

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Women's Quest for Independence in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, Faculty of Humanities
And Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English

Submitted

By

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December 2023

Declaration

I hereby affirm that the dissertation entitled “Women’s Quest for Independence in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” submitted to the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu is an original work written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Central Department of English, Kirtipur. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English. No page of this research work has ever been published in any form before, and has not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or by any other reason. I shall be exclusively responsible if any indications found contrary to my declaration.

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Letter of Recommendation

Rashmi Thapa Adhikari has completed his thesis entitled “Women’s Emancipation in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” under my supervision. She researched it from January 2022 to June 2023. I hereby recommend her research work be submitted for viva voce.

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Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Women's Emancipation in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*"
submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Rashmi Thapa
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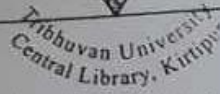
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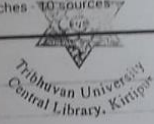
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Part 2 Discussion and Analysis Pursuit of Independence: Problematics of Patriarchy in Nigerian Society

The study investigates into Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun to explore the different factors that marginalize and subordinate women in Nigerian society as represented by Olanna and Kainene in the aftermath of the Biafran War. Kainene and Olanna represent the social contradictions that one is revolutionary and other is independent. Olanna becomes Odenigbo's wife. She has the ability to make everyone fall in love with her. She is proud of her uniqueness in society. She is educated, rich and fluent at English. Nevertheless, Olanna is a black woman in male-dominated society. The statuses of both sisters Olanna and Kainene who are rational and lead the life of elite class represent the modern women of Nigeria. The narrator speaks, "Olanna dances like white people!" Mama Oji said, laughing. "Her buttocks do not move at all!" (332). Olanna is cast as a laughing stock at her failure to move buttocks. In the male-dominated society, Olanna's role is expected to entertain but she does not show any interests toward such feminine activities. Both the sisters are highly educated and become unique among the women in Nigerian society. They are symbolic of the modern parallel to the traditional African woman. Odenigbo's illiterate rural mother represents the traditional society dominated by the principles of patriarchy. Olanna lives and interacts

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my respected teacher and supervisor Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma who offered me scholarly guidance. I am very grateful for his inspiration, time and encouragement. I would like to express my special thanks to the Head of Central Department of English Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Dhruva Bahadur Karki for his valuable suggestions during my research work. Similarly, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi, Prof. Dr. Anirudra Thapa, Prof. Dr. Ram Chandra Paudel and all the respected professors for providing me insights.

Finally, I am delighted to express thankfulness to all my friends, family members and relatives for their encouragement and support in my academic pursuit. I am immensely indebted to my husband for his support and motivation that kept me working until the completion of the project.

Abstract

This research work has investigated into the endeavors of the protagonists especially Olanna and Kainene to release them from the traditional social framework imposed upon them as depicted in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Although the women with education degrees and affluent family background endeavor to lead independent lives without subordinating to men, most of them fail to retain their idealized status in African society that is predominantly patriarchal. The Nigerian society as depicted in the novel does not accept women's leadership as exemplified in the case of Kainene who runs her father's business. Both Olanna and Kainene are competent and highly educated. However, they cannot establish their identity as independent individuals. They are forced to abide by the principles of patriarchy that women can only be subordinates to men.

The objective of the study has been to investigate the causes of the conflict between modern values embodied by Olanna and Kainene and traditional norms and values of rural Nigeria represented by Odenigbo's mother. This conflict is similar to the conflict that caused the Biafran war and that ultimately pushed the nation to disintegration. The year the novel was published in 2006 was the year of violence among different ethnic groups for political powers. Besides, the problems of the human rights were not resolved that year. Adichie created the novel to reflect on the ongoing political turmoil of Nigeria as well. The conflict between them implies the possibility of transformation by adapting to the circumstances created in the aftermath of the Biafran war. The war has become a productive opportunity for women like Olanna and Kainene to express their prudence and boldness in social affairs. Their public exposure symbolizes the possibility of tremendous growth and development on the part of women in Nigeria as portrayed in the text.

The study has employed Womanism as a theoretical tool to analyze the text. Womanism, a branch of African feminisms advocates for rights of women and care for men. It seeks to have a world of equality and independence regardless of gender discriminations. By using the concept of Chikwenye Ogunyemi, the research has explored the boldness and intelligence attained through education and financial independence by the women of the current generation are the weapons to combat the male-domination.

Key Words: African Feminism, Womanism, Biafran War, Conflict, Violence, Subordination

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Chapter I

Portrayal of Nigerian Women in the Aftermath of Biafran War

The study scrutinizes the female struggles for freedom. The study uses the Womanist perspective as developed by Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Mary Modupe Kolawole as portrayed in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Female characters are portrayed as professionals including teachers, farmers, traders, civil defenders and care givers. These women are the war heroes in the novel. As Adichie speaks about true war heroes:

I believe that the true war heroes are the ones about whom nobody writes books, and especially the Biafran women who showed remarkable bravery in keeping families together. I think the reason that the ordinary person's story is more engaging is that it is in those lives that we see the real effects of the war—the indignity of starvation, the struggle to hold on to their humanity. (Plaias 76)

Adichie privileges women characters as they represent true female heroes of the Biafran war. Women like Olanna, Kainene, Mrs. Maduako, and Mrs. Muokelu represent women who stand out in the war endeavor to endure the survival of the young nation. Instead of travelling abroad, Olanna and Kainene decide to stay in Biafra to defend their nation. Their resolve indicates a sacrifice of women during the war. They play the role of mothers of the nation in many ways as they contribute to the victory-war endeavor. The male characters are engaged in the war, whereas their female spouses take care of the children and senior citizens at home. During the war, they lose many things including Mrs. Muokelu's husband has lost his legs in the war. Besides, Mama Oji's husband returns as a deserter.

The study shows female protagonists including Kainene, Mama and Olanna who suffer the repercussions of the Nigerian Civil War undergo trials and tribulations even in the aftermath of the war. Kainene, Mama and Olanna, represent not only the present of Nigeria but also the future of the nation. Their contribution in comparison to men characters is higher in the sense that they help to defend the nation and at the same time, they build up the foundation of Nigeria. On the other hand, male characters play one role that they defend the nation. However, the male domination pervades in the indigenous African society. For instance, Olanna—the main protagonist whose parents are shallow and greedy—loves Odenigbo deeply. Their relationship though is of equal partners is imbalanced because of gender differences. The narrator states, “She watched him get up and leave. He banged the door. They had never had a quarrel: he had never been impatient with dissent from her as he was with others. Or it may simply be that he humored her and did not think much of her opinions in the first place” (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 75). Odenigbo does not value Olanna’s opinions as he treats her as the second to him. Despite her education, he takes her as his subordinate.

Undoubtedly, women characters particularly, Olanna and Kainene play significant roles during and after the war. Olanna teaches young Biafrans about the new nation, and the national anthem and the flag to make them patriotic and loyal to the Biafra. The novel reads, “She (Olanna) taught them about the Biafran flag. Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra would have and finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future” (287). In this way, Kainene contributes to the nation by donating money to the war effort. She sets up a refugee centre to cater for displaced Biafrans. She provides them essentials including medicines. Besides, she sets up a craft center where the inmates of the refugee center can learn one trade or another and can generate income

for refugees. The sacrifice of both Olanna and Kainene indicates that they are true heroes in patriarchy. However, the position of men supersedes their status in the aftermath of the Biafran War.

I use womanism—a branch of African feminism developed by Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Mary Modupe Kolawole who describe womanism as a perspective of African feminism.

Womanism pertains to African women of the diaspora and not continental African women. It results from critiques of liberal feminism as excluding the narratives and experiences of women of color, especially black women.

Statement of the Problem

Adichie's female characters Kainene, and Olanna are bold and strong. However, they have been perpetually suppressed. They cannot come out of the grip of patriarchal domination. Although they are capable of taking societal responsibilities, they cannot independently lead their lives without fear. In this context, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the traits of Olanna and Kainene that make them heroic?
2. How does Nigerian society marginalize and subordinate women in the aftermath of the Biafran War?
3. Why does Adichie's novel portray female protagonists to demonstrate women's subjugation?

Objectives

The general objective of the study is to investigate into the heroic qualities of female characters particularly Olanna and Kainene. However, their position remains marginalized in the aftermath of Biafran war in Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To demonstrate heroic qualities of female characters and the variables that make Olanna and Kainene vulnerable in Nigerian society
2. To explain the reasons for the failure of Olanna and Kainene at attaining equal status in the aftermath of the domestic war
3. To analyze Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* to justify subjugation and marginalization of Nigerian women

Delimitations of the Study

The study underscores Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* that presents contemporary womanist perspective on Africa. The novel raises the issue raised by Womanists in the 21st century. The text is evaluated in line with the current discourse on gender through textual analysis. The gender discourse in African women writing integrates feminine tale and national narrative as discussed in this study. This research analyzes Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* to explore the obstacles to women's independence by employing womanism, a branch of African feminism. The perspective on womanism by Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Mary Modupe Kolawole has been taken as the theoretical framework to discuss the issue. The secondary sources on African feminism, particularly on womanism in the connection with the major argument of the study have been used as well.

Significance of the Study

This study adds knowledge on African feminism particularly womanism that places the feminist vision within experiences of Nigerian women with culture, colonialism, domination and subjugation that impact African women's lives as portrayed in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. How Olanna and Kainene—the women who deserve to be leaders and are engaged in leading positions during the Biafran war—are dominated and subjugated in the aftermath of the Nigerian

Civil War. The experiences of these typical female characters reflect the experiences of Nigerian women in the critical juncture of politics. The pursuit of emancipation by female characters from the lingering domination of men in African culture demonstrates the impact of patriarchy on the vulnerable section of society i.e. women. There has been research on African feminism but the study from the theoretical modality of womanism—the branch of African feminism in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* directs the future researchers a new dimension of investigating into African literature. The study is motivated by the desire to investigate into the new spaces taken by African women writers particularly Adichie who portrays the subjugation of women including Olanina and Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Theoretical Framework

I have explored the female suffering in the Nigerian society. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* that portrays experiences of vulnerable African women in the aftermath of Nigerian Civil War can be studied from the perspective of womanism that especially investigates into the issues of African women. The study has been based on the content analysis of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which is the primary source of information.

The study is conceptualized within the Womanist theory as expounded by Ogunyemi and Kolawole. Womanism indicates to an Afro-centric form of feminism that shows concerns of gender, class race, politics, ethnic relationships, religious intolerance, and colonialism in their consciousness. Ogunyemi asserts that Womanism—a branch of African feminism—is a mother-centric ideology that focuses on familial, communal, national, and international caring. It advocates for women’s experiences and perspectives within a specific socio-cultural and political context. It underscores understanding of sexist relationships, associations rather than hegemony. Both womanhood and motherhood are the symbolic means of understanding the world. The

womanists emphasize on the centrality of the African family and sustain the role of mothering. This theory helps the study to explore how Adichie evolves a Womanist consciousness to engage in building Nigeria a viable nation. With the focus on the gender discourse in Africa, Ogunyemi states, “Black women are disadvantaged in several ways; as blacks they, with their men are victims of white patriarchal culture; as women they are also victimized by black men; and as black women they are also victimized on racial sexual and class grounds by white women” (67). The assertion justifies that a black woman is a victim of numerous forms of oppression. Adichie, as a black female writer voices against the problems imposed on black women in Nigerian society. Hence, womanist interpretation underscores gender discriminations prevalent in African society.

Womanist ideology directs that Adichie, a black woman author, seeks to empower the black man as well as he is equally a victim of colonial and neo-colonial oppression. The African people are burdened with diverse forms of oppression along with black patriarchy. Morolake notes, “African feminism links racial, societal, caste and all gender form of repression to construct a more all-encompassing classification of feminism through which women are considered supremely as individuals, rather than sexual objects” (17). Womanism is the idea and voice of African female scholars; Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Mary Modupe Kolawole in their separate well written volumes have dwelt extensively on the womanist ideology in African female writing. Considering the interpretation of the concept taken from Modupe Kolawole’s study in womanism and African Consciousness, “To Africans, womanism is the totality of feminist self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion in positive cultural way” (24). Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi expresses her conviction:

To the womanist therefore, the vital unity of a people evolving a philosophy of life acceptable to both men and women is a better approach to the wo/man palava than a debili-

tating and devastating political struggle for women liberation, independence and equality against men to prove a point. (71)

In the same line of argument, Nwajiaku underlines:

Womanism underscores Africanness. She identifies the peculiarities of the African female experience and African world view which to her is largely family oriented. Consequently, when several radical feminists insist on the dissolution of patriarchal structure and all its symbols, 'the African female opts for a more pragmatic and dialogic approach to issues therein. (107)

Womanism presents an idea African woman, with so much strength and powers that complements the man to make the society a better place. The choice of the theory for the present study is because it helps to achieve the study aim, as the female characters in the novel assert their individuality without competition with the male but rather involve the male in their struggle to better their living in the harsh and precarious condition of war.

Review of Literature

The study has explored literature on domination, patriarchy, gender, and women's sufferings and African feminism to show the gap between the existing knowledge and the information as investigated in this dissertation. Domination depends on construction of social and cultural differences among people as there cannot be any basis for distinguishing those who wield power from those who are subjects without differences. Patriarchal mindset emphasizes that men are superior to their counterparts. This ideology backs up male domination and builds up the foundation of patriarchy which undervalues the power and experiences of women. It questions women's heroism and their leadership. In the African context, the major foundation of patriarchy is the oppression and control over women's bodies. Adichie has authored the novel with the female

protagonists who are bold and strong. They contest with the male power and domination as Olanna and Kainene do in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Kolawole in *Womanism and African Consciousness* states that African women are products of numerous forms of subordination including patriarchy, tradition, racism, colonialism, neocolonialism and gender imperialism which function against women's self-expression (25). The novelist, Adichie has crafted *Half of a Yellow Sun* to demonstrate that female characters like Olanna and Kainene challenge the male domination and can establish their own world. They move from the margin to the front in terms of profession, societal activities and politics.

Morve Roshan K. in his research article, "Representation of History in Chamamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*" states that Adichie has fictionalized the history to include the question of conflict and internal trouble in Nigeria. She has raised the issues of identity intertwined with the war history which is crucial to Nigerian-Biafran historical lived experiences in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* published in 2006. The novel is the fictional picture of the 1960s. Besides, the novel depicts "the class, cultural, military, and ethnic and war conflict. It establishes a connection between the two communities, two groups and two cultures, which have a discrepancy with each other" (Roshan 150). Similarly, the novel raises the issues of third world countries particularly Nigeria. The historical reality shapes the common life of humanity as perceived in the reading of the novel by Roshan. Adichie portrays the reason for using the title, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. the title is metaphorical as it symbolizes the rising sun on "the Biafran flag. It has a new hope for a bright and glorious future. It also identifies that the Nigeria was one country like sun, but it has parted into two states" (Roshan 152). The critic focuses on the representation of Nigerian history in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel presents the adverse condition of Nigeria in the current time but the country embodies potentials to have a brighter future.

Onyeka Ike asserts that peace is priceless but it is violated in Nigeria as portrayed in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In his view, the critical situation worsens as it happens in Nigeria when it is parted into two states: the West and the North. Along with this partisan, joy and happiness of people is stolen away (366). The new situation created so far in the country is worse than ever expected since the people are forced to flee for survival. The representation of such depressive scenario through *Half of a Yellow Sun* intensifies the impact of political turmoil in the aftermath of the war. The very situation is exemplified in the departure of the peace and happiness in Kate's family. The narrator pictures the pathetic condition of the family:

Tears filled my eyes. The children were crying. There was stampede as women threw away their loads to take cover. God spare us this madness. This insanity, this hell on earth. This sudden darkness. This end of the world. A whole town moving. The buildings would begin to move in a short time. Yes, why not. The aged were moving. They were moving corpses, with sticks, with walking sticks, skeletons. In a day or two they would die like the pregnant woman. And nobody would bury them. They would rot and decay and mingle with mother earth. Then their bones would remain. No! Life was cruel! Life was meaningless. . . there were more and more corpses as we moved along. I shut my eyes. (45-57)

Peace and development is shattered by the Nigerian Civil War. Ugwuta is portrayed as a prosperous community that rose with commercial and agricultural products before the war. The division of the country because of the disastrous war that lasts for three years has cracked the country emotionally as well. War brings hunger, famine and death. Peace and joy, the valuable variables of development disappear from the country. Ike's reading demonstrates the problems created by the Nigerian Civil War as portrayed in the novel.

Chijioke Uwasomba in his article argues that Nigerian literature represents Biafra. The Nigerian Civil War as depicted in Adichie's novel "was occasioned by the secession of the Eastern part of the country in 1967 has thrown up an avalanche of writings (fiction and non-fiction). On 30 May 1967, the then Eastern Region of Nigeria seceded from the Federal Republic of Nigeria and took on the name, Biafra" (31). This historical information narrated through Adichie's novel shows the significance of the Biafra in the history of Nigeria. The causes of the Nigerian Civil War are highlighted in the novel as stated by Uwasomba in his reading of *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Besides, Uwasomba states that Adichie's novel portrays human and social issues and presents characters entrapped in the war that leads to devastation and demise of human values, societal ideals and personal friendship (33). The significance of the Biafra war remains deep-rooted in the history of Nigeria that Olanna, a female character teaches students the symbolic significance of Biafran flag. "Red is the blood of the siblings massacred in the North; Black, for mourning them; Green for the prosperity of Biafra and that of a yellow sun, the glorious future" (Uwasomba 36). The knowledge on the Biafran war imparted by Olanna implies the value of undivided Nigeria.

Yacoubou Alou has read Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* from the postcolonial perspective. Alou states that Adichie's novel represents the postcolonial subject's ambivalence over cultural and national identity (106). Adichie's characterization reflects her inclination toward narrating a single and unbalanced story that portrays her underground Biafran activism (106). Adichie's subjectivity can be perceived in Alou's reading of the novel. Overall, the novel pictures the issue of identity politics which has become predominant because of the Nigerian Civil War. Sophia O. Ogwude compares Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* with *Janus*. She states:

It goes beyond recounting historical events to provide a positive social vision. Of interest is the novelist's handling of relationships, within the academia, across various strata of the society, and interestingly among women of different social and educational standing. In this novel, the African world, including its values, its culture and its civilization, are all portrayed positively. (119).

The novel embodies themes that reflect the African values and assumptions. It discusses the issues of education, class, gender, and belief system of the African world. The depiction of African world reveals the historical significance as asserted in the reading of Ogwude. The critic further states that the novel is “unquestionably the product of a committed female African writer. The novel is true celebration of the *Niaja* spirit. The indomitable spirit of our common people is here lavishly extolled” (120). The *Niaja* spirit refers to the belief system of African society. The Africans derive power and strengthen themselves to fight against challenges in life. The common Africans are so powerful that their spirit cannot be defeated at any cost. The fictional representation of all these African strengths implies the richness of African culture.

Kalu Wosu in “Writing and Discourse Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a Civil War Narrative” avers that Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a war story that moves round characters who are caught up in “an intricate web of love, hope, betrayal, deception, hatred, deprivation and loss” (123). The main characters such as Ugwu, a university teacher at Nsukka and his wife, Olanna have high hopes of a brighter and more prosperous Nigeria but their hopes are adversely affected by the horrors of the Nigerian Civil War. Wosu’s reading highlights the problems facing the common Nigerians during the Civil War as depicted in the novel. Wosu elucidates the impact of the Civil War in Nigerians’ life as portrayed in the novel. “*Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays the physical and psychological violence suffered by the Igbos living in

Northern Nigeria during the pogroms that preceded the Nigeria-Biafra conflict. The pogroms carried out by the Hausa/Fulani are symptomatic of anti-Igbo sentiments fired by the erroneous belief that the Nzeogwu coup” (125). The depiction of both physical and psychological violence of the Igbos demonstrates the intensity of war impact in the lives of common Nigerians. How a single event can cause massive devastation is the prime aspect of the novel.

On a different note, Uchenna David Uwakwe in “Satirized Feminism in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*” asserts, “In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Ugwu’s psyche lets out an invoking depiction at the dawn of his encounter with Odenigbo, which notably, Adichie, somewhat inadvertently, bestows on him” (357). The encounter between the male and female characters Ugwu and Odenigbo respectively implies the attraction between opposite sexes. The compliment for the counterpart reveals the human psyche is repressed in society torn in domestic war. Similarly, in the same article, Uwakwe states, “The callousness of the woman is portrayed in Odenigbo’s mother. Adichie employs a twist, as the woman turns the allegation of witchcraft on Olanna” (358). The superstitions deep-rooted in Nigeria degrade the position of women who are considered witches. They are socially boycotted and deprived of respectful life in society. This reading shows the cultural problems such as belief in witchcraft that the protagonists including Olanna and Kainene suffer as barriers to moving ahead in life.

In a different line of reading of the novel by the scholars, Maureen Amaka Azuike states that the women characters in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* continuously contend to achieve freedom from the grip of tradition. They have been disempowered in patriarchy. In Azuike’s words, “more and more women are banding together in order to put an end to many years of deep rooted oppression and senseless subjugation of women. Today, Nigerian women are perceived as articulate, forthright, fearless, and well respected people” (89). The contribution of Ni-

gerian women to the development of the country cannot be ignored. Instead, they should be remembered and respected as asserted by Azuike. The demand for women's empowerment is indispensable. However, women characters in the novel are depicted struggling and deprived of freedom due to domestic war in Nigeria:

Ironically, Adichie celebrates the new breed of African women who are highly educated, freethinking, resilient and independent. It is the high level of education of the female protagonists of Adichie's works which acts as their bulwark against the retrogressive cultural patterns that exacerbate the subjugation of women. It is worthy of note that Adichie's heroines (Olanna, Kainene and Auntie Ifeoma) are second degree holders from prestigious Universities. (Azuike 88)

The representation of women characters shows the pathetic situation of women in Nigeria. They do not hold degrees from the prestigious universities. Even the highly educated women like Olanna, Kainene are forced to lead the lives of second class citizens in Nigeria. Adichie forms the identity of African women as wives and highlights varied facets of gender oppression inter-linked with such identity. Women become wives through conjugation. Ogun-dipe-Leslie locates oppression in married life which keeps African women subjugated in patriarchy (19). Adichie portrays inequalities prevalent between wives and husbands in African society. Primarily, she identifies domestic violence, religion, traditions, family life, in-lawism, civil anarchy, extended families, polygamy, temptation for male child, racism etc. which implant the seed of inequalities based on gender differences.

The point of departure from the existing scholarship lies in the representation of Nigerian women who seek emancipation from the grip of war-torn country wherein women are adversely affected. The main female characters Olanna, Mama and Kainene embody symbolic significance.

They represent nationhood, traditions and future of Nigeria respectively. They struggle to seek emancipation in the country that presents women as the second class citizens. Although female characters seek independence, they are not radical. They wish to see a reformed society devoid of gender inequality. Although they are bold, intelligent and beautiful, they are oppressed in numerous ways in African society. They do not suffer only male domination but also racism which victimizes many men of black race as well. Womanism—the branch of African feminism—advocates for the rights of both women and men and seeks to establish an equal society free from domination and oppression in terms of gender, race, nationality, and class. This study analyzes Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* to explore both heroism and vulnerability of female protagonists particularly Olanna and Kainene.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into four chapters. The first chapter functions as the introduction of the research. It discusses the portrayal of Nigerian women in the postwar period in the light of research questions. The chapter is a blueprint of the study as it embodies research questions, delimitation, and significance, review of relevant, methods and theoretical framework and empirical literature. The organization of the study is contained in the chapter. The second chapter discusses the methods and theoretical framework used in analyzing the novel to explore the women's emancipation as depicted in the novel. The third chapter—the analytic chapter of the study—examines the endeavors of female characters for emancipation in African society in the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War. The final chapter—the conclusion of the study—summarizes the major findings of the study. It presents research possibilities and recommendations for the concerned. Overall, the chapter concludes how women are subjugated and marginal-

ized during and after the war in the male-dominated Nigeria despite their resilience and contributions to the war. Finally, the works used for the study are acknowledged.

Chapter II

Approaches & Theoretical Lens to Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

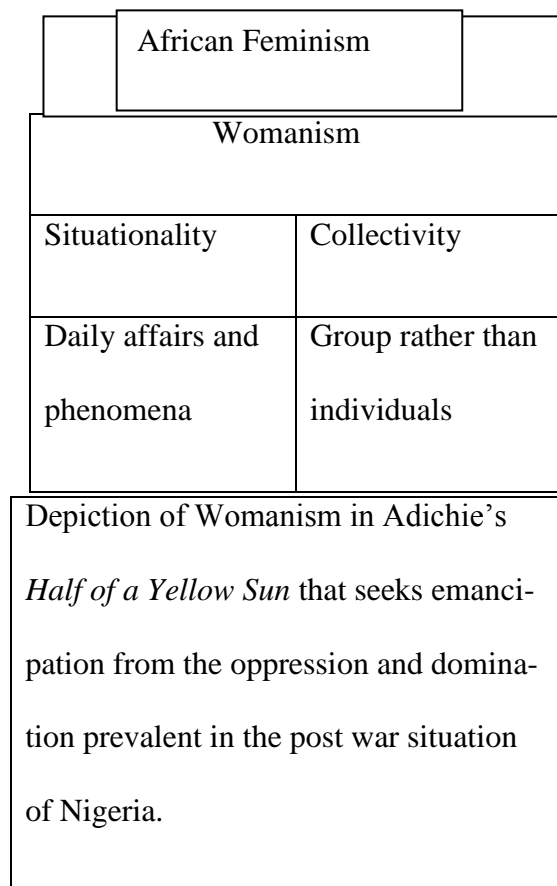
This research employs textual study to analyze Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The main aspect of this research design is to use the stories as data and especially the personal accounts of experience that characters have as told in the story forms. The fictional world as constructed to represent the real world has characters. This world is not the fixed, single and measurable. The individuals have personal feelings and opinions and they share with each other on their own. The qualitative research design undertakes the fictional narrative not as it is precise and fixed as the quantitative research.

This research uses the critical research that includes a strong emancipator agenda along with critique. In this process of undertaking research, the investigation infers to the act of empowering participants to both question and to change their situation. Cranton puts forward his perspective, "Emancipatory knowledge is gained through a process of critically questioning ourselves and the social systems within which we live . . . If we do not question current scientific and social theories and accepted truths, we may never realize how we are constrained by their inevitable distortions and errors" (315). In this approach of research, the researchers question all aspects of the construction of reality that is presented in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie has constructed a world within her novel wherein the lead characters are dynamic and complex. Especially Olanna and Kainene seek emancipation from the grip of patriarchy by challenging the African tradition carried by Odenigbo's mother who imposes the Nigerian beliefs and practices upon the youths who are influenced by the modern belief system. The novelist advocates that there is not organized reality as exemplified in her novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The emancipatory approach is postmodern in its concepts.

The study has also employed phenomenology—a school of philosophical thought—underpins all qualitative research. Indeed, all qualitative research is phenomenological. The phe-

nomenological research explains the nature of things through the process of people's experiences as portrayed in the novel. How the characters experience in the fictional world as it is in Adichie's novel is the core aspect of the phenomenology. This research type seeks to understand and explain human experiences of the surrounding. The characters in the novel have everyday experiences and the researcher undertakes those experiences as the basis of the investigation to achieve the objective of the study.

Conceptual Framework



The study has undertaken the African feminist perspective to analyze the novel by the African female novelist, Adichie who constructs both female and male characters to show how Nigerian women experience in the critical time including Biafran War that divides the nation by devaluing human dignity. Guy-Sheftall Beverly in "African Feminist Discourse: A Review Es-

say” defines African feminism that “recognizes a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European/American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women’s subjugation which differ from the generalized oppression of all African peoples” (32). African feminism also identifies specific inequalities and constraints pervasive in traditional societies as it is the case of Odenigbo’s mother who advocates for the practices of Nigerian traditions and values as assimilated in the rural Nigeria. Indeed, her objections against Olanna’s modern moves and lifestyles are the challenges to the development and movement of African youths who are committed to social and political transformation as the missions and revolutions of Olanna and Kainene reflect. The perspective is the critique of the oppressive and patriarchal African traditions including forced marriages and female circumcision as stated, “Black women have been silent for too long. Women must assume their own voices—speak out for themselves” (11). The inclusion of women’s voices reflects the personal experiences in patriarchal African societies. The similar expression regarding the African feminist perspective is:

The Black woman of Africa suffers a threefold-oppression: by virtue of her sex, she is dominated by man in a patriarchal society; by virtue of her class she is at the mercy of capitalist exploitation; by virtue of her race she suffers from the appropriation of her country by colonial or neo-colonial powers. Sexism, racism, class divisions; three plagues. (118)

The study brings the African feminist tradition of thinking and problem-solving to the global women’s movement and participates in the formulation of new theories and methodologies. The personal view of women’s writing does not in any way hinder a woman writer’s creative drive as in the case of Adichie who expresses her subjective views in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It is a general-

ization that all writing by women and about women has the feminist implications as such conclusion undermines the foundations of the concept of feminism (Naomi 133). Indeed, the outspoken African women writers like to follow the topic of feminism with crookedness that “bespeaks detachment. Notable black African women writers like Bessie Head, Ama Ata Aidoo and Zaynab Alkali are known to have denied any identification with the feminist movement” (Naomi 134). It shows all women writers do not deal with the subjective topics. They may raise the common themes in their writings that represent the problems facing humanity in general regardless of race, sex, and class. There is a misconception that feminism invokes a movement which is anti-male, anti-culture an anti-religion. This misconception warrants instantaneous correction as:

feminisms do not set out to denigrate men but to censure a system that unrepentantly places women’s needs as secondary to men’s. Nor do they stop with securing for women jobs that were previously monopolized by men. For if feminisms were to cease at the creation of a new space for woman in a man’s world simply in terms of opportunities—conceded on the grounds of necessity rather than merit—this would stop short of being an abortive revolution since there is no guarantee that this space would not soon be usurped on the grounds of there not having been any significant improvements in the human condition since the admission of women into the world of leadership and professionalism.

(Naomi 134)

Women writers do not fight against men for their share. They create and generate so that they can lead dignified lives. They do not have to regret on being incapable and backward in comparison to their counterparts. Rather they prefer to excel in their respective professions and are dedicated to leading different sectors of society as Adichie does in the creation of fiction. The African feminists criticize feminism—Western ideology—the movement that plays an important

“role in the African woman’s struggle to rise above the murky waters of patriarchal dominance” (Naomi 134). Chandra T. Mohanty in her book states that third world women have ever kept them busy with feminism although they have rejected the label frequently as seen in many instances (7). Mary E. M. shares Mohanty’s perspective in her article “Re-conceptualizing African Gender Theory”, and endeavors to draw the attention to the dilemma and fluid positions of critics and writers such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Tsitsi Dangarembwa and Miriam Tlali in identifying with feminism (Naomi 134-5).

Similarly, Anthonia A. Ekpa states that African feminism endeavors to grant the woman a sense of subjective worth, and “effectual, and contributing being, while it rejects stereotypes of woman that deny her a positive identity. Hence, an African woman who identifies herself as a feminist recognizes her potential as a human being and prides in the areas in which she excels” (29). For Ekpa, women seek to be on the home front or in their workplace. They appreciate each other’s talent and worth for leading dignified life collectively. They honor mutually and keep them disciplined for the collective cause of women. In this regard, Naomi states:

It is important to recognize that the focus of feminist studies is this institutionalized male dominance, operating through social structures like the law, education, employment, religion, the family and cultural practices. None of these is to be explained simplistically in terms of conscious intent, of ill-will or conspiracy of individual men or even groups of men. These self-sustaining structures of, by means of which women’s interests are always ultimately subordinated to male interests, constitute the social order known as patriarchy. (136)

Hence, African feminists show concerns to the ceaseless marginalization of women in African countries. Adichie raises the issues facing the Nigerian women in the postwar period. The Afri-

can women especially experience “the three-striped banner of culture, tradition and religion. It is this growing awareness of women’s oppression and the need to redress the situation that has moved many an African woman writer to take a feminist stance, sometimes using a radical approach” (Naomi 137). This version of African feminism can be termed as womanism. Regarding this, Kolawole in her book, *Womanism and African Consciousness* argues that “those who reject feminism as a term of reference are looking for alternative terminologies that are relevant to their specific cultural experience, and that the most dominant concept acceptable to them is womanism of African womanism” (qtd. in Naomi 138). Meanwhile, Kolawole defines womanism as “the totality of feminine self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion in positive cultural ways”. Indeed, womanism intends to address the issues pertaining to make hegemony in patriarchy when exploring solutions to women’s marginalization by looking inward and outward (202). Hence, it becomes clear that womanism endeavors for the liberation of women from socio-cultural and socio-economic institutions wherein they experience discriminations based on the sex differences. Besides, they seek to challenge all the agencies and institutions that relegate them to the margin of society. Adichie carves her female protagonists who are the epitomes of womanism as they advocate for the equal rights and seek their dignified existence in African society. Although both feminism and womanism seek for the freedom and independence of women, the latter aims at establishing the union between men and women as Olanna and Kainene do in their relationship with Odenigbo and Richard respectively.

“African feminism excludes radical feminism, and African womanism breaks away from Afro-American womanism. What then is African feminism or African womanism? It strives to create a new, liberal, productive and self-reliant African woman within the heterogenous cultures of Africa” (Naomi 139). African feminism intends to modify culture as it impacts on women in

diverse societies. In contrast to that, most African cultures exclude women from practicing same rights as men do. Therefore, women accept that culture is an unavoidable aspect of their identity as exemplified in the case of Odenigbo's mother who retains the Nigerian tradition and practices. She does not seek for any transformation in the cultural framework of Nigerian society as she takes culture inevitable in her life. Adichie constructs both kinds of female characters traditional and modern to represent the original fabric of African feminism. The study undertakes the African feminism as the theoretical framework to analyze Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* so that the amalgam of traditional and modern values represented by the female characters can be justified.

Joelle M. Cruz in "Reimagining Feminist Organizaing in Global Times: Lessons from African Feminist Communication" states that African feminism helps re-imagine feminist organizing global eras. Hence, Cruz presents foundational African feminist principles including holism, collectivity, and situationality and also explains these principles to flesh out the African feminist communicative lens. "African feminisms can be particularly helpful in global times, as marginalized groups and poor women survive by creating resilient organizations. Despite the grounding of African feminisms in a particular region" (Cruz 23). Indeed, African feminist critics are concerned with the problems prevalent in African societies such as access to food and water, armed conflict, and disease which are affected by the power relationships in the global framework. In fact, African feminisms do not address gender discriminations and power only but include the issues of essentials for survival. Adichie's characters are engaged with the daily affairs and some of them suffer the crisis of the basic needs in the aftermath of the Biafran war.

Amadiume documents the "significance of women's work in Igbo society in which women used to sell oil from the palm tree. Industriousness was highly regarded as illustrated by a distinction called "Ekwe". Ekwe was a title given to particularly industrious women and was akin to

having “green fingers” (42). As it is stated that “whatever such a woman touched yielded multiple profits: all of her crops increased, her domestic animals reproduced prolifically and were not killed by diseases, her chicks were not carried off by hawks” (Amadiume 42). The reading focuses on the significance of work and African women’s unlimited endurance and toil in terms of work that pays them huge profits. The construction of industrious character, Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun* reflects on the crucial aspect of women’s engagement in industrious activities.

Kainene undertakes the responsibility of her father’s factory on her own and runs. She is a hard-working personality and contributes to the welfare initiatives during and after the war in Nigeria. Besides, Olanna is a dedicated person who toils tremendously to satisfy the needs of the society and of Odenigbo who has intimate relations with her.

Cruz asserts that a great number of African women work in the informal economy and also takes their children to workplace. They are the producing force not the burden on their counterparts. Thus, African feminism demonstrates the strength and zeal of African women in general and the researcher valorizes the power of Nigerian women in particular as depicted in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Mostly African women believe in the team work as they find it productive and contributive for the great growth of the economy. African feminism considers “the group rather than individual as unit of analysis. Such an orientation can be explained by the “corporate” nature of indigenous African societies (Mikell 10). The preeminence of the group succeeds individual concerns. African women follow the corporate approach to undertaking responsibilities and cooperate with each other for the collective cause. The next crucial feature of African feminism is situationality that underscores the relationship which centers on the fluid nature of signification in African societies. In accordance with the situation, the people keep changing their behaviors and attitudes. Hagan asserts, “Situationality highlights how divulging or concealing in-

formation is contingent on space, time, and parties in a given communicative interaction” (qtd. in Cruz 28). African feminists use the concept of situationality to discard absolute and watertight patterns of gender in the feminist interpretation.

African feminist epistemology emphasizes on “how political aspirations are buried in everyday and mundane communicative interactions. In this vein, women might express their yearning for agency and empowerment in discussions of basic needs including food, water, and shelter” (Cruz 30). Of course, the female characters particularly Olanna and Kainene express their needs and feelings for both material goods and even sexual intercourse. They do not suppress their emotions. In their interpersonal communication with both male and female acquaintances, the characters share their views and feelings. This approach as undertaken by the novelist in *Half of a Yellow Sun* challenges the Western notion of feminism. S. A. Fraser-Burgess et al. argue:

womanism’s social change perspective holds transformative promise. It is rooted in Black women’s experiences and penchant for reaching solutions that promote communal balance, affirm one’s humanity and attend to the spiritual dimension. Fostering inclusivity, acknowledged intersectionality, and communalist values, womanism offers scholars of color an ethic of the embodied self that recommends at least two guiding principles for a pedagogical philosophy. It is first one oriented towards, love of self and second towards placing one’s discipline within a cultural-historical context. In the first principle, there is potential for nothing less than suspending the symbolic and ontological violence to one’s sense. (506)

This study has employed womanism to analyze Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The womanist lens is a perspective which can be featured as “an alternate paradigm for organizing experience,

for constituting knowledge, and rejecting discourses of domination. The embodied engagement of the Black woman is to provide a prototype for activism predicated on the multi-modality of normative human participation and presence in the world” (Fraser-Burgess et al. 506). Rejection of the discriminatory practices and discourses of domination is the foundation of womanism. Women of color do not accept the domination as it is imposed upon them in patriarchy. Iris Marion Young defines oppression as, “the institutional constraint on self-development” (37). The oppressive society does not allow people to grow financially and mentally. The oppressed are adversely affected and their contribution to the societal development is also discouraged if oppression remains. Womanism demonstrates the disadvantages of oppression that impedes the developmental process.

The critics from the African society experience ambivalent situation because of oppression and current endeavors of domination. Most of them deal with the racial issues and the effects of racism in their lives. Adichie goes beyond this trend as she does not raise the issue of race in her fiction as depicted in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Young basically defines social justice which is needed that is possible on the decline of injustice and domination in society. The social conditions that cause problems and conflicts are exploitation, violence, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism. Young’s “conceptualization of injustice in terms of oppression and domination is a critique not only of the purely distributive theory of justice but also of the end-state conceptualization of its fulfillment. Such theories conceive of power purely as the possession of individuals that represent institutions” (Fraser-Burgess et al. 512). Those who hold power exercise it in order to continue their domination and oppression. Generally men possess the power and therefore, they stay in the hub of society. Young further explains:

While the exercise of power may sometimes depend on the possession of certain resources—money, military equipment, and so on—such resources should not be confused with power itself. The power consists in a relationship between the exerciser and others through which he or she communicates intentions and meets with acquiescence. . . The dyadic modeling of power misses the larger structure of agents and actions that mediates between two agents in a power relation. (31)

The agents function and carry on the roles of oppressors. The power is the stamina that energizes the agents to exercise in society. Womanism demonstrates the impact of power in patriarchal society as the construction of patriarchy depends on the power of men that they gain from different predecessors including parents, religious leaders and so on. The manifestation of power in social affairs is acute and therefore, women under duress to abide by the laws of patriarchy revolt against such power. The womanist questions the representation of women as commodities as exemplified in the case of Olanna. Justine Tally defines, “A womanist is a woman who is aware of her own values but has never felt the need to declare herself or actively participate in the movement—hence she is more common” (214). “Womanism is just a term she uses to relate feminism to black women” (Tally 215). “While preferring women’s views of the world and “loving other women”, the womanist cares for men even while possibly rejecting the “male” (i.e., male values) in them. This is an important departure from the connotations of feminist or black feminist, which, rightfully or not, often come to signify a rejection of men per se” (Tally 216). Women characters primarily Olanna and Kainene advocate for the rights of women and also care of men as these girls take care of Odenigbo and Richard.

The womanist, Walker insists, appreciates herself, her culture, her womanly attitudes and emotions *unconditionally*, even in the face of a society which has insisted that tears, emotion,

compromise, subjectivity, and other feminine traits are signs of weakness and of an inferior nature when compared with the manly attributes of emotional self-control, dominance, and objectivity” (Tally 219). Laura Sjoberg states, “War has gendered causes, gendered practices and gendered consequences. It is also lived and experienced in gendered ways” (252). The novelist of *Half of a Yellow Sun* declares that she wants to engage history so as to animate the discourse of Biafra that is rarely a public issue in Nigeria. Further, women are represented fairly in this war narrative which is different from the earlier narratives which are mostly male-dominated.

Adichie depicts women as bold and responsible people during the war (qtd. in Nkereuwem & Chukwurah 98). Adichie challenges the stereotypical representation of female characters in the text. Her female characters are not fragile, weak and docile. Rather they are intelligent, educated and independent regarding their personal needs (Nkereuwem & Chukwurah 99). Their financial independence primarily that of Olanna and Kainene demonstrates that such depiction challenges the normative notion of narrative created mostly the male novelists.

The womanist theory as expounded by Ogunyemi Chikwenye is a theoretical base and as a feminist theory, it is an African brand of feminism concerned with gender, class, ethnic relationships, religious intolerance, colonialism and non-colonialism. In fact, womanism is a mother-centered ideology whose primary focus is on caring at the familial, communal, national, and international levels. It underscores understanding of sexist relationships, affiliations that domination, dialogue than division. As a postcolonial idea, womanism is contained in the anti-colonial discourse. It is a relevant theory in investigating into how Chimamanda Adichie evolves a womanist consciousness through her work to engage in the process of documenting the past and rebuilding a more practicable Nigeria. Her main characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* including Kainene and Olanna undergo the struggles of the Biafra war. Kainene is a female boss in her fa-

ther's factories, lives alone, and dates a white British man, Richard. She is an emotionally stronger than Olanna. However, her strong-willed nature cannot save her from the shock that eclipses her at the sight of Ikejide's death (Ogbazil 31). Kainene demonstrates her shock painfully. Her sister, Olanna, an educated and bold woman marries Odenigbo who has had a child with Amala. He is philosophical and discusses every issue seriously with the people around. On top of all these, women characters in the novel have qualities which "make them the envy of all" (Nkereuwem & Chukwurah 102). Kainene is a committed business-minded character who is saddled with the singular task of managing and coordinating her father's extensive business empire. During the war, she plays her role significantly that she relocates to Orlu from Port-Harcourt. She establishes a refugee camp to care for the displaced and homeless after the fall of the previous place. She is so determined that she refuses to move to London with her parents. Rather she continues to work even during the war (Nkereuwem & Chukwurah 105). Her bold and committed personality inspires other women characters in the novel as well.

Nkereuwem & Chukwurah assert that Mrs. Muokelu, another strong-willed woman character in the novel, joins hand with Olanna and Ugwu to train Biafra children during the war. She cooperates with the displaced and homeless at the relief center. Her strong dedication for the Biafran cause, she even trains Olanna in the act of soap making that they sell for living (105).

Women characters struggle in *Half of a Yellow Sun* against the patriarchal-induced perception of the woman and their endeavor in reconstructing the image of women by crushing the patriarchal-conceived customs, traditions, and religions. The novelist reconstructs the image of women through Olanna and Kainene to valorize the female gender. According to Charles Cliff Feghabo:

The early African females' imaginative attempt at refashioning a more balanced image of the woman as illustrated in such texts as Nwapa's *Efuru*, Buchi Emechita's *Second Class Citizen*, Zainab Alkali's *Still Born*, and lately Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, to mention but a few, has come with subversion as the male image is often deconstructed and is reconfigured in contrast to the female as a failure or is demonized as an agent of the afflictions of the female gender. (44)

Motherism, one of the brands of African feminism is close to womanism. Catherine Acholonu's *Motherism*, a derivative of *Womanism* by Alice Walker "focuses on the centrality of the woman in society. It expresses its Africanness by its celebration of African motherhood and respect for the family union constituted of the father and mother, the environment and the world" (Feghabo 45). Acholonu explains Motherism as a "melting pot of all people, men and women, even feminists who are concerned about the menace of wars around the globe, racism, malnutrition, political and economic exploitation . . . the degradation of the environment and the depletion of the ozone layer through pollution" (2).

Womanism is a form of feminism that focuses especially on the conditions and concerns of women of color, especially Black women. Womanism recognizes the inherent beauty and strength of Black womanhood and seeks connections and solidarity with Black men. Womanism is a gender progressive worldview that emerges from Black women's unique history and extends beyond women of African descent. Womanism is a term coined by writer and activist Alice Walker and it pertains to acknowledging women's abilities and contributions to society. She defines the relationship between womanism and feminism as, "Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender" (9). Women of all strata of society, living in almost every part of the world have

been subjected to physical and mental violence at the hands of patriarchy. Time and again, they raise their voice to demand equal rights, power, fair treatment and opportunities.

The first and second waves of feminism primarily focus on the rights and needs of the White upper-class and middle-class women, excluding women of color and women belonging to the socio-economically oppressed sections of the society. Although these movements have an effect on various societies, the excluded groups of women often have to deal with the worst forms of patriarchy owing to their intersectional identities. Hence, womanism is considered to be a larger ideology that concerns itself with gender equality, whereas feminism is thought to be its component. Walker coins the term womanism to draw the attention of the masses to the sufferings and exclusion of Black women.

African feminists' writings advocate a change in the marginal position of the female gender through the rewriting of history or the recreation of the status of the woman. However, they are devoid of the advocacy and exploration of bisexuality of the female gender. Adichie endeavors to rewrite the female gender as laced seriously with feminist ethos unblemished by western liberal culture. Her *Half of a Yellow Sun* focuses on the educated middle-class. It smacks of the influence of her middle-class background. The attention on the middle-class evinces the coloring of the experience of this class on her creative engagements (Feghabo 45). The author argues that culture that assigns gender specific roles is a human creation. Based on her personal experiences, she questions the culture-based assigning of roles centered on gender rather than on interest and ability. "She deduces that society has taught humans to internalize the inferiorization of the female gender, giving so much attention to the male gender-a thing that props up the invisibility of the woman" (Feghabo 46). Adichie's exploration of the educated female characters is not unknown to African feminist discourse that struggles that the denial of education and the economic

progress of the woman strengthen the bases of female subordination and push her down the chasm of invisibility. This is why feminists including Adichie advocate the education and economic independence of the woman so that she is can release herself from the pool of suppression. Adichie in her text explores the twin concerns of African feminists and accordingly, she has portrayed Olanna and Kainene who are educated and have financial independence.

Adichie challenges African cultural dictates which privilege the male gender. This study analyzes Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* in the lines of the arguments based on the theoretical discussions.

Operational Definitions of Key Words

Gender: It is a social construct that states that the expectations, capabilities and responsibilities of women and men are not biologically ascertained all the time. The roles given to both women and men based on their gender are socially and culturally defined. The social structure prevails as it puts women at the bottom and men on the top of the hierarchy. The male dominance and female subjugation are reinforced and continued in the social system called patriarchy. Thus, the construction of masculine/feminine, son/daughter, host/hostess, husband/wife, superior/inferior in the process of gendering takes place in patriarchy.

Feminism: Feminism refers to the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. Feminism is manifested worldwide and is represented by different institutions committed to activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. Women are confined to the domestic sphere, while public life is reserved for men. In medieval Europe, women are denied the right to own property, to study, or to participate in public life. Women are prevented from conducting business without a male representative, be it father, brother, husband, legal agent, or even son. In patriarchy, married women cannot exercise control over their own children without the permis-

sion of their husbands. Besides, women have little or no access to education and are deprived of most professions rigid society. Men perpetuate their dominance in almost all respects. Feminism intends to change the way most of the conservative societies treat women. The branches of feminism include Western feminism, African feminism, Indian feminism, Islamic feminism etc.

African Feminism: African feminism pictures realities of women in different African countries. It advocates for women's needs, reality, oppression and empowerment as addressed by having an inclusive and accommodating understanding of the generic issues and group attitude to self-definition as women. African feminists believe in the practice that both women and men are similarly oppressed. Therefore, gender equality means oppression of neither gender. They seek independence and freedom for both men and women.

African Womanism: Africana womanism—a term coined in the late 1980s by Clenora Hudson-Weems—is an ideology applicable to all women of African descent. It focuses on the experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of African women with different social backgrounds. The concept of African womanism has been shaped by the work of women such as Clenora Hudson-Weems, Ifi Amadiume, and Mary E. Modupe Kolawole. African womanism can be taken as fundamental to the continuing development of Afrocentric theory. This ideology brings to the forefront the role of African mothers in particular and African women in general as leaders in the endeavor of regaining, reconstructing, and creating a cultural integrity.

Patriarchy: Patriarchy refers to a system that privileges men but oppresses women in numerous ways. It is a social and institutional structure wherein male dominance prevails and women are directly or indirectly controlled by men. Patriarchy is nurtured by religions and cultural practices. In this system, men feel valued, whereas women are inferiorized and subordinated. The system does not value female experiences, and knowledge. Men benefit from almost all

social institutions and therefore, they feel superior to women. Because of patriarchy, men hold political powers, while women are mostly excluded from the decision-making bodies and agencies in the political system.

Chapter III

Pursuit of Independence: Problematics of Patriarchy in Nigerian Society

The study investigates into Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* to explore the different factors that marginalize and subordinate women in Nigerian society as represented by Olanna and Kainene in the aftermath of the Biafran War. Kainene and Olanna, the twins of nouveau rich Igbo parents represent many of the period's social contradictions: one a tough businesswoman, the other a free spirit. Olanna becomes Odenigbo's wife. She possesses the ability to make everyone fall in love with her. She is proud of being different from the rest of the Igbo people. She is educated, rich and fluent at speaking English. However, she is racially black and a woman in patriarchy.

The condition of Olanna and Kainene who belong to the educated class in the Igbo tribe reflects on both their boldness and docility. The narrator speaks, "Olanna dances like white people!" Mama Oji said, laughing. "Her buttocks do not move at all!" (332). Olanna is cast as a laughing stock at her failure to move buttocks. In patriarchy, her role is to entertain and the other women like Mama Oji play the role of agents.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Olanna and Kainene are portrayed with boldness and dominant nature. They are not submissive. The twins, who are western educated—up to master's degrees from foreign universities—are symbolic of the modern parallel to the traditional African woman. The traditional African woman is symbolized by women such as their mother and other women such as Odenigbo's illiterate rural mother, the twins' mother's female relatives—Aunty Ifeka and her daughter residents in the northern part of Nigeria. Olanna lives and interacts with them in a rustic milieu during the Biafran war. Adichie by portraying the opposite deconstructs the traditional femininity and enriches her advocacy for the intellectualization of the female gender. The study focuses on the information about the actions and the characters including both male and female who belong to both rural and urban settings of Nigeria. Olanna "identifies when she

gets employed as a Sociology lecturer. In a radical choice, she prefers the job of an academic and getting married to Odenigbo to getting married to the Minister for Finance, Chief Okonji, assumed to be a money bag, and living in luxury as barely literate” (Feghabo 48). There are discriminations among women of color based on the education as exemplified in the case of Olanna and Kainene and Odenigbo’s rural mother. In the interactions of educated Olanna and Kainene with the uneducated women, the latter are put in a position of disadvantage. Hence, the feminists’ assumption is validated in Adichie’s narrative through the portrayal of the disadvantaged state of the uneducated women during the Biafran war. Olanna meets an elderly illiterate woman who has been to the airport to welcome her son. Despite her upbringing in upper middle class family, she draws close to comfort the elderly woman. She expresses sisterhood for the uneducated woman. This shows that all women of color do not discriminate with other women based on their class and education.

Olanna’s education makes her privileged over the uneducated female characters in the novel. She is visionary as she can look beyond the war and organizes free school classes for the children in the rural area. The classes are her “noble win the war effort” (432). Besides, Olanna keeps her busy in the business of teaching the children at the camp set up as a war refugee camp by Kainene. According to Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, Womanist theory aims “to establish healthy relationships among people, despite ethnic, geographical, educational, gender, ethical, class, religious, military, and political differences” (123). In the similar line of argument, Mary Kolawole opines, womanism is the totality of feminine self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion in positive cultural ways” (24). My reading of *Half of a Yellow Sun* demonstrates that the novel depicts women which provide essential survival service to the refugees of the Biafran war. Woman characters in the novel are primarily as teachers, farmers, traders, civil defenders

and care givers. They are depicted as true war heroes. For the novelist as she reveals in her interview:

I believe that the true war heroes are the ones about whom nobody writes books, and especially the Biafran women who showed remarkable bravery in keeping families together. I think the reason that the ordinary person's story is more engaging is that it is in those lives that we see the real effects of the war—the indignity of starvation, the struggle to hold on to their humanity. (Plaias 76)

Adichie privileges women's story based on their experiences and struggles during the crisis including Biafran war. Woman characters like Olanna, Kainene, Mrs. Maduako, and Mrs Muokelu represent women who endeavor to ensure the survival of the succeeding generation. Their roles challenge the traditional representations of the women as docile, submissive, and weak. Instead of going abroad, Olanna and Kainene engage in serving the war stricken people. They play the roles of mothers and women of the new nation (194). Their contributions are fictionally revitalized in the novel. Both sisters Olanna and Kainene are committed to staying in Biafra and continually helping the people by sacrificing their momentary pleasure. Critics including Onukaogu and Onyerionwu consider the action of Olanna and Kainene to ensure the survival of the war refugees basically of children during the war. For these critics, the "weaker characters would have jumped at the opportunity to leave the embattled enclave" (206). But because of their strong commitment, Olanna and Kainene do not go abroad with their parents. Instead, they serve the helpless and thus prove their heroism. Olanana teaches young Biafrans about the new nation, the national anthem and the flag so that they can be patriotic and contributive citizens of Biafra. The narrator highlights Olanna's mental health as well that she is genuinely intelligent. The novel reads, "I hope you've thought about coming to join us at the ministry, Olanna. We need first-

class brains like yours,' Chief Okonji said" (30). Olanna's brain is judged as the first class which can become an epitome for every Biafran as asserted by Chief Okonji.

For Plaias, "The women Adichie writes about are most resilient and fight their daily battles by playing multiple roles, which show the arbitrariness of such gender roles, and by extension the women's capability to perform them" (76). Common rural women though do not have much to donate provide yams, plantains and fruits to the soldiers. They contribute to the survival of the soldiers fighting for the new nation. The narrator underscores such generosity of women, "There is a group of women at the barracks every other day, from all sorts of backwater villages, bringing yams and plantains and fruits to the soldiers. These are people who have nothing themselves" (187-188). Such women play instrumental roles in ensuring the survival of the new nation.

The woman should be more cautious and articulate in life's affairs. The blame for the woes of the woman is rather heaped on nature than the man. In such situation, the actions of the woman appear to strip her of virtue. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the callousness of the woman is depicted in Odenigbo's mother. The novelist employs a twist as the woman turns the allegation of witchcraft on Olanna, "they say you did not suck your mother's breasts.' Master's mother turned to look at Olanna. 'Please go back and tell those who sent you that you did not find my son. Tell your fellow witches that you did not see him" (96-97). Hence the act that Odenigbo's mother shows "aligns with certain myths which reveal Ugwu's acquaintance with the Igbo oral tradition" (David 358). The fictional narrative goes:

Ugwu stopped. He knew many stories of people who had used medicine from the dibia: the childless first wife who tied up the second wife's womb, the woman who made a neighbour's prosperous son go mad, the man who killed his brother because of a land

quarrel. Perhaps, Master's mother would tie up Olanna's womb or cripple her or, most frightening of all kill her. (98)

Odenigbo's mother chooses the path to accomplishing her designs that is altogether despicable. She drugs her son, Odenigbo and makes him impregnate the girl she herself has chosen to take Olanna's place. She has internalized the principles of patriarchy and she is so traditional that she cannot detach herself from the domination of male-domination. Overall, she prepares her son to overrule women including Olanna. She does not like Olanna because the latter can question the imposition of patriarchy; she can advocate for her rights in particular and the rights of women in general. Odenigbo's mother cannot stand the boldness and intelligence of Olanna.

The image of women is satirized in the novel. The Black woman's hair palaver which resonates appears to have sprung curiosity. The instance gives this indication, ". . . and then the wind blew the woman's wig off her head. She was bald. They used hot combs to straighten their hair . . . because they wanted to look like white people (19). The duality of the implication on the baldness results from the desire for unwholesome imitation. As a pattern in seeking the attention of men for relationships is even among the truly rural girls. This is portrayed in Nmesinachi who is said to shave and irregularly pencil her eyelid. And, Arize who is desperate to marry, "I want a husband today and tomorrow, oh! My mates have all left me and gone to husbands' houses" (41). The view of enslavement, in the African woman's predicament as sex worker, is seen from Odenigbo's perspective, exemplifying the ends which the White man is said to seek here, "You know the Europeans took out the insides of an African woman and then stuffed and of expatriate sexual relationship with scathing bitterness, what the novel presents as "comic caricature" (236), is explicated, "But this was expatriate life. All they did, as far as she was concerned, was have sex with one another's wives and husbands, illicit coupling" (237).

The novelist subverts the role of both man and woman. The myth, ‘What a man can do, a woman can do better’, calls the attention to the physiology and physiognomy of the woman. The writer portrays some of the women who in their inclination to upholding this myth are enmeshed in such a complex form of contradiction as subverts it. Miss Adebayo’s attitude gives the early indication of the narrator’s consciousness of the ‘What a man can do . . .’ myth, for which she is frequently undervalued. Many of these are seen in the manner of her affront with Odenigbo. Similarly, Ugwu rejects Miss Adebayo’s offer of a life from the market back home as he does not like the measure of her female assertiveness, “. . . but he thanked her and said he still had many things left to buy and would take a taxi, although he had finished shopping. He did not want to ride in her car, did not like how her voice rose above master’s in the living room, challenging and arguing” (19). Kainene’s interest in managing her father’s business also challenges the assumption of only man being capable of doing business and succeeding the family.

Kainene is portrayed as being “determined to make her father’s factories grow, to do better than he had done. In the evenings, visitors—company people negotiating deals, government people negotiating bribes, factory people negotiating jobs . . .”(78). The ironical outcome of her managerial success is apparent in bribery and nepotism that becomes the trigger to her own enterprise. Kainene smokes and has an affair with Richard, the expatriate. Her portrayal reverses the depiction of the traditional women. Whatever she does is not acceptable in patriarchy.

In the same line of argument, the character of Kainene is so bold and intelligent that she faces every situation in the world of business properly and decisively. She does not allow anyone to undervalue and underrate her. Her stature as a business successor of her father convinces every associate. The narrator describes her personality:

The ten per cent is standard, so extras always help. The other bidders probably don't have a beautiful daughter'. Kainene dragged the word out until it sounded cloying, sticky: beau-ti-ful. She was flipping through the coy of Lagos Life, her silk robe tied tightly around her skinny waist. 'The benefit of being the ugly daughter is that nobody uses you as sex bait.' (35)

Hence, the position of Kainene is instrumental. Her father is one of the bidders and she is a beautiful daughter. Therefore, he can benefit from her beauty in winning the bidding. The implication of this assertion is that women can only subordinate the men in achieving the success although the familial status of Kainene reverses the traditional and societal expectation and imagination about women in the Nigerian society. The portrayal of Kainene challenges this patriarchal notion that women are endowed with beauty only. In fact, Kainene is intelligent and educated. She can make decisions on her own. She is capable of leading her father's factory alone without any leadership of men.

Not only Kainene is powerful and bold. Even her sister, Olanna surpasses the traditional image of women as depicted in the novel. She is critical of her lover's revolutionary spirit. She does not take men's intelligence and scholarship for granted. She questions that. Her relationship with Odenigbo is intimate as they have been in relationship for long time. She suspects his scholarship. The narrative goes:

Olanna smiled *Revolutionary lover*. The things Kainene could say with a straight face! 'I'll introduce them,' she said. She had never liked any of Kainene's boyfriends and never liked that Kainene dated so many white men in England. Their thinly veiled condescension, their false validations irritated her. Yet she had not reacted in the same way to Richard Churchill when Kainene brought him to dinner. (36)

Olanna is critical of both Odenigbo and Kainene's boyfriends. She does not like any of them as she doubts their sincerity. However, she employs different parameters in the case of Richard, the white boyfriend of Kainene. It shows that she is not rigid and prejudiced towards white race. She is dynamic and intelligent that she can differentiate between right and wrong. Accordingly, she assesses people's personality. Her reactions to Richard Churchill at dinner are positive and unbiased. Her intelligence can be supported with her master's degree from a foreign university. The education has broadened her horizon of human behaviors and she is used to diversity. Her familiarity with the Western culture helps her to accommodate differences and welcome the foreigners in her family. The novel reads, "Our Olanna has just finished her master's degree. Master's degree at London University! It is not easy!" Uncle Mbaezi said proudly" (40). Uncle Mbaezi expresses his pride in her graduation from one of the prestigious universities of the world because of two reasons. The first people of color in Nigeria can hardly afford the world class education. So if anyone from the nation does, it becomes the issue of pride for them. The second Olanna is a woman from a country wherein women are generally deprived of higher education. The education of Olanna from the University of London challenges the concept that education should be confined to men. Many woman characters that represent rural women of the Igbo community are illiterate. Olanna's education uplifts her social status and helps her to release oneself from the suppression and domination.

Despite her boldness and intelligence, Olanna gets frightened by the personality of Odenigbo. The reason might be the male-domination and the societal support to the men rather than women including Olanna. Even education and economy of women cannot help to surpass the hegemony of men in their conjugal relations. Olanna does not feel to be in peace in the presence of Odenigbo. Rather she seeks his absence for doing something independently. The narrative

goes, “‘Why don’t you come with me, nkem? It’s only for a week.’ Olanna said no; she wanted the chance to settle down when he was not there, to make peace with her fears in his absence. The first thing she did after he left was to throw away the red and white plastic flowers on the centre table” (47). Even within the household, Olanna does not feel free when Odenigbo accompanies her. She wants Odenigbo to release her psychologically so that she can manage the house and can breathe into fresh air independently. His dominant presence in the residence irritates Olanna. He does not allow anyone to express their intelligence and make decisions on their own. This is why, Olanna settles down when he is not there. Although Olanna is not inferior to Odenigbo in terms of education, and finance, she tolerates his domination in Nigerian society. She is short of equality and freedom in the private life as reflected in the excerpt.

Olanna and her boy friend Odenigbo are opposite in nature. They share bed but are not emotionally connected to each other in a watertight way. Olanna does not want to get married because she predicts oppression and domination of the male partner in the conjugal bond. Therefore, she denies marrying him although she continues being in intimate relationship with him. In contrary to this, Odenigbo, who confines himself to the study room for hours, asks Olanna every time they are in the bed for marriage. This binary proposition and desire for marriage shows the lack of trust in their relationship. The novel reads:

Still, when Olanna lay in bed with Odenigbo, legs intertwined, it would strike her how her life in Nsukka felt like being immersed in a mesh of soft feathers, even on the days when Odenigbo locked himself in the study for hours. Each time he suggested they get married, she said no. they were too happy, precariously so, and she wanted to guard that bond; she feared that marriage would flatten it to a prosaic partnership. (52)

Olanna's suspicion is not about their destruction of their intimate relationship but she is much awake about her personal freedom that she is about to lose when she gets married to him. Under this fear, she avoids the subject of marriage with Odenigbo. She prefers to continue being in intimate relationship with opposite partners without marriage. For her, marriage is the institution that confines female partners to the households, whereas the same institution empowers the male partner to overrule the woman in patriarchy. Indeed, the marriage is the design of patriarchy to perpetuate the male-domination through this institution.

Similarly, Olanna's sister, Kainene has emboldened her confidence. She is induced with a lot of confidence that she does not follow the traditional patterns of society wherein a woman stays docile and low-confident. The portrayal of her personality challenges the patriarchal imagination about the dress code and mannerism of women. Most importantly, the girls from the elite families are expected to be demure. In case of Kainene, the image is not compatible. The text reads:

He didn't think Kainene was some wealthy Nigerian's daughter because she had none of the cultivated demureness. She seemed more like a mistress: her brazenly red lipsticks, her tight dress, her smoking. But then she didn't smile in that plastic way the mistresses did. She didn't even have the generic prettiness that made him inclined to believe the rumour that Nigerian politicians swapped mistresses . . . "This is Kainene Ozobia, Chief Ozobia's daughter. Kainene's just got her master's from London. (57)

Although Kainene is the daughter of a wealthy Nigerian, Chief Ozobia who owns factories and a lot of other properties, she does not stay obliged to abide the normative image of the girls from the rich families in Nigeria. Therefore, the man doubts her high class upbringing. She is more carefree and frank than her sister Olanna. She smiles originally and does what she likes. She

lives full-fledged life without showing any concerns towards the societal reactions and responses. Her boldness and intelligence reflect in both her presentation and personality.

However, the representation of female characters as perceived in patriarchy indicates that women are the products and the men are consumers who can exploit the former for their pleasure. Olanna speaks very bluntly and says, “My sister and I are meat. We are here so that suitable bachelors will make the kill” (59). In the male-dominated society, the status of women regardless of their ethnicity, race, class and education is low in comparison to that of men. The men are the most sought after people and they seem to be more powerful and intelligent. They have multiple choices, whereas their counterparts lack choices. ‘My sister and I are meat’ implies that Olanna knows the value of young women like she and Kainene, the daughters of an elite in Nigerian society graduated from prestigious universities.

Besides, patriarchy prepares a group of women to impose the dictates over other women. The normative values of the Nigerian society are imposed on young and energetic girls like Olanna and Kainene who seek to experience newness in their life in terms of societal judgment about both women and men. Nevertheless, the rural and senior women as represented by Odenigbo’s mother carry on their tradition that keeps women at the lower level and impose on the innocent girls as exemplified in the case of Olanna. The narrative goes:

Olanna stared at her. Master’s mother’s voice rose, as if Olanna’s continued silence had driven her to shouting. ‘Did you hear me? Tell them that nobody’s medicine will work on my son. He will not marry an abnormal woman, unless you kill me first. Only over my dead body!’ Master’s mother clapped her hands, then hooted and slapped her palm across her mouth so that the sound echoed. (97)

Odenigbo's mother prides in having a son who is positioned as if he is a divine figure and no girl can entice him. Her firm mindset about the position of men that she thinks is higher than women widens the gap between Olanna and Odenigbo's mother. Educated and bold women in the rural Nigeria are considered abnormal. In fact, submissive and docile girls are highly respected and their status from the perspective of traditional folks is much higher than those who do not abide by the dictates of patriarchy. Hence, Odenigbo's mother functions as an intermediary for men to carry on the patriarchal values. She has been prepared to impose the traditions over the women. She expects young girls to keep silent even if they are exploited. She has been trained in such a way that she cannot revolt. The similar level of silence on the part of Olanna and other Nigerian girls she seeks for. The conflict between Odenigbo's mother and Olanna is something personal. It is a generational and conceptual conflict. Olanna's education, boldness, and financial independence challenge the values of patriarchy. Indeed, this is the reason that Odenigbo's mother does not like Olanna. Instead, her son's conjugal life with Olanna will not be happy. Moreover, she plans to arrange a marriage of her son with a docile and submissive girl who can keep Odenigbo happier and more satisfied.

The tradition of breastfeeding continues in the Nigerian society and when a woman denies that, she is outcast and unacceptable. Odenigbo's mother doubts whether Olanna will breastfeed her children by Odenigbo. Olanna is so modern and educated that she may not breastfeed her children at the cost of her health. The first thing she is not willing to marry with Odenigbo and secondly she does not want to lead a traditional life designed by patriarchy. The narrative reads, "What woman brings another person to breastfeed her own children when she herself is alive and well? Is the normal, gbo, Amala? (98) Only those women are considered alive and normal who breastfeed their children. Otherwise, they are abnormal and desolate. Odenigbo's

mother does not want her son to get married with a girl who denies breastfeeding. Whether Ama-la is normal or not is the question because of the breastfeeding tradition compulsorily practiced in Nigerian society.

In the same line of argument, the study discloses other variables such as education and finance which empower women in general and Olanna and Kainene in particular as portrayed in the text. Their higher education is considered as a barrier to patriarchy as it cannot prevail in their lives effectively. Odenigbo's mother opines that too much education has ruined Olanna as the latter does not seem obedient and submissive to the patriarchal design. Hence, the text reads:

Too much schooling ruins a woman; everyone knows that. It gives a woman a big head and she will start to insult her husband. What kind of wife will that be? Master's mother raised one edge of her wrapper to wipe the sweat from her brow. These girls that go to university follow men around until their bodies are useless. Nobody knows if she can have children. Do you know? Does anyone know? (98)

Odenigbo's mother questions the loyalty and appropriateness of a woman as a wife who is supposed to serve both her husband and the society in general. Since Olanna is highly educated, she cannot be an apt wife for Odenigbo as she is assessed by his mother. She uses the parameters of judging a woman as set by patriarchy. She believes that too much education has ruined Olanna and therefore, she cannot be an appropriate candidate for Odenigbo. Edlyne E. Anugwom elucidates the role of education in women's life in Nigerian society. For him,

Education generally concerns itself with the imparting of knowledge in people.

Knowledge in this case can be seen as the corpus of instruction and social ethos, which hinge on the acquisition of abstract ideas, which makes for a refined mind and the acquisition of psycho-motor skills, which in turn makes for a skilled person or at least posi-

tions one in the right frame of mind to acquire the skill necessary for existence in an atomized social order. Thus, education is first and foremost a social tool that is imperative for the continued survival and growth of the human society. (128)

Olanna attains knowledge on life affairs. She understands different aspects of social life. She can scrutinize human behaviors. Because of education, Nigerian society keeps changing and the growth of human society has become viable. The impact of education in life of both Olanna and Kainene remains ironclad and reflects on the interpersonal relationship. Olanna's education irritates Odenigbo's mother as the latter takes it as a barrier to her role as a good wife and a mother she is likely to play after getting married with Odenigbo. The Nigerian society grows productive because of the focus on educational system. The illiteracy and conservatism can be realized in the behaviors of Anulika that she wants a baby boy from her would-be daughter-in-law. She represents the women of traditional and parochial society of Nigeria that prioritizes a particular sex of babies. She seeks to respond to the social expectations from a married woman by bearing a baby boy. The narrative reads, "I want to have a baby boy first, because it will place my feet firmly in Onyeka's house," Anulika said. . . 'You know, Onunna from Ezeugwu's compound had a baby girl first, and her husband's people will not do that to me, they don't dare, but I want to have a boy first anyway', Anulika said" (119). The discriminations based on gender pervade in the rural Nigeria as portrayed in the novel. Adichie is critical of this belief that giving the birth of a baby boy first becomes the matter of pride for both the mother and the family as exemplified in the case of Anulika who is eager to give the birth of a baby boy at her first delivery. The moment can become something significant for the husband of the person who bears the male baby first. Anulika's case represents the expectations and values given to the male baby in rural society of Nigeria.

Nigerian writers, male and female including Adichie tend to genderise their characters by limiting their creation to the dictates of the time in which they wrote. Besides, women characters are made to speak and act in conformity with the constraints of their social spaces as Odenigbo's mother and Anulika. Space, therefore, becomes an instrument used by writers to justify gender hierarchy in their literary works. The centrality of space in gendered representations of women is explained by West-Pavlov as follows:

[S]pace as a paradigm of intelligent enquiry is critical here because to situate a cultural artefact in space is to bring it down to earth, to re-orient reflections towards questions of contexts of materiality, of relationship, of causality and interaction. Meaning is thus a function of the space in which it emerges. Truth and falsehood are replaced by space as a matrix of meaning. (23)

The concepts of truth and falsehood are often the instruments used by female Nigerian writers particularly by Adichie in their attempt to re-write the canon of Nigerian literature, to restructure women in literature from women's perspectives, to condemn the one-dimensional images of women pervasive in male writing, and to re-imagine women as intricate human beings with numerous identities. Adichie's even in *Purple Hibiscus* dynamic female characters such as Kambili, Mama and Auntie Ifeoma are presented in such a way that they can enforce social transformation within the fictional world even if it is just by changing characters' attitudes about African belief systems.

As the study employs Womanism to analyze *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the relevance of the perspective reflects in the inclusion of gender as portrayed in the novel by the lead Nigerian female writer, Adichie who is influenced by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi who in her article "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English" critiques

the trajectory of African-American womanism posited by Alice Walker and argues that Walker's womanist views are parochial because of their embodiment of racial separatism and lack of tolerance for men. She then proposes an African womanism which is gender inclusive in that it positions men as partners in the multiple struggles African women face, including struggles against colonialism, militarism and authoritarianism. In this way, Nigerian women redefine feminism from within their specific cultural spaces and in their writing the convergence of multiple temporalities as they offer different perspectives on gender relations in Nigeria. The present status of the representation of women in Nigerian literature seems to suggest that with the passage of time comes real social transformation in not only male writer's thinking about women but also in their recreation of women in fictional writing.

Adichie has emboldened her female characters whether they lead the plot or not. Even minor characters in the novel look bold and confident. They safeguard their prestige and existence by challenging male counterparts. Olanna and Kainene are the lead characters. The narrator highlights the prominent personality of other characters as well as mentioned, "Only the thing Olanna had not expected was the raised voice of Aunty Ifeka's sister, Mama Dozie. A fierce woman, she was said to have beat up Papa Dozie once, after he left their sick child and went off to visit his mistress" (192). Although Olanna cannot stand Mama Dozie's raised voice, she is a bold woman who does not compromise with injustice caused by her husband, Papa Dozie. When she finds him reckless about the child and herself, she beats him. The novelist conveys a strong message through the representation of bold and just women in the contemporary society of Nigeria that they do not need to accept the male-domination as propelled by patriarchy. Rather they should combat the obstacles for dignified living. Even if Odenigbo's mother is illiterate village woman, she is conscious about her social status. She cannot compromise with the insult and

domination done by both men and women. When Olanna uses English as a language of conversation with the people around, the mother doubts as presented in the novel, “Master’s mother was looking at them suspiciously, as if she was sure that Olanna had just insulted her in English” (196). Although she does not understand English, she suspects Olanna. She is critical and analytical.

The portrayal of Odenigbo’s mother implies that Adichie has constructed almost all female characters that are mindful and intelligent. Therefore, they seek respect and recognition when interacting with both men and women in the fictional world. The excerpt further indicates that Olanna uses English as the language of power and segregate the uneducated women from the rural Nigeria. The impact of Western education as reflected in her behavior divides the women of color. Although Olanna is not white, she has a superiority complex in some respects. Therefore, she endeavors to take advantage on the innocence of the rural Nigerian women that represent the Biafran society.

The novelist highlights malpractices, innocence and conflicts extant in the Nigerian society. Her minor female characters are submissive and they carry on traditional practices and superstitions which the major female characters primarily Olanna and Kainene discard. They do not seem affected by the traditional norms and values. The narrative reads:

It may be, though that the medicine worked on women and Mama would have to protect herself and Amala to make sure that only Olanna died or became barren or went mad.

Perhaps Mama was performing the preliminary protections now that Olanna was in London and would bury the medicine in the yard to keep it potent until Olanna came back.

(214)

The conflict between Odenigbo's mother and Olanna becomes so intense that neither of them feels comfortable with each other. On the one hand, Mama uses medicine in order to make Olanna barren. On the other hand, Olanna insults and discards the mother. They are portrayed as if they represent old and new generations of Nigerian women who participate in the Biafran war. The tussle between them is grounded on the differences of perspectives to look at the world. Adichie endeavors to fictionalize the realistic picture of Nigeria by depicting both educated and uneducated women who differ from each other because of their socialization and generation gap. The radical feminists argue that women's subordination is not rooted in relations of production but in specific relations of reproduction and sexuality. They contend that housework can be looked at as reproducing and not producing labour power. Firestone, a radical feminist argued that 'unlike economic class, sex-class sprang directly from biological reality: men and women were created different, not equal' (Firestone 72). In this regard, Adichie underscores the need of women in patriarchy as expected by men for reproduction rather than for other causes. The narrative goes:

'Sorry,' Odenigbo said, when he got in. he did not say anything about what he and his mother had talked about until they were driving past the campus gates in Nsukka, an hour later. 'Mama doesn't want to keep the baby.'

'She doesn't want to keep the baby?'

'No.' (250)

Odenigbo's mother is eager and ready to accept a baby boy if Olanna can bear. She treats Olanna not as a human being but a reproductive machine for children. When a woman fails to bear children, she is treated a barren land and is discarded socially. Even when she bears a baby, it should be a boy rather than a girl. Otherwise, the society does not accept both the baby and the mother.

Adichie presents Amala who bears a baby girl that is not accepted as it is beyond the expectation of the family of the man. I agree with the perspective of the radical feminists that they state that women are married by men for the reproductive purpose. Therefore, the humane treatment cannot be expected.

The position of the radical feminists is criticized for putting too much emphasis on reproduction and sexuality. It gives the impression that women are subordinated mainly because of their role of giving birth to children. The liberal feminists state that the subordination of women goes beyond reproduction. They point out that it is curious that feminists should yield to such unconcealed biological determinism (Jackson 9). Patriarchy is a set of social relations that has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them in turn to dominate women. The material base of patriarchy is men's control over women labor power. That control is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality. Men exercise their control in receiving personal service work from women, in not having to do housework or rear children, in having access to women's bodies for sex, and in feeling powerful and being powerful. Odenigbo represents men and how men subjugate women for their vested interest is the prime focus of the study. The narrative goes, "Odenigbo has done what all men do and has inserted his penis in the first hole he could find when you were away. Does that mean somebody died?" (226). Odenigbo is a typical man who satisfies his sexual urges by penetrating his penis in the hole available. He lacks emotional attachment and sincerity with a woman is almost impossible as he is self-centered. He doesn't care whether the woman dies or remains alive. In all situations, he is concerned about his desire and pleasure. Such exploitation of women continues in

patriarchy as exemplified in the case of Odenigbo and Olanna. Although they are intimate friends, there is lack of trust. Odenigbo is dishonest in the relationship.

The crucial elements of patriarchy as experienced are heterosexual marriage, female child rearing and house work, women's economic dependence on men reinforced by arrangements in the labour market, the state, the numerous institutions based on social relations among men—clubs, sports, unions, professions, universities, churches, corporations and armies (Hartman 97). Olanna and Kainene seem economically independent. However, they cannot release themselves from the paternal legacy of their father. Although they do not depend on the other men excluding their father, they cannot breathe in fresh and independent air because of their emotional attachment with Odenigbo and Richard. They are sexually attracted towards them. Olanna's inclination towards Odenigbo and Kainene's sensual interest in Richard show their dependency on men as established by patriarchy. The narrative reads, "We are fine," Olanna said. Her lips had a slight glister of pink gloss. Richard did not miss her use of the plural. He was not sure if she meant herself and the child, or herself and Odenigbo, or perhaps *we* was meant to suggest that she had made peace with what had happened between them and what it had done to her relationship with Kainene" (169). The relationship between Richard and Kainene is complex in the sense that they talk about the peace as ensured when both Richard and Kainene are together. Their attachment exemplifies the awkward relations as the emotional and sensual intimacy is not expected between women of color and white men. Adichie creates such possibility that can shock people of orthodox community.

Gender is the socially and culturally constructed roles for men and women. For example, gender roles of men as owners of property, decision makers and heads of household are socially, historically and culturally constructed and have nothing to do with biological differences. The

father of Olanna and Kainene and Odenigbo are the owners of huge property. Kainene and Olanna can only lead the legacy but are not portrayed as the owners of the property. Their depiction demonstrates that their identity is in the association with men first their father and second their boyfriends Odenigbo and Richard. They do not have their social identity in isolation. Both men and women are sexually equal but socialization has divided them into inferiors and superiors, subordinated and dominant groups. Sex refers to the biological differences between male and female. For instance, the adult female has breast that can secrete milk to feed a baby but the adult male does not have. Gender roles differ from place to place and change with time. But sex roles are naturally fixed (Alamveabee 5). The impact of socialization that creates gender differences can be seen in the societal positions of Olanna and Kainene. The relations between Odenigbo and Olanna and between Richard and Kainene are based on gender relations.

Gender relations are part of social relations that refer to the ways in which the social categories of men and women, male and female, relate over the whole range of social organization, not just to interactions between individual men and women in the sphere of personal relationships, or in terms of biological reproduction. Whatever the women characters do in the fictional world is guided by the principles of patriarchy. In all aspects of social activity, including access to resources for production, rewards or remuneration for work, distribution of consumption, income or goods, exercise of authority and power, and participation in cultural, political and religious activity, gender is important in establishing people's behavior and the outcome of any social interaction. The narrator states, "She looked impressed, though, when Ugwu told her that he would be living in the Boys' Quarters. It was like being given his own house, separate, all to himself" (92). The separation between boys and girls and even their quarters are separate because of gender behaviors. Both men and women are expected in the traditional set-up of Nigeri-

an society to stay separate. Accordingly, they reside. They cannot go beyond the dictates of society. Their behaviors should be compatible and appropriate in the line of the social values and assumptions.

The novelist presents how patriarchy overrules social norms and values of the people in Nigerian society by fictionalizing the world of humanity. Those who do not stay obliged to the laws, get boycotted and outcast as well. Not only individuals but institutions also guide people to adapt to the social behaviors set as standards for both men and women. Institutions between individual men and women, gender relations describe the social meaning of being male and female, and thus what is considered appropriate behavior or activity for men and women (Pearson 20). Women characters are just treated as the instruments for men as they exploit them for sensual pleasure. They lack loyalty as exemplified in the case of Odenigbo who has bought a house for his mistress outside marriage. The narrative goes:

It's disrespectful that you have a relationship with this woman and that you have bought her a house where my mother's friends live, Olanna said. 'You go there from work and your driver parks outside and you don't seem to care that people see you. It's a slap to my mother's face.

Her father's eyes were downcast now, the eyes of a man groping in his mind. (218)

Odenigbo and Olanna are intimate. However, their relationship lacks sincerity. Odenigbo is a highly educated person who is expected to stay faithful to women he loves. In fact, the situation is juxtaposed as he inclines towards both Olanna and a woman outside for whom he has just bought a house. It implies that men for their sensual pleasure manage resources to keep women for sexual pleasure as Odenigbo does. In capitalism, men use their resources to exploit women's body for lust. To Mamdani, incidence of poverty is more rampant among the female-gender in

Africa because of discrimination in educational opportunities. On the Gender-related Development Index (GDI), Nigeria ranks a disparaging 123rd position with the Estimated Earned Income for female as low as US \$614 and the male, US \$1,495 (UNDP 5).

Lack of education has been a strong visible barrier to female participation in the formal sector. The social pressures on females such as early marriages, and other extraneous factors as well as consideration of female education as secondary to that of boys and certain inhibitive religious practices in some parts of Nigeria are the major causes of the high illiteracy rate amongst women. The uneducated women in Nigeria like women who have intimate relationship with Odenigbo and Richard become victims at the hands of men due to lack of awareness and economic resources. The rural women as portrayed in the novel exemplify the rift extant between men and women in the Nigerian society. Women in Nigeria are represented as marginalized section of society. Society recognizes the value of women as voters and domestic contributors. However, their voices are not heard. Besides, they are considered as incapable of governing, and taking public responsibilities. They are denied decision-making right in both private and public spheres.

The women like Olanna and Kainene are not accepted as the leaders although they are highly competent and educated. They are courageous and intelligent. When they seek to participate in the public space for positions as Kainene who is prepared to succeed her father by operating the factory, the society hesitates to accept her. Olanna's love for Odenigbo is pure and sincere. She even dreams of having Odenigbo's companionship. She cannot stay away from him as she has been hypnotized. The text reads:

Olanna had a happy dream. She did not remember what it was about but she remembered that it had been happy, and so she woke up warming herself with the thought that she

could still have a happy dream. She wished Odenigbo had not gone to work so she could tell him about it and trace his gently indulgent smile as he listened, the smile that said he did not need to agree with her to believe her. (321)

Odenigbo is not romantic and frivolous. Although Olanna cannot enjoy his companionship, she seeks him for happiness. She feels intimate to her. “He is the greatest living mathematician, the greatest,’ he said” (100). In fact, mathematicians are serious and calculative. They philosophize even minor things. Discrimination against women in Nigerian society is manifested in all spheres of human relations. It pervades in different spheres including socio-cultural, economic, religious, and political. The husband’s opinion is always supreme on almost every issue in patriarchy. She has to even go with the choice of children’s sex when planning for childbirth. They do not feel free and powerful in undertaking social responsibilities on their own.

Mostly women as portrayed in the novel are supposed to stay back home to take care of the house and children, whereas men go out to work to provide for the family. Even women characters have internalized this notion that they seek to hand over this culture to the next generation. This power of patriarchy can be seen in the interpersonal relationship of Olanna and Odenigbo’s mother. “You can see that my mother doesn’t know what she’s doing. She’s just a village woman. She’s trying to make her way in a new world with skills that are better suited for the old one.’ Odenigbo got up and moved closer to take her in his arms, but Olanna turned and walked into the kitchen” as mentioned in the text (101). Odenigbo just plays with Olanna emotionally and wants to keep her in illusion of being a loving man. Although his mother cannot stand Olanna, he advocates that she is alright as she has been doing based on the old societal structure. He asks Olanna to get sympathetic with the traditional mindset of his mother. His tricks to fool Olanna are tactful and successfully on Olanna. She cannot do anything except going to the kitch-

en as she moves to when Odenigbo idealizes the situation. Again he follows her to console her if she has been hurt with his words. Odenigbo is sure that he can baffle her with his tricks.

Richard observes traditions and he believes that marriage is the best institution in which he can satisfy his needs regularly. Therefore, he likes to marry Kainene although she does not have any plan for marriage. He knows that he is not ethical and loyal in relationship with her. The narrator reflects on his desire for marriage:

He would ask her to marry him when he returned to Port Harcourt. She would first say something like, ‘A white man and no money to speak of. My parents will be scandalized. ‘But she would say yes. He knew she would say yes. It was something about her lately, a mellowing, a softening from which this note had come. He was not sure if she had forgiven him for the incident with Olanna—they had never talked about it—but this note, this new openness, meant that she was ready to move forwards. (151)

Of course, race can create scandals in the Nigerian society. Almost every Nigerian remembers and knows that the white man can exploit their resources including women. In the traditional set-up of the Nigerian society, women are considered commodities for consumption. Kainene may not get ready for marriage provided that she represents the current generation of Nigerian women. Besides, Richard has had sexual relationship with Olanna, her own sister that Kainene knows and therefore, she cannot forget his insincerity and deception. Kainene is portrayed bold and frank. She hardly lives with the memories of the past. Rather she copes with the present and moves forward for better future. Kainene’s personality challenges the traditional image of women in Nigerian society. Despite different affairs of Kainene and Olanna with Richard and Odenigbo, they represent bold and decisive women of the modern Nigeria who do not accept injustice

and unfairness. They are critical and question different issues. They work as the mouthpiece of Adichie who presents the Nigerian society after the Biafran war. The novel reads:

‘Can you believe who is responsible for that small girl Urenwa’s pregnancy? Kainene asked, and Ugwu almost did not recognize her. Her eyes bulged out of her angular face, filled with rage and tears. ‘Can you believe it is Father Marcel?’

Olanna stood up. ‘*Gini?* What are you saying?’

‘Apparently I’ve been blind; she’s not the only one,’ Kainene said.

‘He fucks most of them before he gives them the crayfish that I slave to get here!’ (398)

The excerpt demonstrates the true face of the religious leaders like Father Marcel who are hypocritical as they are lustful but pretend to be kind and spiritual. Both Kainene and Olanna stand against such a social evil so that innocent and helpless girls including Urenwa can have justice and can lead their lives freely. The depiction of Kainene and Olanna challenges the traditional notion about women that they are docile and submissive. Instead both of the sisters fight for rights of the women. Olanna excels in interpersonal communications with the authorities for peace and justice in society. She interacts as presented in the text:

Olanna looked at him and then called, ‘Officer!’

The officer had just waved a car on. He turned. ‘What is it?’

‘You had better tell your boy here that it will be better for him not to even think about touching me,’ Olanna said.

Ugwu was behind her, and she sensed his intake of breath, his panic at her boldness. But the officer was laughing; he looked both surprised and impressed. ‘Nobody will touch you,’ he said. ‘My boys are well trained. We are not like those dirty rebels you people called an army.’ (417)

Although Olanna's parents are shallow and greedy, she has a strong character and sense of morality. She has studied sociology in London. Her education reflects in this conversation with the officer that she is fearless and logical. Her juxtaposed character Ugwu is frightened when Olanna threatens the officer. He lives in panic and fear. Her boldness baffles him. She undertakes the situation so smartly. She leads a group of boys who work for social welfare during the Biafran war. She is a fluid and dynamic woman in both personal and public affairs. The relationship between Ugwu and Olanna is humorous in the sense that he just follows her without any questions. He is impressed with her, but cannot express his feelings for her. He just enjoys being with her wherever she goes. The narrative reads:

Ugwu was in the kitchen with Olanna, peeling onions, watching the movement of Olanna's shoulder as she stirred the soup on the stove. Onions made him feel cleaned up, as if the tears they drew from him took away impurities. He could hear Baby's high voice in the living room, playing with Master. He did not want either of them to come into the kitchen now. They would destroy the magic he felt, the sweet sting of onions in his eyes, the glow of Olanna's skin. (177)

Ugwu does not want anybody including Odenigbo to come in the kitchen where Olanna is present. He is so impressed with her that he feels the glow of Olanna's skin. Ugwu feels not just involved in, but responsible for Olanna's happiness. As she and Odenigbo dance outside, circled by clapping friends, he thinks they belong to him. It shows his loyalty towards them. They dance as if they are the married couple. Overall, Ugwu feels secure and fine under their leadership (202). The strength in their relationship is as perceived by the loyal Ugwu who is ready to do everything for their sake. Almost everybody accepts that Olanna leads the generation. She is a

bold and intelligent person. She represents the generation, whereas Odenigbo leads the men of the contemporary Nigeria. The novel reads:

‘Odenigbo would have said, “The voice of a generation!” Olanna said.

‘What would you say?’

“The voice of a man.’

Okeoma smiled shyly, and she remembered how Odenigbo teased her about his being secretly infatuated with her. (325)

Although Olanna says so many things humorously, she understands that Odenigbo has always been critical of her personality. Perhaps he cannot tolerate her leadership because of her boldness and smartness. She is quite popular and impresses people easily with her prudence. Other parents are different. They look at Olanna, “her beautiful face, her undemanding fees, and her perfect English, with awe-filled respect” (292). She is marvelously commendable as an iconic figure among the women characters portrayed to exemplify both boldness and intelligence. Her depiction challenges the traditional image of Nigerian society. This also means that the current generation of women in Nigeria cannot compromise with injustice and domination of men. Their education and financial independence are the strong means to lead prestigious lives.

Chapter IV

Liberation from Traditional Values

The study has raised the issue of women who seek for emancipation in the Nigerian society. The female chief characters Olanna and Kainene stand for women of the current generation that pursue changes in the social values and parameters to judge women in general and the educated women in particular. The study has covered two kinds of female characters traditional and modern. Odenigbo's mother, a rural uneducated woman belongs to the traditional Nigeria on the one hand and Olanna and Kainene represent the modern generation on the other. By presenting these opposite nature of female characters, Adichie has implanted the seed for sociological

change and development in the postwar situation of Nigeria. The study has employed Womanism as a theoretical tool to analyze Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Womanism is for African women; feminism is for the women in Western countries. Womanist theorists raise the issue of women of color whose socio-economic situations are different from those of the American and European. They advocate that the case of African women should be studied through the lens of their relationship with the men in their context.

Since Adichie herself is a Womanist theorist, she has portrayed women of color in order to show that they are dynamic and seek for changes in life. They are not racist as well. By carving the picture of the beautiful relationship between Kainene and Richard, a white man, the writer has justified that women in Nigerian society are open to welcoming people regardless of color and ethnicity. Similarly, the women as represented by Odenigbo's mother who seek to stay attached with their traditional values always want their children to get married with docile and submissive girls so that their marital life can continue in the old pattern.

The study has examined the female struggles for freedom from African feminist perspectives to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Womanism—a branch of African feminism developed by Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Mary Modupe Kolawole who describe womanism as a perspective of African feminism has resulted in exploring the characters Olanna and Kainene who have forthright attitude and outgoing personalities which are not acceptable in the rural Nigerian society.

Womanism has resulted from critiques of liberal feminism as excluding the narratives and experiences of women of color, especially black women as exemplified in the case of Adichie's female protagonists including Kainene, Mama and Olanna who suffer the repercussions of the Nigerian Civil War demonstrates the trials and tribulations of African women in

general and Nigerian women of the 21st century—the epoch that idealizes women as independent human beings and finally manage to cope with the situation boldly.

Kainene, Mama and Olanna represent the future of Nigeria who can challenge and contest the male domination in the indigenous African society. Since they are educated and financially independent, they seek equal partnership in both private and public spheres and to a large extent they achieve that as well. However, they experience discriminations based on gender differences. Their counterparts Odenigbo and Richard are obliged to meeting the parameters set by Olanna and Kainene respectively for intimate relationship. The male lead characters though value Olanna's opinions they do not always stay detached from the norms and values of patriarchy as Odenigbo takes Olanna as his subordinate.

Adichie's female characters including Kainene, and Olanna are bold and prudent. They can lead the public institutions and accordingly they move forward as well. Kainene has decided to run her father's factory on her own. This decision implies that women characters of the current generation are responsible and prefer to stay accountable in the public life. The gender differences pervasive in the Nigerian society have forced Olanna and Kainene to feel vulnerable in both private and public spheres. Although they are assertive and self-reliant, their progress is hindered by the intervention of the traditional norms and values as undertaken by Odenigbo's mother. The study shows that most of the women as portrayed in the text are still illiterate and unaware about their rights. They are ignorant and depend on male members.

The study has explored the societal factors such as economy, education, culture, marriage, and lifestyle that are the byproducts of societal values and norms. The reasons for Nigerian women's failure are individualism and conservative values. The research has analyzed Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* to explore the subjugation of Nigerian women. This research has found that

the obstacles have pushed women to lose their independence by employing womanism, a branch of African feminism. The perspective on womanism by Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Mary Modupe Kolawole has been taken as the theoretical framework to discuss the issue. The secondary sources on African feminism, particularly on womanism in the connection with the major argument of the study have been used as well.

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