerns, African feminism must consider independence from oppressive systems. She lives for many things other than improving herself and having sex, so it must be devoid of Western romantic fantasies. It's also "far more pragmatic" (Emecheta, 2007). Unlike Western feminism, African feminism accommodates males. It's certain that men will always be there in their lives (Maduka, 2009).

African feminists combine racial, sexual, socioeconomic, and cultural oppression to build a more inclusive kind of feminism in which women are first and foremost regarded as human, rather than sexual beings, she argues. African feminism, she says, is an ideology that advocates racial, cultural, sexual, and class independence (2). Mainstream feminism has failed to investigate these concerns by excluding white women from the battle for black and African women. For example, white women only have to fight white males for sexual equality. On the other hand, black and African women are subjected to a variety of forms of oppression. economic, political, and racial oppression by white patriarchal institutions as well as their black or African male counterparts. In order to achieve human liberty, she calls African feminism "humanistic feminism." African and diasporic black women have evolved traits of collaboration and a rejection of male protection (Davies, 2007).

Genuine African feminism supports self-reliance, cooperative effort, and social organization while rejecting overburdening, exploitation, and the enslavement of African women. They are urged to fight back against the African men who fought with them for their countries' independence. Other strategies of accessing power beyond outward submissiveness must be explored by African feminism. Africanism is a battle among African males to eliminate the yokes of foreign dominance and European exploitation. With this in mind, it confronts the reality of African women's lives and acknowledges the role played by colonialism in perpetuating certain inequities. African feminists believe that certain African civilizations have frameworks that provide women with equal rights and that African women have and will always solve their own challenges. African feminism recognizes and rejects institutions that advance the position of African women. The value of motherhood, polygamy, and customs warped by colonialism and urbanization is seen as valuable by African feminists (Davies, 2007).

2. Literature Review

Representing the African Woman: Subjectivity and Self in *The Joys of Motherhood*, by (Nnoromele, 2002), reexamines and redefines the representations of the African woman in *The Joys of Motherhood*. She believes that Nnu Ego's life experiences and reactions to life events, rather than Enu Ego as a stereotype, are representative of African women's conditions. In her circumstances, what part does culture play? Finally, she considers whether personal responsibility may be considered. She claims that the Joys of Motherhood are not a universal concept of African motherhood. She examines Nnu Ego as the quintessential African lady, affirming her as the archetypal African lady (182).

Crazy in Black Women's Writing, by Lilian Temu Osaka: An attempt is made to explain lunacy in literary terms and evaluate the characters' inability to cope with reality in "Reflections from Four Texts: A Question of Power, *The Joys of Motherhood*, Anowa, and Possessing the Secret of Joy."

African women's migration to foreign civilizations, she claims, is the root of their women's lunacy (p. 4). According to Osaka, it is a common motif in the work "Madness in the African Novel" (1979) by Femi Oing of black and African American women. Themes of lunacy are explored in books by Bessie Head, Ama Atta Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, and Alice Walker.

Jo-Ade distinguishes between two types of alienated heroes according to Osaka (1979). Social labeling of the heroine as crazy or insane is the topic of her article (5). It is autobiographical, she says, dealing with Bessie Head's mental collapse and subsequent rehabilitation in "A Question of Power" (7). As Osaka points out, both *Anowa* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* are about crazy. To play Nnu Ego as a character who goes down into lunacy in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* To match the societal standards, Nnu Ego loses her first son, Ngozi. Being an African lady drives Nnu Ego insane (10). *Madness in Black Women's Writing: For women who might normally be strong leaders in society, patriarchy and migration to new societies induce lunacy (17). It's like a question of power between The Joys of Motherhood and Anowa. If Nnu cannot fulfill her job as a receptacle for generating infants, then Nnaife, and even Amatokwu, have dominion over her. Because she is Nnaife's first wife, she is treated as a male by Igbo society.*

According to [Robolin \(2004\)](#) explores Emecheta's work as feminist fiction in "Gendered Hauntings: *The Joys of Motherhood*, Interpretive Acts, and Post-Colonial Theory." In a colonial environment, Stephane claims that cultural, sexual, political, economic, and religious elements influence the person. Nnu Ego's life is described as a pathos story. She is spiritually and financially afflicted, according to Robolin ([Ojo-Ade, 2011](#)). Her father, a patriarchal character in the narrative, causes the first of her afflictions. Agbadi's older wife, Agunwa, was buried with Nnu Ego, and her gendered haunting is caused by her *chi*, the Slave Woman. Robolin argues that the Slave Woman is Nnu Ego. The narrative also shows how societal power hierarchies influence women (84). To survive in a patriarchal culture where males govern women, Nnu Ego must flee to Africa.

From a sociological standpoint according Bhabha (2005) assesses *The Joys of Motherhood* and *In the Ditch* (133). She contends that nineteenth-century novels' depictions of "ordinary" English women are warped in several ways. In Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, in her opinion, has heroes that "reflect the lives of 'typical' African women." As a result, the novel depicts "a very familiar tale of many Nigerian women's lives" (134). It communicates a feeling of the immense courage and love that so many ordinary women possess, and that is the backbone of their own and their children's existence. This is characteristic of African mothers, who provide their children with safety and care. affirming that women's economic freedom will free them from their husbands' power.

He says *The Joys of Motherhood* exposes the illusion. Other causes, besides economics, obviously perpetuate the subjugation of women to males in traditional communities. Suffice it to say that the novel supports this viewpoint. Even when money is not eroded, women's subjugation is deeply established in African culture. Independence may be gained through educating women.

According to ([Amadiume, 1997](#)) in her paper "*Buchi Emecheta and the African Dilemma, the Joys of Motherhood provide a novel way of coping with the dual strains of racial and gender oppression.*" Emecheta does not address several oppressions at once; rather, the novel creates a succession of subtle historical and geographical displacements and splits that separate the two discourses. *On the other hand, The Joys of Motherhood* is viewed by Amadiume as an account of the sorrow of being a black woman in a society that discriminates against her. She claims that the novel resolves the dilemma by restricting various discourses to separate time periods and regions. It criticizes colonial notions by praising pre-contact rural African culture as real and ideal, despite the fact that it is sexist and patriarchal.

Theoretical framework

This study employs womanist theory. African feminism emphasizes the essential principle of male and female survival as well as cooperation and complementarity as necessary to Black/African feminism, which is why a womanist interpretation of this author's work is justifiable. Theorists such

as Ogunyemi and Catherine Acholonu have put motherhood, nature, nurture, and environmental protection at the core of their theories. Others include Molaria Ogundipe's "stiwanism," Leslie's, which is an acronym for "Social Transformation Including Women in Africa," and Obiora Nnaemeka's negofeminism, which is a feminism of negotiation and "n" (non-negotiation). However, as defined by Alice Walker and Ogunyemi, womanism includes not only African and African-American women, but also women of color. So, womanism is a social change concept founded on the distinctive experiences of African women, African American women, and women of color. African feminism, on the other hand, focuses primarily on African women's experiences and how to enact social change with both men and women involved. womanism, hence applicable to both African and African American contexts without generalizing women's experiences due to their diversity.

As a result, she wrote *Womanism: the Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel* in English .divides radical feminism from womanism. According to radical feminists, sexism is the only patriarchal system that oppresses women. Black or African women are conspicuously absent. According to radical feminists throughout the world, overcoming sexism is a gain for all women in all civilizations. Radical feminism rejects this shortcoming in favor of a utopian existence independent from the masculine realm.

Not all sexist treatment of black or African women is womanism. When asked about the situation of women's writing in South Africa, white journalist Beata Lipman replied, "Racism is more important than sexism" ([Ogunyemi, 1985](#)). Black feminism, and specifically womanism, is the centerpiece of Lipman's assertion. Warrior womanism challenges repressive patriarchal structures by addressing sexism, racism, and other factors. That is why a womanist sees patriarchy as a form of racism.

Manipulation of women is an issue that both Womanism and African feminist thinking address in complimentary ways. While ([Ogunyemi, 1985](#)) proposes a womanism aimed at both male and female survival, African feminism entails both female liberation from repressive male domination as well as cooperation with men when necessary. The male-female relationship is a radical feminist concept. ([Amadiume, 1997](#)) admits that women are oppressed since males control their productivity ([Bhasin, 1993](#)). According to radical feminists ([Bhasin, 1993](#)), women are subordinated only by the sex class system. Brownmiller also believes that males rape, bully, and dominate women to retain their authority and superiority. According to some radical feminists, men are a ruling class who utilize violence to control others, which gets institutionalized over time since their genetics and/or psychology separate them from women.

According to [Bhasin \(1993\)](#), Female gender stereotypes and prejudice against women based on ideas that women are meant to be submissive, weak, and physically powerless are challenged by Amazonian feminism. To support and develop a vision of heroic femininity, Amazon feminism rejects the concept that some traits or interests are intrinsically male (or feminine). Amazon feminism believes all women are physically capable of competing with males ([amazoncastle.com](#)).

Black communities are oppressed by patriarchy and sexism in numerous ways, explains Bell Hooks.

Every black person concerned about our collective survival must realize that sexism is a damaging factor in black existence that can only be adequately addressed via a concerted political effort to alter awareness, behavior, and institutions. In the realm of black existence, we require a female revolution. However, a feminist movement is required before such a revolution can occur. The term "feminist" is unfamiliar to many black people. They may simply see it as a matter of white women wanting equal rights to white males. Feminism, in actuality, is a movement dedicated to the abolition of all forms of sexism and injustice. There are a variety of tactics that may be used to accomplish this goal. We need to figure out how to confront the many manifestations of sexism in our various groups ([shows, 2010](#)).

The preceding remark demonstrates that mainstream feminism is incompatible with Black and African women's concerns, particularly when Black women see mainstream feminism as associated with Eurocentric and ethnocentric white women's disputes.

Ogunyemi claims she created her womanist theory unaware that ([Walker, 1983](#)) had propounded a similar one. Walker's womanist theory represents black feminist criticism's dissatisfaction and potential. It demonstrates black feminists' willingness to recast the sexual argument around cultural disparities between white and black women. Walker's theory's primary elements of womanist epistemology are daring, woman-centeredness, and wholeness, or community-centeredness. These three fundamental feminist ideals help shape a feminist anti-patriarchy paradigm ([Allan, 1995](#)). Walker's womanist philosophy criticizes and challenges radical white feminist theory and practice in particular.

This study employs Ogunyemi's womanist theory to analyze "*The Joys of Motherhood*." She encapsulates the essence of womanism in these words:

Womanism is accommodationist and black-centered.

Unlike radical feminism, it desires real unity between black men, black women, and black children, and work to transform men's sexist attitudes ([Maduka, 2009](#)).

Womanism, she believes, is the glue that holds black and African women together in their quest for liberation, proving to men that women are as human as men. But it embraces men and children and wants a unity of men, women, and children.

In addition to sexual themes, Ogunyemi argues that a womanist writer should address racial, cultural, national, economic, and political matters ([Ogunyemi, 1985](#)). Because of her ethnic and sexual circumstances, one is a womanist ([Ogunyemi, 1985](#)). African womanism is influenced by African women's racial, sexist, political, cultural, and economic situations. It encourages African women to focus their opposition to male authority on sexism.

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* will be studied within a womanist and ethical universal framework to determine their fidelity to two philosophies that emphasize the survival of men, women, and children, respectively.

3. Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study. The issue's literary text and critical resources (print and internet) are evaluated, assessed, and interpreted using qualitative research criteria. To begin with, a summary of the chosen book's analytical methodology is offered. Then, using the applied theoretical framework, pertinent passages from the novel are picked and grouped into sub-themes through critical reading. According to Melakneh (2008), grounded theory practice, ethnography, case study, and textual analysis are all data-gathering methodologies used in qualitative research. Using textual analysis, this study investigates how women (characters) are used as a representation of the act and other texts.

Summary of the novel

From her deathbed in Lagos, Nigeria, Nnu Ego flees. She's planning to kill herself.

In the narrative, Nnu Ego is born. His wife, Ona, falls in love with her father, Agbadi, who has several wives. To produce a son for her father's family line, not her own, Ona refuses to marry him. As a result of Agbadi's near-fatal hunting mishap, Ona becomes pregnant. Agbadi's child, if it's a daughter, she agrees.

Ms. Nnu Ego, Agbadi's favorite daughter, is Agbadi's favorite daughter. Her first husband was a wealthy and titled family son. Sadly, Nnu Ego's inability to bear children causes the couple to break apart. Her spouse gets a second woman who conceives rapidly. Unhappiness causes Nnu Ego to lose weight and fatigue. Her father plans a second marriage for her.

His second wife is Nnaife, a washer for Dr. and Mrs. Meers, a white couple in Lagos. In spite of Nnu Ego's displeasure with Nnaife, she falls pregnant soon after. So she almost kills herself by jumping off a bridge to save her child.

She goes home after being persuaded to leave the bridge and shortly falls pregnant again.

In World War 11, which ruined Nnu Ego and Nnaife's lives, In Europe, Nnaife loses his job, and Nnu Ego supports the family with tiny trades. He ultimately finds work aboard a ship, which implies long absences. While dad is away, Nnu Ego fights to survive. Nnaife's elder brother died, and Nnaife inherited all of his brother's wives and children when he eventually returned. Adaku moves in with Nnu Ego and Nnaife in Lagos, while the other women stay in Ibuza.

To share Nnaife's meager wage with Adaku and her children, Nnu Ego learns to be the elder wife. Nnaife is forced into the army and goes to fight in World War 11, making life much more difficult. He left four years ago. His spouses must endure his silence and lack of income.

Trading helps Adaku and her two kids, but Nnu Ego's four kids struggle. She returns to Ibuza after her father's death. Adaku's commerce flourishes during her absence, but Nnu Ego's fades. Nnu Ego is re-starting, but she envies Adaku's accomplishments. The family males choose Nnu Ego above the other woman, even if she is incorrect. That Nnu Ego is the older wife has swayed the males. Adaku ultimately realizes that, as the younger wife with just daughters, she has no status in the household. She runs away to become a prostitution customer.

A long time later, Nnu Ego discovers three years of Nnaife's wages. She can now afford school fees and feed her children. Soon later, Nnaife returns. The battle is won. He returns home to assert his inheritance rights with his brother's eldest wife, Adankwo, after Adaku has defected. He conceives her and takes home another wife, Okpo.

Nnu Ego sighs. But Nnaife keeps having kids and wants additional brides, despite their financial situation. In spite of this, Okpo is a decent girl who shares Nnu Ego's traditional beliefs. Oshia surprises everyone by offering her remaining military salary to help pay for her education. (Nnaife and Nnu Ego's second child, but their first to live.) Oshia is expected to graduate, find a decent career, and help support his younger siblings' education and his parents' retirement.

But Oshia has plans. He wishes to study in America. His disdain for his duty as the first-born son distresses his parents. Oshia's betrayal changes Nnaife forever. Assaulting the father of Kehinde's spouse when she breaches his rules by leaving him with another Yoruba guy. Naife blames his issues on Nnu Ego. His once-felt affection has changed to venom.

She returns to Ibuza with her two oldest daughters married and her son Adim (Nnaife and Nnu Ego's third child and second living son). In order to avoid being kicked out of Nnaife's compound, she moved in with her two youngest kids. She died there.

When she dies, her children, Oshia from America and Adim from Canada, arrive and offer her a lavish memorial service. They constructed a shrine for her descendants to pray for children. But Nnu Ego refuses to listen.

Nnu Ego's boldness and capacity to bring up her children single handedly proves that womanist articulation. There is connection of equal opportunity to be given to women to provide for the family as well as take care of the the children which invariably men do.

4. Results and discussion

Women's Boldness Lacking Change

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood's* womanist articulations Womanist theory, which includes national, political, cultural, and economic issues, is used to examine Emecheta's feminist attitude.

Overall, this effort seeks to improve the lives of African women. Ona, the protagonist of Emecheta's first novel, dies before Enu Ego is introduced. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta challenges patriarchal power, but the challenge doesn't result in any real change. The system of male supremacy is reinforced by her acceptance of and compliance with it. Emecheta's devotion to the ultimate womanist goal of male and female survival is evident, despite her incapacity to confront male power and influence change in the narrative. Beginning with Ona, Nnu Ego's mother, my exploration of womanist articulations in *The Joys of Motherhood* will begin.

The *Joys of Motherhood*'s narrator, after detailing Nnu Ego's plight of finding her kid dead in their chamber and her subsequent.

A botched suicide attempt utilizes flashback to highlight an ironic detail. This involves Agbadi, Ona's boyfriend and Enu Ego's father, and the men of his time's esteem for haughty and pretentious women. Men did not appreciate submissive women. Men admired and feared Ona because she refused to cower under male power. The narrator says:

He had a sweet place for individuals from affluent families, chiefs' daughters, and wealthy men's daughters. Even in prison, such ladies had an influence. He knew from previous experience that more confidence and sass were required.

A woman who gave up to a guy without first battling for her honor was never appreciated in his youth. With the advent

With Christianity and other developments, it became fashionable to see I find a calm and shy lady attractive (5).

The foregoing passage confirms the shift in men's perspective on women from Agbadi's period to men like Nnaife, Nnu Ego's spouse. The narrator attributes these improvements to Christianity and other factors. Nonetheless, the excerpt suits Ona, Agbadi's sweetheart. The reader is introduced to her through Agbadi's famed personality. He's a wealthy local leader, a brilliant wrestler, and a skilled orator. He's also been labeled as a natural leader and a natural leader. As proven by his seven marriages, Agbadi's characteristics could persuade any lady he desired. Ona didn't see things like these ladies. Agbadi had plunged all the other women into domesticity, slavery, and maternity.

The narrator brings up Ona's eager and bold womanist attitude when he says:

Despite the fact that she was constantly lightly clothed, she He had the air of a conservative, haughty presence, frigid as As steely and distant as any royally bred woman. This lone daughter of Obi Umunna's had style as she sat and curled her long legs together. In feminine modesty (8),

Ona is seen as a "priceless pearl" inside a womanist framework, even if she does not fulfill the latter vocation. "A nasty woman" was described as "a troublesome and impetuous lady who had the fortitude to dispute with her boyfriend before letting him have her" (18). She is "unobtrusive, extremely quiet," like Agbadi's first wife, Agunwa (19). By refusing to marry Agbadi, Ona refuses to be commodified through the payment of her bridal price. However, she agrees to her father's demands that she remain unmarried and carry him an heir, a boy. She can't be blamed, though, because she's split between her father and her lover. Ona, despite her harsh demeanor, complies with their desires about her unborn child. She also reveals her vulnerability to Agbadi after he is fatally injured and rendered unconscious for days.

Ona's subjection to masculine dominance appears to be a chess match between her father and lover. The patriarchal system promotes male offspring over female children, therefore her father's desire for her not to marry and produce a male kid for him is understandable. The gender of the baby also plays a role in Ona's inability to resist Agbadi's influence, as he uses the baby's gender to convince Ona to move in with him. In her final words to Agbadi, Ona says:

You see, I was never meant to live with you. But you are obstinate, as is my father, and I am obstinate as well. Please don't grieve me for too long, and make sure that, as much as you love our daughter,

Nnu Ego, you allow her to have her own life, including a spouse if she desires one. Allow her to express herself as a woman (26).

By refusing to let Agbadi pay her bride price and yet moving in with him and living with him for several months, Ona confirms that she has lost her life. More than her deathbed confirmation is required to overthrow the male privilege system in favor of female liberty. Ona realizes she isn't a lady in death. Her image of a lady, however, does not fit her resolute demeanor. Agbadi defeats Nnu Ego's opposition to male authority by allowing her to be a woman. Agbadi and Nnaife gain from her desire to allow Nnu Ego to marry their daughter because they consider women commodities. When the protagonist's name is Enu Ego, which means "twenty bags of cowries" in the novel's language, a significant womanist challenge is lost (23). As a result, Amatokwu and Nnaife treat her like a commodity. Abuse of women in *The Joys of Motherhood*.

In many aspects, the novel is about the unequal treatment of women. The first is treating women as though they only exist to bear male children. The second is the trade of female children for male power and prestige. This part also discusses the masculinization of first wives and the harsh treatment of wives.

Women are considered commodities when they are used to produce children. When Ona begs Agbadi to let Nnu Ego be a lady, she is actually seeking a different character trait for her daughter. Emecheta created Nnu Ego to resemble her parents. She was more courteous, less harsh, and less belligerent than Ona, and had a singular focus, desiring just one item at a time, badly. Few men could handle, let alone control, Ona, but not Nnu Ego "(35).

Her first husband, Amatokwu, effectively buys her by paying her bride price. Her father forces her into this marriage, and her capacity to carry children becomes a societal control device. Her infertility will make her a failed woman. Her culture values a woman's ability to carry children. Unfortunately, Nnu Ego's inability to carry children leaves her vulnerable to the patriarchal system's definition of womanhood. As a result of his father's insistence, Amatokwu takes a second woman to bear him offspring, displacing Nnu Ego as the senior wife. She can't have kids. In her haste to have children, she offends Amatokwu, her husband:

Amatokwu's second wife gave birth to a child, and Nnu Ego couldn't handle the anguish. She led the youngster into her inner chamber, neglecting to lock the door. She begged the youngster to be her child or send her some of his otherworldly buddies. She cradled the kid, unaware she was being watched. She felt a double blow from behind. Her husband's presence nearly killed her (33-34).

Nnu Ego's need to have her own children characterizes her existence as a woman, as she begs the tiny kid to be her child or give her one of her pals as her child. This is her mother's dream and the reality of a woman's existence in Igbo society.

Agbadi, enraged at Amatokwu's harsh treatment of his daughter, rushes to her aid. He rules over her life and talks to his buddy Idayi about Nnu Ego's second marriage attempt. Nnu Ego becomes a pawn in the hands of these guys since her father decides who she will marry and when. Her father refuses suitors until he sends her from Ibuza to Lagos to a guy named Nnaife. The narrative frequently portrays women as productive vessels. Even the ladies in the narrative feel their lives are lived to have children.

Nnu Ego leaves for Lagos, hoping to please her father by having a slew of children for her new spouse. She doesn't mind Nnaife's looks as long as he can provide for her kids. She realizes her wish when she discovers she is pregnant and later loves Nnaife when she gives birth to her first son, Ngozi, proving she is not a barren lady despite the societal stigma linked to it. Her first child's death ends her delight in parenthood. Nnu, a failing lady, wants to die. In the opinion of society, Nnu Ego is a failed woman since she does not have children.

The idea of a failed woman is deeply ingrained in Nigerian culture, especially since the people who saw Nnu Ego's attempted suicide come from several tribes. That Igbo and Yoruba people were there lends credence to the idea of a failing woman who cannot or does not bear children. In fact, they all felt that a wife without children was a failure (65). Suicide is not authorized in Nigeria because the spirit of communalism predominates over individual ambitions, as Emecheta emphasizes via authoritarian intervention. When Nwakuosor saves Nnu Ego, Emecheta clearly gives males the impetus of authority and power. He not only saves Nnu Ego but also reminds her of her commitment to her father, people, and sons, all of which are patriarchal. By refusing to live in a male-dominated society, Nnu has disgraced her gender in the eyes of Nwakuosor.

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When Nnu Ego gets her first pair of twins, she contributes to de-emphasizing the value of female children. "Your first pair of girls, senior wife," Adaku congratulates her. (140)

"I know, but I doubt our spouse will like them," Enu Ego says. The village can barely afford one female, let alone two. " (141)

Nnu Ego must be pleased to have female offspring to balance her male ones. No, since producing female progeny isn't winning for Enu Ego. Her excuse is that she cannot afford to raise female children when the culture expects male children. Nnaife, a representative of a culture that despises female offspring, is not pleased by the uncalled for act of two girls together.

In the subsequent conversations, Adaku chastises Nnu Ego for being more traditional than the Ibuza people, who reside far away from Lagos. More than just "traditional," Adaku signifies this. So, by rejecting her own female offspring, Nnu Ego is submitting to patriarchal rule. She is preoccupied with pleasing her male-dominated husband and father. Nnaife is understandably displeased with the twins' arrival. "Nnu Ego, what are these?" he chastises. Couldn't you do more? So where will we all sleep? How will they eat? ' Ni Ego complained, "He didn't even mention their names" (141).

Less than useful, Nnaife's questions portray the females. A reprimand for his older wife's failure to bear male offspring. According to the third and fourth queries, a place to sleep and eat in his house is guaranteed for male children, but not for female children. For Nnaife, refusing to name the twins sends a message to women that their offspring are not valued by society. Withholding their names, Nnaife denies responsibility for their well-being.

Adaku, Emecheta's lone vocal female character, gives birth to a boy but loses him in her attempt to enforce patriarchal obedience. As a traditionalist, one would expect Adaku to be unaffected by her son's death. Adaku fell into a profound depression when the baby died. She became nearly unmanageable. Her loss was blamed on everyone and everything (142).

"Why didn't you take one of the females and leave me with my male child?" She shouts out. "My only boy" (142).

It is clear from Adaku's mental, psychological, and emotional breakdown that Emecheta does not challenge patriarchal authority. Adaku will happily kill her female kids for one male. As a result, Emecheta's statement is emphasized once more. Nobody, no matter how vociferous, can overturn the

patriarchy. No matter how vocal or passive, all women must submit to a male-dominated society, as seen by the desire for male offspring.

Feminine offspring are valuable in Adaku's eyes since they are useful. A male child's scholastic or other advancement is aided by the bride price of a girl. When female children reach the age of twelve, they are pawned for cash. For Nnaife, the arrival of his girls is the sole solace. You'll start singing another tune in twelve years when their bride prices start pouring in, "Adaku said, smiling brightly as though she meant no harm (141).

Because her upbringing is targeted towards teaching her to become an obedient wife within society, she loses several benefits, such as formal schooling. No formal education is provided to the female children in *The Joys of Motherhood* except for basic literacy skills (reading, writing, and math). Adaku's girls are privileged since their mother breaks the norm and sends them to school.

When Nnu Ego makes it tough for her daughters by continually reminding them of their identity, Taiwo complains about the injustice of giving guys privileges over girls. So Nnu Ego tells the guys to "stop complaining and go to their lesson." You're a lady "(195). "I know that mother," Taiwo says. "You keep reminding us" (196).

It takes Emecheta only two pages to restate this identical concept of female hard labor maintaining male education and power (197). Emecheta may have been portraying her womanist self in the early 1930s by depicting reality as it is, without attempting to improve it. She is likely to sympathize with masculine domination, which hinders the growth of female children. Also, she believes that girls helping guys would assist them later in life, which she supports. Because her two kids are greedy males who only worry about themselves and their own welfare, Nnu Ego is disillusioned by this belief.

He expects to be paid for his first pair of twins, Taiwo and Kehinde, because in a patriarchal society, girls are "reared" for bride price. When he learns that Kehinde has decided to marry a guy of her own choosing, he is devastated. In the wake of Kehinde's decision, Nnaife is worried about her daughter's potential bride price. So Kehinde's spouse is a Yoruba man, and Yorubas don't charge a fortune to marry. It's not the bride price, but rather the Yorubas' characterization of Igbos as cannibals. With his unwillingness to accept a Yoruba as his son-in-law, Emecheta draws attention to the ethnic antagonism between these two tribes. "I will murder you," Nnaife swore. No one in my family will marry a cannibal clan! In captivity, Nnaife grumbled about a tribe that despised and despised him (237).

So Nnaife breaks the law and winds up in prison for both reasons. A wife from the Yorubas is not worth much, he believes. It's a "bowl of drink and a few lappas... no, not enough for the entire life of the child..."(239). This plot twist in *The Joys of Motherhood* presents a feminist dilemma. So far, Emecheta has complied with Igbo culture's standards, save for the character portrayal she provides Ona and Adaku's obvious uniqueness. As a result of his activities, Kehinde is sentenced to jail. It's unclear what Emecheta's position is now that Nnaife has been freed from jail. In Izu, Nnaife is a free man.

The joys of motherhood also masculinize the elderly woman. After Ona's death, the society she leaves behind turns the senior wife male. For Nnu Ego, unlike Adaku, being a woman isn't allowed. Her being is constrained by this. Rather, it's a product of her society. Having a disagreement with Nnaife causes her concern. Adaku's worry about their husband's death adds to the stress. Not as Nnaife's elder wife. She instantly allays Adaku's concerns.

Shh. ' Don't say things like that. He is no longer alive.

You are not allowed to say stuff like that. Her voice was on the other

On the other hand, she was far from convincing; she was on the verge of crying.

She was terrified as well, but her culture forbade her from succumbing to her anxieties. Being the wife, she was expected to be powerful.

and conduct yourself more like a man than a lady. Because males were not
She was allowed to express their sadness openly, but she had to learn to suppress
Hers as well (156).

Even though she is a woman, Emecheta's heroine is supposed to behave like a male. A lady who defies convention is defeated by this strong takeover of her feminine qualities.

The mother intends for her daughter to be a woman, but she intends to behave more like a man. The narrator adds that Adaku envied her independence as she bursts into tears (156). To be a woman, Nnu Ego envied Adaku's right to weep and express herself.

Nnu Ego is aware of her true status as a senior spouse. Adankwo, a lady who sits in such a posture, tells her and reminds her to act like a guy. While Nnaife is fighting for Nigeria's colonial masters, the British, nobody except Nnu Ego's own deity, Adankwo, claims, has awarded the title of "elder wife." Because Nnu Ego's chi is her life, she must fulfill its demands. Adankwo continues. "You are your husband's senior wife; you are like a guy buddy to him," she says. (p. In this case, culture, the wife is her husband's male companion. Society made her masculine. She either accepts it or rejects it. It is a distinguishing notion of Igbo society that Nnu Ego, as obedient and compliant as she is, returns to Lagos to care for her husband's home and oversee his younger wife.

Nnu Ego's external submission to male-dominated ideology is a reflection of patriarchal society's selfishness in masculinizing senior wives and making it an enviable status. In order to maintain their status, senior wives would do everything to maintain their seniority. Therefore, males develop the culture of the senior spouse. Her authorial intrusion includes

Afraid of Nwakusor and Ubani, Nnaife's buddies, Adaku is treated unfairly by Nwakusor in Emecheta. Because the traditions of civility in Igbo society forbid such treatment of visitors, Nnu Ego knows she is in the wrong. Due to the nature of patriarchal authority, males may either sustain or dismantle this societal norm. This reveals the patriarchal system's double standards for men. As observed by the narrator,

The men had made a mistake in their judgment. Nnu Ego was a
All along, they (the men) had made it appear as though
She was innocent just because she was the mother of sons. Men were
incredibly intelligent. They made it sound like an enviable position, worth
It is any woman's time to battle for, by admonishing her and encouraging
She tells her to live up to her role as senior wife... (187).

When Nnu benefits from a patriarchal culture, she has a disagreement with her co-wife. Nwakusor and Ubani exploit the double sexist ideals of producing male offspring as a woman's essence and masculinizing the elder wife to put Adaku in her proper position within Igbo society. Adaku knows she will be supported if she is a senior wife with male children. But she understands she does not meet any of male society's defensive standards. Adaku violates traditional norms of being a decent lady.

Adaku's Defiance of Cultural Ideals

Emecheta contrasts Adaku's and Nnu Ego's characters to demonstrate their differences. Nnu Ego conforms to Igbo cultural ideals by being obedient and servile. Her ego surrenders to male domination. She bears her husband's children to immortalize him and tries to keep them alive. She is a nice woman in Igbo culture. Adaku, however, is none of them. She is vocal, aggressive, and will not be swayed. Whenever Nnaife tries to dominate her, she retaliates. She is also not a senior wife and has no male offspring. Adaku means "a lady" in Igbo culture. Adaku, pushed to the boundaries of feminine obedience by a male-dominated culture, breaks away. That her choices will have repercussions and that society's view of her and her children will persist. Feeling unfairly treated by Ubani and Nwakusor, who support Nnu Ego for being nasty to Adaku's cousin, she leaves the marriage and forges her own path. With Nnu Ego, she expresses her discontent and freedom:
Everyone accuses me of constantly earning money. What else?

What am I supposed to do? I'm going to use the money I have.
 I want to give my daughters a decent start in life. They will no longer
 accompany me to the market. I'll see to it that they get into
 a decent school. That, I believe, will be beneficial to them.
 In the future, These days, many wealthy Yoruba families send their
 To send girls to school, I intend to do the same with mine. Nnaife
 I will not hand them over to any spouse until they are ready. I'll
 Take care of it! Senior wife, I'm leaving this stuffy room tomorrow. '
 To pay homage to your chi?
 Death to my chi! I intend to work as a prostitute. My chi is cursed!
 She added vehemently once more (188).

Adaku's first impression is one of self-assertiveness, before she makes these words that signify her breaking away from the male dominance structure. She encourages Nnu Ego to relax about their husband's retaliation after Nnu Ego gives birth to her first pair of female twins. Her elder wife, who is curious about why Adaku is so different from her, notices her autonomous thinking. But Adaku's liberated thinking doesn't stop there; she tries to reason with Nnaife about the twins' arrival. Like Nnaife, Nnaife sees Adaku's audacity.

Adaku is rife with masculine privilege-driven questions. So why does their spouse spend money that might be used to provide for the family on drinking and pleasure every night? While they wait for him to give them more housekeeping money, she convinces Nnu Ego to make sure they don't cook for him. Nnaife only drinks to please his women, so their demands for more housekeeping money appear reasonable. By describing these women as just claiming their rights, Emecheta misleads. She says (151) that women pursue and berate their husbands. From the perspective of a womanist writer like Emecheta, her female characters cannot even claim what is theirs. The economic condition of Adaku and Nnu Ego will ultimately lead to an improvement in the life of the whole family, thus Emecheta, as a womanist, examines their economic situation. Womanism's purpose is to make women economically dependent, as shown above. This is because it improves the chances of survival for women, children, and men.

Using all of her money, Nnu Ego surprises Adaku and Emecheta by taking authority from her. Her justification is that she can't let her kids hunger while she lives. With so many children to feed, Nnu Ego is the practical womanist, whereas Adaku just has two. Because of this, Adaku is forced to choose between economic and social success. "Daughter of Wealth" chooses economic security and embarks on a journey of self-discovery (190). Adaku's decision to be a respectable woman is approved.

She has no reason to fool herself. The woman was better off.
 As it was, she would just be socially ostracized.
 her mind. I may not be snubbed, but can I keep it up?' Nnu Ego
 to herself. I don't have enough money to buy food.
 To attend church and meetings (191).

Adaku's financial freedom causes Nnu Ego to forget her cultural concept that a woman's children are her riches. Adaku's choice to become a prostitute undermines these ideals and other conceptions of womanhood. After that, I shall analyze Adaku's final words before she declares herself a prostitute.

She starts by criticizing the societal structure that prioritizes mothers. As a result, a financially independent woman lacks social respect. Her financial freedom will be used to provide for her kids.

In the Igbo culture, schooling is unheard of. The Yoruba families that send their daughters to school are mentioned. The fact that he cannot claim the bridal price of the two females is also denied. To Nnu Ego's chagrin, she finally admits she's a prostitute. Adaku opposes patriarchal culture in several ways. So, like Nnu Ego towards the conclusion of the narrative, her actions are driven by fear. Adaku violates the traditional norm of conduct to protect her daughters. Nnu Ego devotes herself to her

children while adhering to patriarchal societal norms. In both cases, the women must face terrible repercussions. Adaku sympathizes with Nnu Ego when Nnaife is imprisoned and the following dialogue occurs:

Does Naife still own us or not?

I'm afraid that has changed as well. In today's Nigeria, Nnaife
It does not own anyone. But don't worry, senior wife. Tradition
is important to you. You've changed a little, but you've never
'Wavered in your convictions' (246).

Adaku believes in women's rights, while Nnu Ego believes a husband owns his wife. In reflecting on Nnaife's tragic jail term, Nnu Ego admits that "she was brought up to believe that children made a lady" (247). This notion governed Nnu Ego's life till she died. From Nnu Ego's confidence in Emeheta's womanist dedication to both male and female survival may be derived.

The ultimate goal is for society to recognize the need to assist one another in living. Her male children refuse to communicate with her, destroying her expectations of seeing them help her and the family. For her children's sake, she goes insane and dies on the wayside. Many in the community agreed during her funeral that Nnu Ego was a staunch advocate of communal unity and survival. Her demise confirms it. Due to the lack of proper planning and preparation, she is unable to answer children's pleas. That the family's survival and completeness should come before selfish and individualistic desires was the focus of her sacrifice. The core of communalism has been lost in her own sons, Oshia and Adim. Nnu Ego will not provide offspring to those who pray to her in death.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Buchi Emecheta's literary work stands as a beacon of hope for the construction of a better society for women and provides future generations with a desire to establish a consciousness of women's voice with equal opportunities. Buchi Emecheta is steadfast in her desire to see African men, women, and children united under a single banner for their own survival. People who follow the womanist philosophy of Ogunyemi come to this conclusion because they believe in the importance of women's independence and want to make sure that a woman, her husband, and their children have a real connection.

Limitation and recommendation

The study is limited to one novel of Buchi Emecheta *The Joys of Motherhood*. A womanist examination of the main Ghanaian women authors might also be conducted to see if they subscribe to the principles of womanism or other west African countries.

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