

Gender Construct and Domestic Violence against Women in Selected Nigerian Play Texts

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Abstract

In time past, studies on gender and domestic violence in Africa and the world at large became attached only to women while men have been presented as perpetrators, focusing on patriarchal structures such as culture and religion that relegate and victimize women. This paper, therefore, investigates the representation of domestic violence against women in Stella Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy Chested* and Barclays Anyakaroma's *Dance on his Grave*. This paper identifies some behaviour adopted by the offenders and the offended as tactics used in inflicting violence on their victims such as physical, verbal, emotional and psychological, intimidation and economic coercion. The paper adopts Ogunyemi's "womanism" as the theoretical framework. The research methods adopted are descriptive and content analyses. The finding reveals the misrepresentation of female in the different literatures that are analysed. This paper therefore suggests that women should accept the cultural realities of their gender rather than agitate for unequal gender parity that often leads to destructive

violence. In conclusion, domestic violence is universal and not women issue alone because it affects men and children as well. This paper thus recommends that there should be an establishment of desired social interaction between men and women in the society through proper communication such as literatures, media, and drama. The view of this paper is that the reduction or eradication of domestic violence against women will reduce psychological trauma and improve social productivity.

Keywords: Gender Construct, Domestic Violence, Tactics, Victim and Men.

Introduction

Gender studies have developed certain terms and concepts which are used while studying the phenomenon of gender; these concepts include: "sex" and "gender". An understanding of their meanings and implications allow us to see and connect their various aspects. Sometimes it is hard to understand exactly what is meant by the term 'gender' and how it differs from the closely related term 'sex'. Often, these two terms are used interchangeably; however, they bear different meanings as concepts.

Lamanna and Riedmann (2003, p.3) define sex as the "anatomical and psychological characteristics that signify the biological maleness and femaleness of an individual which are seen as uniform across time and space." On the other hand, Olamide (2016, p. 13) sees gender as "socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women." Invariably, gender emphasises that masculinity and femininity are products of social, cultural and psychological factors that are acquired by an individual in the process of becoming a man or woman. Many at times, it is defined as a cultural or social construction

of sex. Supporting gender as a “social construct” Utoh-Ezeajugh (2015, p. 134) sees the concept of gender “as a fluid and fleeting one that changes with time and cultural currents.” In his words, Killermam (2013, p. 2) shares same view with the others. To him, “gender construct can also be broken into three categories; gender identity, gender expression and biological sex.” According to Killermann:

These three categories are another way of breaking down gender into the different social, biological, and cultural constructions. These constructions focus on how femininity and masculinity are fluid entities and how their meaning is able to fluctuate depending on the various constraints surrounding them (Killermann, 2013, p. 2).

It can be deduced from the statement above that human attitudes are never inherent or natural rather they are socially built and internalized by people; therefore, the basic expectations by the society. However, gender expectation varies from one culture to another. These expectations by the society unequivocally linking the two genders are marriage. Lamanna and Riedmann (2011) quoted by Olamide (2016, P. 4) explains further the beliefs socially and culturally expected of a woman,

to be a helpmate, a good mother to put her children and family needs as a priority and cheering the accompaniments of her husband. On the other hand, the man should be educationally or financially buoyant, confident and self-reliant.

Hence, most African cultures view this behaviour as a prerequisite for a man and a woman. This also is in line with the tenets of the theory applicable to this study “womanism”. The society assigns to men greater dominance and influence over a society’s institutions (marriage) hence, greater dominance in all spheres of life leading to rampage and war in most homes. One of the many reasons is because despite the headship of the man at home, they fail in delivering their main call and responsibilities in the homes; rather, they relegate, sideline and violate their female counterparts either in the home and or in the society at large.

This paper establishes the fact that domestic violence in the society is a menace and universal, cutting across both sexes but the highest recorded victims mostly remain women. And, the cause of these problems in most parts of the world today is because of the rigid social construct leading to the emergence of women activists (Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, Tess Owueme, Irene Salami-Agunloye and others), philosophers (Judith Butler, Simone De Beauvoir, West Candace and Zimmerman Don), theorists (Alice Walker, Chikwenye, Ogunyemi, Acholonu, and Oyewumi) and scholars (Zulu Sofola, Ama Ata Aido, Mabel Evwierhoma, Ojediran, Oladejo) who enlighten the women folk to stand for their rights and refuse to be trampled upon by their male counterparts and not necessarily yearning for equality but that the female voices must be given a place to be heard and to stand. Although, many of these theorists and scholars will not agree with the non-equality stand but will all agree with the last statement of the last paraphrase that “man should be educationally or financially buoyant, confident and self-reliant. The selected dramatic texts are read constructively for further discussion and interpretations.

Theoretical Framework: Womanism

This study adopts Ogunyemi’s theory of “African Womanism” which differs from

Western feminism and similar to Alice Walker's "Womanism" (Black feminism) as they share almost the same tenets. It contends that the struggles of Western feminists do not necessarily reflect the needs of African women. According to Ogunyemi:

African and Afro-American women writers share similar aesthetic attitudes in spite of factors that separate them. As a group, they are distinct from white feminists because of their race, because they have experienced the past and present subjugation of the black population along with present-day subtle (or not so subtle) control exercised over them by the alien, Western culture. (Ogunyemi, 1985, p. 64)

Ogunyemi is insisting that African and African-American women experience double subjugation within the society. Ogunyemi calls the distinctive obstacles that African women face, "womanism." As affirmed by Burkett (2009, p.2):

Ogunyemi's theory of "womanism" is extremely useful because it sheds insight on the specific feminist needs of African women. In Ogunyemi's view, "With the world power structure as it is, what would the relevance be of a black female character's struggle to be equal to such a black man as, for example, ... on the African side, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's treacherous male... or Chinua Achebe's insecure Okonkwo?"

Agreeing with Burkett (2009, p. 3) on Ogunyemi's point that the African *womanist* does not desire the idea of Western feminist equality with the African male, brings to bare the question: What benefit is there for the African woman to obtain balance with another oppressed group? She therefore posits that Ogunyemi's stand is that the African "*womanist* must strive for ethnic rather than gender equality within the postcolonial society because this goal fits the needs of African women". Supporting Burkett's assertion, Oyewo (2012, p. 140) adds that "the primary role of the genders has been described as a kind of complimentary rather than competitive partnership leading to a kind of harmonious relationship." The theory of Womanism is committed to the survival and wholeness of all people, including men as well. Because, Ogunyemi (1985, p. 64) believes "rather than supporting separatism, Womanism promotes universalism." Womanism, like Black Feminism, provides a space for Black women and women of colour to create dialogue in a non-threatening environment. Ogunyemi's Womanism encompass the following which are also relevant to our discourse:

- ✓ Be rooted in black woman's history in racial gender oppression.
- ✓ Retain their black cultural distinctiveness and integrity.
- ✓ Be committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female.
- ✓ Be centered to highlight gender issues in Africa and Africans in diaspora.
- ✓ Centers on issues of in-law problems and molestation.
- ✓ Centers on husbands maltreating their wives
- ✓ Centers on issues of extreme poverty and men neglecting their roles as fathers and husbands in the home.

Conceptualising Domestic Violence

Ganley and Schechter, 1996 cited in Oyefara (2016, p. 62) define domestic violence as a “pattern of coercive and assaultive behaviours that include physical, sexual, verbal, and psychological attacks and economic coercion that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partner”. Domestic Violence is not typically a singular event and is not limited to only physical aggression, rather:

It is the pervasive and methodical use of threats, intimidation, manipulation, and physical violence by someone who seeks power and control over their intimate partner. Abusers use a specific tactic or a combination of tactics to instill fear in and dominance over their partners. The strategies used by abusers are intended to establish a pattern of desired behaviors from their victims. Certain behaviors often are cited by the perpetrator as the reason or cause of the abusive behaviour, therefore, abusive verbal and physical actions are often intended to alter or control that behaviour (Oyefara, 2016, p. 62-64).

To Oyefara (2016, p. 55), domestic violence is:

The inflicting of physical injury by one family or household member on another; also a repeated and habitual pattern of such behaviour. Family violence is a broader definition, often used to include child abuse, elder’s abuse and

other violent acts between family members.

In his own view, Aruya (2016, p. 1) expresses that:

domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battery, family violence, and intimate partner violence, is a pattern of abusive behaviours by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family, or cohabitation. Domestic violence and abuse are not limited to obvious physical violence. It can also mean endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, trespassing, harassment, and stalking to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner.

On his part, Aruya also believes that:

domestic violence is a global phenomenon. It is not limited to Nigeria. It occurs across the world, in various cultures, and affects people irrespective of their economic status. According to one study, the percentages of women who have reported being physically abused by an intimate partner vary from 69% to 10% depending on the country. In Nigeria, spousal abuse has become a scourge and there is a report that 50% of our women have been battered by their husbands at one time or the other and unbelievably,

more educated women (65%) are in this terrible situation as compared with their low income counterparts (55%) (Aruya, pp. 1-2).

According to Oyefara (2016, pp. 63-72), wife abuse, wife beating, and battering are descriptive terms that have lost popularity recently and supported by some other scholars for these reasons:

- there is acknowledgment that many victims are not actually married to the abuser, but rather cohabiting or in other arrangements (Waits, 1985).
- abuse can take other forms than physical abuse. Other forms of abuse (emotional, psychological or mentally) may be constantly occurring, while physical abuse happens occasionally.
- males as well as females are victims of domestic violence.

Domestic violence in Nigeria, as in most other parts of the world, is not restricted to any specific culture, gender or religion. The two drama texts to be considered for this study thrive on the idea of Ogunyemi's *Womanism* point of view. Women from time immemorial have suffered from male ego syndrome. Men have been stereotyped to having control of everything around them including their female counterparts women, thereby turning their homes into battle grounds. Some of the behaviours identified below do not constitute abuse, but frequently are tactics used in a larger pattern of abusive and controlling behavior of the abused and the abusers. However, according to Mayhew, Mireless-Black & Percy (1996, p.) these other forms of abuse have the potential

to lead to mental illness, self-harm, and even attempts at suicide.

Janel, Michael, Cohan & Lloyd (2004) cited in Oyefara (2016, p. 72) affirms that distinctions are made among the types of violence, motives of committers, and the social and cultural context based upon patterns across numerous incidents and motives of the perpetrator. Many theories have emerged as to the causes of domestic violence. According to Whitaker (2007, pp. 941-947), these include:

1. psychological theories that consider personality traits and mental characteristics of the perpetrator,
2. social theories which consider external factors in the perpetrator's environment, such as family structure, stress, social learning.

As with many phenomena regarding human experience, no single approach appears to cover all cases. All forms of domestic abuses have one purpose: to gain and maintain control over the victim. Abusers use many tactics to exert power over their spouse or partner.

Domestic Violence Assessment Policy (2007) cited in Oyefara, (2016, p. 72) affirms the types of domestic violence actions executed by abusers and which includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological tactics; threats and intimidation; economic coercion; and entitlement behaviors. Examples of each are provided below in the textual discourse.

Textual Discourse

Some of the behaviours identified in the following lists do not establish abuse, but frequently are tactics used in a larger pattern of abusive and controlling behavior as discussed below:

Emotional or Psychological Abuse in the Selected Dramatic Texts

Emotional or psychological abuse involves constantly belittling the other person; constant blaming or bringing up past sins and secrets in order to shame; treating the person as a child and constant belittling of their actions and decision-making. This is one of the issues tackled by the African womanist theorist, especially issues of the in-laws. Emotional neglect caused by gender construct and leading to domestic violence in homes and marriages in the two texts we are considering as portrayed by Ashake and her teenage brother-in-laws in Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* thus:

James: Get us water from the refrigerator... (p.18)

Ashake: James, don't be rude! James ... (p. 19)

Clem: Ashake, I say you have no right...no authority whatsoever to lock that fridge up! It was bought by my brother's hard earned money... for more than your bride price...we got you cheaper than the fridge and for that simple reason, you can't wield your power over what has a higher price than you. (p. 21)

Ashake: Now, I have become a commercial commodity with a cost price and a selling price? ... this is my home. You have no right whatsoever conducting yourself here, in this rude and reckless manner! ...Women are no longer ready to tolerate nauseating in-laws like you who have been fed with fusty ideas about the place of women in the society... you think my personality is to be

mauled and debased? And I should subject myself to all sorts of indignities? ... I am no longer ready to tolerate dunderhead twerps like you! (pp. 21-22)

Clem: What effrontery Ashake! You, a mere wife to my brother? (p. 22)

James: Lakuli! This is coming from a woman and least of all my brother's wife! What is the duty of a woman any way (pp. 22-23).

Clem: To serve a man in whatever way imaginable (p. 23).

These are provocative words that turn the woman into action because she is being belittled by her family members and not to say, her teenage brother-in-law. Because as they put it, she is a 'mere woman'. This is a serious issue confronting African women and most especially Nigerian women. It is the way the society has constructed the sexes by belittling the female gender and calling them names in such a way "that women occupy inferior position in the scheme of things" as Lewu (2015, p. 564) affirmed. Constant belittling is also portrayed by Ayakoroma in *Dance on his Grave*:

Alere: Yes. You are all witnesses to what has been happening in this land. Women are relegated to the background in the affairs of the land... We are no better than slaves! I am not saying that we should all aspire to be chiefs, advisers, or take the place of the king... (p. 23) ... I am not thinking of ruling this land; but the question is: Should we not be consulted even in matters concerning our children and us? Are we only to raise children and

prepare meals for our husbands? Wash their clothes and not argue? ... Now, the time has come for us to speak with one voice! They said they are men. Who gave birth to them? (p. 24).

Olotu: What are they going to say there? Women! ... Women want to put on thinking caps too eh? Well, they would all grow bald headed too. (36)

These scenarios relegate and subjugate the womenfolk to the background. This is a case where men downgrade women because of the erroneous belief that women are powerless, senseless, and lack confidential skills. As a result, they become a minority whose vocal power and human status are submerged at every level of the society.

Verbal Abuse in the Selected Dramatic Texts

Verbal abuse includes name-calling, shouting and yelling, and insults which may at times lead to physical violence. This is portrayed by Oyedepo in her *Rebellion of the ...* where Ashake's two teenage brothers-in-law much younger than her insult her personality:

Clem: Ashake, I say you have no right... no authority whatsoever to lock that fridge up! It was bought by my brother's hard earned money... for more than your bride-price... that we got you cheaper than the fridge and for that simple reason, you can't wield your power over what has higher price than you (p. 21).

James: You have put it most laconically (p. 21).

Ashake: Me? Ashake? Me Ashake?

Clem: Yes, you Ashake! (Stamping his feet) (p. 21).

Ashake: Remember, this is my home. You have no right whatsoever, conducting yourselves here, in this rude and reckless manner! (p. 22)

Clem: What effrontery Ashake! You- a mere wife to my brother? (p. 22).

Verbal abuse is also used by Jolomi to his wife Falilat in the *Rebellion of the ...*, He believes "women are better seen than heard". He also calls his wife a "subordinate" and concludes that "just like a rope does not befit a fowl's neck ... naturally, you are not fit for any other role" (p. 32). Here, the husband does not consider the role of his wife as a complement rather, she does not have any role to play. She must be mute and take to directives without her own contribution whether useful or not. This feature can also be seen in Ayakaroma's *Dance on his ...* where Olotu calls the *Female liberation movement* a "gathering of the hen". When his wife tells him about the opinion of the women to be involved in state affairs, his reply is very insulting as he thinks that the women are brainless. In his words "... you think these matters are for egg-heads?" He also regards his wife's ideas on building a better home and community as a "rubbish" and "foul talk!" (p. 39). He goes as far as calling his wife the "devil" (p. 53).

Physical Violence in the Selected Dramatic Texts

Physical violence includes all kinds of hitting slapping, pushing, shoving, and other more extreme forms of violence. Physical violence also includes sexual assault and rape and being forced to involve in sexual acts that the abused would rather not

(including within marital relationships). Physical violence in Oyedepo's *The Rebellion...* between Jolomi and Falilat is displayed below:

Jolomi: ... Any further association with those women, who are compensating for something they lack in femininity, will make you see my wrath!

Falilat: And what can you do? ... Me Fali! (pounces on Jolomi suddenly with incredible agility sending him sprawling on the floor. She descends on him, raining down pellets of slaps and punches especially around the lower region. Jolomi lets out yells and struggles rather desperately... Saka burst in in fury).

Jolomi: It's Fali. Her hands now have the strength of a sledge hammer. You can imagine your scrotum being crushed by heavy sledge hammer.

Saka: Did she want to castrate you?

Jolomi: This is the second time Fali has assaulted me... What is wrong with you too, Saka? What is wrong with your face? ... It looks as rugged as a bumpy road. Are those newly-made tribal marks? ... You visited the zoo? How did you manage to escape with your life? ... How did you encounter a tigress?

Saka: My house is the zoo and Ashake my wife is the tigress... Those marks I have

on my cheeks were made by her artificial nails (pp 34-35).

These explain what a (radical) feminist stand for, as it encourages the militant approach for survival against the Africana Womanism approach that employs a subtle way to tackle domestic issues. Physical violence is also seen in *Dance on ...* as displayed by Olotu in the scene description thus; "...He runs to the wall and draws out his sword and everyone takes cover for their life. Alaere runs out shouting for help. He pursues her out, as there is a sharp black out" (p. 54). Another scene description also reveals Olotu beating his wife Alaere below:

He pursues her. She shouts for help and runs for the door to the inner compound. He grabs her by the door, drags her back and beats her. Just then the CHIEF comes in, so do the household. They plead with KING OLOTU and he is forced to stop short of strangling her. Alaere is led aside as BEKE stands facing her father aggressively

Beke: Father, you realize what you have done? You nearly killed her!

Olotu: Did I?

Beke: Yes! Are you not sorry?

Olotu: Sorry! Not at all! You know in a war, one is not sorry for killing the enemy. You kill or you are killed (p. 85).

The Africana Womanism kicks against women molestation by men. In protest, the women in Ayakoroma's *Dance on ...* deprive their husbands every marital right. The men unable to bear the sexual starvation and hunger device a tactic of beating their

wives as the king, Olotu shares the canes with instructions thus:

Olotu: ...Yes... they are canes... this night; we are all going to sleep with our wives by the first cockcrow. They refuse us entry, the canes will do their work... by the time you finish with the most stubborn one and the others will pledge their unreserved loyalty. Now, go my people; go and fight this war in the families.

The level of empowerment and emancipation created for the women has toughened the likes of Sharp, Ashake, Falilat in Oyedepo's *The Rebellion* ... and Alaere, Erebu and other women in Ayakoroma's *Dance on...* to fight back physically and verbally. The women have been trampled upon and violated, and freedom becomes a do or die affair as portrayed in the above excerpts from the play texts.

Controlling Behaviour aimed at Compelling another to Comply with an Abuser's Wishes in the Selected Dramatic Texts

The abuser may try to control both big and small decisions taken within the home; from what meals are made and when, to whether or not the spouse can see friends or family. Such control can be exercised over conceiving a child or removal of a pregnancy. It can also be exercised through insults, name-calling, withholding of affection, and financial support. Ayakoroma uses this tactic in Olotu's lines when he says his daughter will go and live in the city without consulting his wife and he makes the decision final:

Olotu: ... we seem to be having great differences in our opinions, But, then, as the head of this family, I have the

final say. So go you must (p. 49).

Olotu does not consult his wife as he sees her as not having the right brain to think properly and for the fact that his ego will not let him do it because he is the man of the house and so his words stand whether it favours the rest of the family or not.

Olotu: I do not pay all that bride price on your head for you to come here and reason for me! I do all the reasoning for you and every other person in this house! No more of that rubbish in my palace! (p. 46)

In both drama texts, the women also use the withdrawal of affections as a tactic to gain their freedom. They denied their husbands sexual intercourse and refused to do the house chores like cooking the food for the whole family, washing of cloths, general cleaning of their environments and fetching of water from the stream. All these are just to prove that the men cannot do without them and they are relevant in their homes as well as in the society and that after all, who gave birth to the men? Women! This tactic is supported by the Africana Womanist, especially when it is believed that a woman controls the home indirectly. She stays at home to train up a child and has the power to mold the child and home to her taste. This is also found in Oyedepo's *The Rebellion*... when Oye dialogues with his wife when she did not include "the decoration meat" on his food:

Oye: where is the decoration meat? ...a person will be impressed at the richness of the soup, seeing the meat rising high from the stew (p. 51).

Sarah: I hope one day the bubble of this decoration meat will not burst, when

someone you invite for a meal tries to savor the meat only to find out that it's all bone- all a ruse (p. 51).

This is one of the tactics employed by Oye compelling his wife against her wish. She prefers eating the meal without “the decoration meat” because to her, it is good to present yourself the way you are rather than pretending. She could not get her husband to comply with her wish here as the men are bent on controlling the behaviours of their wives and compelling them to comply to their own wishes. As Olotu puts it to his wife “you are my wife; so, I take decisions here” (p. 44).

Neglect

Emotional and physical neglect include refusal to provide for basic needs like providing money for feeding, payment of bills and even cooking which solely rest on the females. These roles socially are meant for the men to fulfill but they dodge from it. In the same vein, Womanism advocates for fair sharing of responsibilities. It is believed that in a home where one spouse works, the less busy spouse should attempt to ease the burden of the busy partner. And that goes for the rest of the family. This is revealed in Oyedepo's *The Rebellion* ... in a conversation between Ashake and her brother in-law:

James: ... well if you don't mind, we want our lunch now (p. 24).

Ashake: ... you need food? Huh? ... Why not? If you feel like eating, the key of the store is there on the cabinet, you are at liberty to get yourself something to eat... (pp. 24-25).

Clem: Even domestic animals have the benefit of cooked food. My father's pigs still

have the benefit of cooked cassava (p. 25).

Ashake: Then, you go and do the cooking yourself! .. (p. 26).

James: When brother comes back, I shall tell everything. May be, he will have a choice between this belligerent termagant and his own blood relations (p. 26).

This reaction from the women is born out of frustration and the eagerness to be totally free from the ego of the patriarchal system and the fight for equal right. Ashake in Oyedepo's *The Rebellion* ... has received enough insults from her brothers-in-law and other in-laws and cannot take the 'shit' any longer, decides to neglect them and put them in their rightful position as she assumes her duty at home as a wife and not a slave. For women to assume their rightful position in the society, they need to adopt the tactic of “the self-articulation”,

A way of creating a variety of recognizable identities for themselves. However, when women express themselves through such an avenue, it depicts their self-articulation and self-determination through aesthetics of assertiveness (Ojediran, 2012, p.17).

Resolutions in the Two Selected Drama Texts

The two drama texts under study have different resolutions but all points out the fact that what a woman sets to achieve irrespective of obstacles and obstructions, she will achieve it even if it has to claim someone's life. Oyedepo's *The Rebellion* ... seeks for social interaction forum to engage the two genders to come together and table their plights. The men in protest of what

their wives' reactions decide to hawk rice on the streets as Tara puts it "and he does it in a peculiar style, in 'buba' and wrapper" (p. 93), strapping babies on their back and all dressed in heels, and "feminine accessories" as put by Salwa (p. 93). To Tara and other women, this is seen as madness. But to Akanbi, it is a tactics which he called "if you can't beat these women, you join them" (p. 89). The women table their plea thus:

Tara: How best can a woman fight a man? How best can the war of sexes be waged without the woman being the sufferer or the loser? ... we talked to them about freedom and so on, equality of opportunity in all facets of life; total obliteration of gender prejudices. This is fair enough; I suppose (p. 94).

Salwa: of course not! You have only hit below the belt and we are not giving up... we are not giving up! (p. 94)

Akanbi: ... you women need not be so desperate about this... you need not be so militant (p. 95).

Salwa: Are you trying to plead with us in this queer manner? Look men, we remain undaunted! The struggle continues! (p. 95).

Ayakoroma in his *Dance on ...* concludes on the fact that if a woman is set on a mission she does not weary until she accomplishes the task even if it takes the life of a dear one. The men did not compromise their stance in spite of the tactics adopted by the women and the husbands overruled it by even forcing them with the use of canes and beating. This led to the death of king Olotu whose wife spare headed the women liberation forum in the play.

These drama texts represent the level of feminist activists and activism. The liberal (Africana Womanism) and the extreme (radical feminism) and the level at which women are represented in various literary studies.

Findings

We discovered that, domestic violence poses a serious problem to the lives, the health, and the wellbeing of individuals and families. Although both men and women emotionally engage in physical violence against their intimate partners, men's cases are out-rightly ignored. In Nigeria, family violence has not only been acknowledged as a major public health concern but a critical criminal issue on the extreme. Furthermore, domestic violated women are coming out with a voice to stop the men's intimidation to build a better tomorrow for the girl child. However, in years past, male writers misrepresented the women voice and personality, an action that elicit outcry from women writers and these issues are now being corrected. But, most especially, this issue had caused a counter reaction from the female writers and the ideas projected could lead to crisis in the homes and the society. Hence, this paper suggests that for the society to be at peace, the role of a woman in the society should be given paramount importance in all spheres of life. The best approach to gender portrayal in the dramatic texts should be a work that does not discriminate on the basis of gender, sex, and class (endorsed by extremist theorists on gender issues) but strike a balance as suggested by Ogunyemi's Africana Womanism.

Conclusion

The Africana Womanism theory adopted for this paper kick against the rivalry between the in-laws and the wife in her home. In *The Rebellion ...*, the creation of BCM by the women is borne out of the urge of total liberation and belief that they are perceived as weaklings who inherently

have the right way to be human. Captain Sharp, Ashake, Falilat and other leaders of the group, create distinct lives between male and female social perception of men and women.

Relatively in *Dance on ...* behavioural tactics are adopted to make their point and to fight against the idea of seeing the women as inferior beings. Rather, they want to be seen as part of the decision making as a compliment which is one of the features of Ogunyemi's (African) Womanism, "influential in all ramifications; politically, socially and economically." For instance, women in the selected drama want to be engaged in active politics, to be relieved from house-maids' positions in their matrimonial homes by their husbands and in-laws, and the men should be ready to marry just one wife; reversing the social structure of polygamy in the society.

This theory helps us to better understand the world and the social construct of gender and sexes. It teaches that "respect is reciprocal" and if the two sexes come together in agreement they can build a better live together not minding who is to lead or rule and over who. There should be fair sharing of responsibilities. If there is proper communication and understanding in the home, domestic violence will be reduced to the minimum or be eradicated. Conversely, domestic violence does not breed desired unity in the country.

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