

## GENDER INEQUALITY AND BIAS IN ADICHIE'S *THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK*

### PRÉJUGÉS ET INÉGALITÉS DES SEXES DANS LE RECUEIL DE NOUVELLES « AUTOUR DE TON COU » DE CHIMAMANDA

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**Abstract :** This paper examines male-centered favouritism, sexual abuse, injustice, disparity and prejudice against the woman in Adichie's *The Thing around Your Neck*. The liberal and radical feminist approaches have been helpful to uncover the instances of injustice, the consequences of male-centered favouritism, incidences of sexual harassment as well as the outcomes of man's cuckoldry drawing attention to the retrograde customary practices stressing the ill life conditions of the woman. The results have proved that the woman has been differently treated from man. The daughter appears less important than the son since it is noted that men are superior to women by nature. Male-centred-favouritism results into corruption, male school drop-outs, impoliteness, theft, family impoverishment because parents invest more to respond to the needs of their sons' needs than those of their daughters. Policemen who are supposed to work for justice; the male youth and teachers whose role is to educate the youth are corrupt which symbolizes a total absence of justice, mismanagement as well as incompetence of the Nigerian government. Besides, the high school drop-outs of most young Nigerian girls is due to sexual harassment depriving the latter of attaining their dreams. The woman stands for a slave who must be exploited and who does not have any right to freedom of choice and speech. She is raised in such a way that does not offer her the openness to boost her life conditions. Ultimately, man's cuckoldry and trickery lead to lack of social harmony in a lot of households and jeopardize the woman's sexual health.

**Key Words:** Gender, Favouritism, injustice, sexual harassment, cuckoldry

**Résumé:** Cet article analyse le favoritisme centré sur l'homme, harcèlement sexuel, l'injustice, la disparité et les préjugés contre la femme dans « Autour de Cou » de Chimamanda. Les approches féministes libérales et radicales ont permis d'illustrer les cas d'injustice, les conséquences du favoritisme centré sur l'homme, les cas de harcèlement sexuel ainsi que les conséquences de l'infidélité de l'homme, tout en attirant l'attention sur les pratiques coutumières rétrogrades qui mettent la femme dans de mauvaises conditions de vie. Les résultats ont montré que la femme est traitée différemment de l'homme. Elle a moins de valeurs que l'homme, car il est cru que les hommes sont supérieurs aux femmes par nature. Le favoritisme centré sur l'homme entraîne la corruption, la déscolarisation de l'homme, l'impolitesse, le vol, l'appauvrissement de la famille parce que les parents investissent plus pour répondre aux besoins de leurs fils qu'à ceux de leurs filles. Les policiers qui sont censés travailler pour la justice ; la jeunesse masculine et les enseignants dont le rôle est d'éduquer la jeunesse sont corrompus, ce qui symbolise l'absence totale de justice, la mauvaise gestion ainsi que l'incompétence du gouvernement Nigérian. En outre, l'abandon de l'école secondaire par la plupart des jeunes filles Nigérianes est dû au harcèlement sexuel, ce qui empêche ces dernières de réaliser leurs rêves. La femme est traitée comme une esclave qui doit être exploitée et qui n'a pas le droit à la liberté de choix et d'expression. Enfin, Le cocufiage et la ruse de l'homme entraînent un manque d'harmonie sociale dans de nombreux ménages et mettent en danger la santé sexuelle de la femme.

**Mots clés :** Genre, Favoritisme, Injustice, harcèlement sexuel, cocufiage

## Introduction

Gender issues have been an overriding topic in nearly all current debates in the humanities and social sciences because not only is the woman constrained to be passive, submissive and obedient, but also she must conform to the norms of her culture. Otherwise she would be judged as a person without education from early childhood. Aristotle once noted that "The male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled. Woman is matter, waiting to be formed by the active male principle..." (Cited in Bressler, 2007: 82). In addition, Napoleon Bonaparte writes "Nature intended women to be our slaves... They are our property... What a mad idea to demand equality for women!" (Quoted in Bressler, 2007:83). Beauvoir argues "humanity is male and man defines woman not as herself but as relative to him." (Cited in Bressler, 2007:84). From Adichie's view point in *We should all be Feminist*, she argues "Men rule the world... Because human beings lived in the world in which physical strength was the most important attribute for survival; the physically stronger person was likely to lead." (2012:14).

As male beings are physically powerful, societies have only worked in favour of man and have failed to educate him. Needless to search for an explanation of why in many communities and for long the woman's life is jeopardized. She has always been underestimated because she is thought to be weak and unable to perform physical and intellectual tasks and has no right to express her own choices of life.

In reaction, woman-oriented ideologies grounded in the narrative have argued that male-centred favouritism is not faultless as it usually results into corruption, theft, indiscipline, impoliteness as well as school drop-out. Policemen and teachers are corrupt. As a matter of fact, man has never succeeded at school without corrupting his teachers since this ill practice is acceptable in society.

Chimamanda's *The Thing around Your Neck* is a collection of twelve short stories. Now this research paper has selected four short stories from which the analysis should be carried out. The attention is drawn to the retrograde customary practice and the weakness of the government which is unable to enforce respect for human rights in "Cell One", "Imitation" "The Thing around Your Neck" and "The Arrange of The Marriage" From the above perspectives, the present paper seeks to reach an understanding of Chimamanda's fictional society based on the outcomes of male-centered favouritism, sexual harassment, man's infidelity, the woman's portrayal in the fictional work and the way the woman is constrained to be passive, submissive and obedient to man.

*The Thing around Your Neck* has been analyzed and interpreted in so many different perspectives uncovering the unfair-treatment against the woman as well as the woman oppression. Vine conducted a study on *The Dialogic Imagination* and drew attention on the bad ways mothers educate their sons. In her conclusion, she "shares her shock with women, readers, mothers warning of the danger which may befall them if they follow their sons' bad attitude with brittle morality." (2014:117). This proves that only women who spoil their sons through the way they raise them. They always try to play down all faults and wrong acts caused by their sons that are against society

norms. This work depicts other dimensions that spoil the male youth and that endanger the community and women's life such as family impoverishment, the mismanagement of the community. Sons' ill education is analyzed by Barillaro who worked on *Teacher Text guides & Worksheets* and argues "there is generation gap because children are protected from the outside world, rejection of Nigerian culture." (2013:9). Sons prefer to respect the foreign culture to different standards that are required in society because the society has failed to educate them and has no power over the male youth. Lack of control over these sons gives them much freedom to neglect and not go along with the society's requirements. In fact, this generation gap is due to the strong force of new colonization which has played negative roles on Nigerian male youth. They prefer to apply the foreign culture in their everyday life which makes them become ignorant of the most important values found in their own culture. In *Sibling*, theft is depicted as the only negative factor of male-centered favouritism that spoils man in his community. Sijna argues "Her parents take little notice of her... Through the eye of a neglected daughter, we see her favoured brother degenerate from stealing from their parents..." (2014:3-6). The above view point tries to show how the woman is underestimated and fed up with the way society is mismanaged. Wanting to search for freedom and peace in their life, the vast majority of women prefer to live abroad as means to resist against patriarchy and the way to passively sort out problems conflicting them with men. Women's resistance against patriarchy was described by Adhikary in *A Postcolonial Feminist Reading*. "Women resist against the discrimination and the ill-treatment... In their resistance, they have freedom of choice and independence from patriarchy." (Adhikary, 2020:1-6). However, women developed new strategies to be set free from patriarchy which were deeply discussed by Eke on *An African Woman in Search of Global Identity: In An exploration Feminism and Afropolitanism*. Eke states "Afropolitan Feminism as that in which the African woman is comfortable and at home anywhere in the world whilst refusing to take victim identity." (2020:2). Drawing attention on the way women have escaped patriarchy, Eke stresses that "Afropolitanism being the latest, remains African Feminism in exile." (2020:17). But this statement seems to be paradoxical because some female characters described in the narrative are not comfortable abroad.

One of the heavy burdens carried by the woman is described in a research conducted by Anglesos on *Archetypes of Contemporary Nigerian Woman* in which it is stated that "many of Adichie's characters in *The Thing around Your Neck* show behaviours and thoughts which validate the idea of imposed marriage and submission as the only choice for them." (2015:6). This view means that the woman lacks freedom of choice and speech in her society. The society has always worked on behalf of the woman. Further, Anglesos on *Archetypes of Contemporary Nigerian Women* focused on the woman's ability to overcome faced difficulties in her life. The researcher argues that Adichie's "characters are agents of change that exhibit hope for many generations of

contemporary of African women that gain power each day in their long quest gender equality" (2015:20).

This paper investigates the effects of male-centred favouritism, instances of disparity and prejudice against the woman, the consequences of sexual harassment as well as man's infidelity which are the key factors that are at the origin of conflicts opposing man and the woman in their society.

### **Selected short story Synopses**

"Cell one" speaks about Nnamabia who leaves his sister in a church on Sunday and goes back home to scramble their house's walls when both parents are away from home. After having scrambled the house's walls, he steals his mother's jewelry and goes to sell them at a cheap price. Now he has been taking beer days and nights with his friends for more than two days without coming back home until all the money is finished. Surprisingly, he has always been defended. Ultimately, he is arrested for being suspected to set insecurity because he behaves like a waif.

"Imitation" is about Nkem who is unhappy with her husband's infidelity. She is dropped in the USA rearing kids while her husband is spends a lot of money courting young Nigerian girls. Told by her friend Idjemekana, Nkem decides to move back to Nigeria at the end of the school year because she is not comfortable in the USA.

"The Thing around Your Neck" is a tragic story about Akunna who has won the lottery visa and has to leave Nigeria for the USA. As a result, she has dropped out school and fails to attain her goals because she has escaped from being raped by her uncle. On their way home, he tried to convince her that everything would be successful if she agrees with him, but she does not want to go along with him; she decides to leave his accommodation few days after and tries to find a way out. To overcome this issue, she gets a job in Juan's restaurant where she has accepted to be paid less than other waitresses provided she affords the rent. Unfortunately, the poor salary cannot help her to afford life in America which, later on, leads Akunna into prostitution.

"The Arrangers of The Marriage" talks about the dissatisfaction of Agatha who has been over-exploited and now is constrained to marry a person whom she does not love because she has been raised by her aunt and uncle just after her parents' death. After they have arrived in the USA, Agatha is unhappy with her new husband's apartment. She feels sad enough to live in a house whose conditions are not appropriate. Then she is disappointed with her new husband's hypocrisy. Consequently, she decides to break her marriage and leave him, not only she expects her new husband to be an HIV positive, but because she has discovered that he is a divorcé and did not want to let her know about his marital status before they got married.

Feminism is defined as a "part of the broader feminist political movement that seeks to rectify sexist discrimination and inequalities" (Leitch, 2010: 24).

Feminism literary criticism assesses different ways works of art-depict male power over women, focusing on the economic, political, psychological, intellectual, educational, racial and social aspects of literature. Feminist criticism belittles other concerns of literature, but puts much emphasis on the oppression and discrimination against women of literature. It calls writers' attention to the woman's bad life conditions and portrays male and female inequalities that over-dominate phallogocentric societies. Therefore feminists view literary texts as focusing on social harmony and significance. Tyson, in (source), notes that "feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature reinforces and undermines the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of the woman." (83).

As feminist critics are concerned with the factors that are at the origin of conflicts opposing man and woman in society, one of the major concerns of feminist criticism is to resist the reactionary usual practices in order to free women from the evil treatments.

Feminists' critical approach could be applied to *The Thing around Your Neck* to depict the instances of male-privilege, sexual abuse, the way the woman is viewed by the community, her roles to warn the danger faced by society, her attitudes in interaction with male characters; it could also portray the way she behaves to overcome difficult situations in distinct settings as displayed by the writer in each short story; to display injustice which is a fundamental factor that is at the origin of conflicts opposing man and the woman in their society and that does not enable the female characters to prosper in their lives.

Chimamanda is purely a feminist novelist and committed writer whose work is full of different features that call the attention of feminist critics. She portrays male privilege, sexual harassment, male domination over women, injustice and the power that the society exerts over women. She depicts the way the society has always worked in the favor of men only. Women always appear in a weak position expressing their disappointment, laments, claims, and complaints in their own families, at work places, in their households. Feminist critics have always worked for the cause of women by fighting against all kinds of abuses against women in order to put them in their rights.

### **1. Male-centered favouritism and its incidences in the community**

Hornby defines favouritism as "the act of unfairly treating one person better than others because you like them better." (2010:540). Now *The Thing around Your Neck* depicts male-centered favouritism because male characters are more privileged than female ones. Female characters accuse the community of favouritism considering the way it fails to establish equal treatment between men and the women in society.

The management of the society described in "Cell One" is ambiguous since it raises a number of queries and it does not specify who is already in the cell and who should be put in prison.

The narrator invites her parents to bear their responsibility in order to fight male privilege in their family. She also warns them to be aware of the negative factors that have spoiled the male youth and that have jeopardized the economic growth of their family as well as the whole community. Therefore it is pointed out that Nnamabia should be put in prison.

The second time our house was robbed, it was my brother Nnamabia who faked a break-in and stole my mother's jewelry. It happened on a Sunday. Then he walked out through the back door and did not come home that night (Chimamanda, 2009:1).

The evidences depicted from the text prove that the narrator is in conflict with her parents because they don't seem to be concerned with the good education of their son. They are always silent in front of his abnormal behaviour. Their silence stands for complicity. They sound complicit with Nnamabia because both of them have never punished him. And the failure to punish him symbolises favouritism towards their son. Sometimes Nnamabia destroys the most important school and library properties; other times, he has become a thief stealing the most valuable properties from different houses. He is incriminated in a group of criminals setting insecurity in the community.

When Nnamabia broke the window of his classroom with a stone, my mother gave him the money to replace it... When he lost some library books in class two, my mother told his form-mistress that our houseboy had stolen them... He left every day to attend catechism... So he could not receive Holy Communion, she told other parents that he had malaria on the examination day. When he stole the exam questions from the study sold them to my father's students... She told my father that Nnamabia was sixteen after all, and really should be given more pocket money... He had already been arrested and accused of belonging to a cult." (2009:6-7).

In accordance with the above statement, Nnamabia's parents are acting in such a way that is fought by the narrator. She has always complained about how female characters are raised and treated in society. For example, in *We should all be Feminists*, Adichie asserts "I dream about a world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves. We must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently." (2014:11).

My father asked Nnamabia to write a report: how he had sold the jewelry, what he had spent the money on, with whom he had spent it... After Nnamabia wrote a report, my father filed it in the steel drawer in his study where he kept our school papers (2009:5).

This attitude of the narrator's parents in front of her brother's misbehaviour is negative because not only it spoils Nnamabia, but it also motivates him to go on endangering the society, and reinforces the conflict between him and his sister since their parents heed his misbehaviour. On the contrary, they treat him with a lax understanding. Londhe investigated on *Family and Exile* and she argues that "a middle class mother in Nigeria spoils her son." (2014:116). She is convinced that it is the influence of belonging to a middle social class that the woman happens to destroy her own son. While the analysis shows that the narrator finds her parents partial and full of injustice given that the great loss does not affect them at all. Yet, they keep on undergoing the consequences of their son's misbehaviour and do not care that their

strong support in favour of the latter continues to sink their family into misery. Indeed, their attitude asserts that the narrator is imprisoned because her call warns the community to become aware of the problems faced by their society does not count much. Her efforts are underestimated, and her voice is not heard in her society either. In *Critical Theory Today*, Tyson contends that “from the patriarchal standpoint, women’s perspectives, feelings, and opinions don’t count unless they conform to those of patriarchy.”(2005:91). Though the narrator is underestimated and her voice is not heard, she never feels tired. Instead, she insists on showing her parents that their support continues to spoil her brother. Now she is happy on the assumption that her both parents are convinced and have become aware that they must stop spending money for someone who is not useful for the community.

The second week, we were not going to visit Nnamabia. We did not know how long we would have to keep doing this and petrol was too expensive to drive three hours and it would not hurt Nnamabia to fend for himself for a day... Nobody went to see Nnamabia that day. It surprised me this little victory.”(2009:10).

Nnamabia’s beauty as portrayed in the narrative is ironical. It stands for so much trouble he has caused in his family. The narrator is surprised to see how much their parents always feel happy with her brother who is a trouble maker. The narrator argues ‘when my mother took us to the market, traders would call out, ‘Hey, madam! Why do you waste your fair skin on a boy and leave the girl so dark? What is the boy doing of this beauty?’ (2009:6). More importantly, the narrator’s darkness is ironical. It stands for her maturity and revolutionary spirit motivating to reveal out the instances of society’s mismanagement threatening the future of the male youth which do not seem to be trusted.

As it was previously stated in the introduction, male-centered favouritism spoils the male youth and results into crime in society. The portrayal of death on the university campus could symbolize the complicity and incapacity of the university leaders as well as professors. They are irresponsible because they have failed to educate their own children who always behave like homeless children; and have become thieves, burglars impoverishing people of the whole community, the latter are expected to have raised and collaborated with the evildoers who often set insecurity all over the county. In addition, the appearance of corpses on the campus proves out that these Nigerian university educators described in the narrative are not working for the prosperity of the community. On the contrary, they only contribute to spoil the youth.

Four members of cult boys waited at the campus gate and waylaid a professor driving a red Mercedes. They pressed a gun to her head, shoved her out of the car, and drove it to the Faculty of Engineering, where they shot three boys walking out of their lecture halls...The vice chancellor announced that all evening classes were canceled and everyone had to be indoors after 9p.m. This did not make much sense to me, since the shooting happened in sparkling daylight...”(2009 : 8).

Indeed, since the university is well known as a milieu of education per excellence where highly educated university teachers must play the key role to transform the youth for the development of the whole country; it is paradoxical to have seen people being killed on the university campus only instead of at any other places of the country.

Further, the narrator bitterly denounces corruption as another outcome of male-centred favouritism. Male characters are brought up being more encouraged in all what they do. They are not afraid of causing much trouble in society because they live and they are working in a world which is a male dominated society it has always worked in their favour. None has control over male characters which is a negative attitude offering the latter much freedom. Grounded on male oriented-beliefs described in the narrative, the narrator is disappointed at the way corrupt policemen ill-treat her cousin. She is severely ill-treated because she is female. Though her car had already responded to the law requirements. She is treated as an animal without knowing that all human beings deserve equal right and treatment in society. No matter whether they are male or female. None is subjected to evil-treatments for no reason. Therefore, policemen's reaction to the narrator's cousin Ogechi conforms that there is a total absence of justice in this community.

“My father no longer delivered a monologue, as we were waved on, on how illiterate and corrupt police were. He did not bring up the day they had delayed for an hour because he refused to bribe them, or the way they had stopped a bus in which my beautiful cousin Ogechi was travelling and singled out and called whore because she had two cell phones and asked her so much money that she knelt on ground in the rain begging them to let her go since her bus had already been allowed to go.” (2009 : 10)

The trouble maker Nnamabia had already been informed of the evil practice over dominating the community. Once arrested, he bribes policemen so that they would return him much favour. As he is more privileged than his sister, his parents fail to give him pieces of advice warning him that corruption is punishable in court and could not help him sort out his problem. But they are only impressed with the strategies Nnamabia has developed to bribe policemen. “Once you come in, you have to give them money. If you don't, you are in trouble...He knew he would buy peace in the Cell.” (Chimamanda, 2009:8). Therefore the cell stands for a place which enriches police who have become active agents contributing to the spoilage of the youth since they are only concerned with bribe while their role is to maintain and apply justice in the country.

As it is depicted in “The Thing around Your Neck,” Akuna is surprised to see the way corruption destroys society. The educational system is completely spoilt. Teachers fail to succeed in their mission because they are corrupt. To succeed in an exam or to get high-grades, students must give money in exchange for marks. Born and raised in the environment where people are not able to find out real causes hindering the prosperity of their whole society, the narrator does not understand how the society can be spoilt by people whose role is to educate the youth for the development of the community. She shows how often educators lack moral and ethical values required in



the professional setting. “Your mother whose salary was barely enough to pay your brothers’ school fees at school where teachers gave an A when someone slipped a brown envelope.” (2009:63).

On the contrary, the above statement is fought by Akunna who feels sick to see the way youth is completely destroyed. It give the impression on the assumption that students who do not bribe their teachers seldom succeed. So her refusal to bribe her teachers to be admitted in an upper class at school is to try to catch the community’s attention to become aware of corruption that it is one of the key factors blocks the development of the community. Showing how Akunna resists against the poor practice and wants a change in the educational system, the narrator argues. “You had never needed to pay for A, never slipped an envelope to a teacher in secondary school.”(2009:63).

In addition to the fact the cell stands for a place which enriches people working for justice, it also stands for a place that favours and encourages male impoliteness. As policemen are corrupt, they failed to apply justice and judge Nnamabia according to the law. The fact of being locked in prison does not help him at all since he does not learn anything about his misbehaviour from the prison. Highlighting that Nnamabia has no respect for anybody in society, the narrator states.

“Where is our son?” My father asked... “I was not there, sir. There was something nervous about the policeman... ‘They said he misbehaved yesterday and they took him to the Cell One and then there was a transfer of all people in Cell One to another site.’ “He misbehaved? What do you mean?”... “Take me to my son! Take me to my son right now”... “Nna-Boy, why did they beat you like this?”... “(2009 : 12-13).

Furthermore, besides corruption resulting from male-centered favouritism, it also leads Nnamabia to drop out school. The narrator has always complained about the repeated absences of her brother from school. Of course, Nnamabia rarely attends classes. The school activities have not been stopped when he is arrested for belonging to a group young boys setting insecurity in society. He could no longer continue to study after having spent days and nights in prison.

## **2. Man’s cuckoldry**

In “Imitation”, Nkem is disappointed with her husband’s infidelity which disturbs their household. Her firm decision to rebel against him results from a strong fear to avoid catching sexual transmitted diseases, as well as an attempt to put an end to her husband’s infidelity. She is unable to bear polygamy since the law does allow a man to get married two wives. Nkem’s close friend argues. “I mean, Obiora is a good man, of course,”... But to bring girlfriends into your home? No respect...”(2009:14). Then the long departure from Nkem’s home land, and the fact she is living far away from her husband make her to be disappointed in her marriage. The same issue is discussed Eke in *An African Woman in Search of Global Identity: In An exploration Feminism and Afropolitanism* which Eke writes “Nkem misses

home.”(2020:16) To miss her home means that she is not comfortable in the USA. In addition, Gloria complains in arguing that ‘this kind of marriage certainly lessens the woman’s sexual freedom and maintains a sexist patriarchal system, although the mechanics tend to be less aggressive now they were in the past.’(2020:7).

He fails to educate his kids staying far away from his family. The fact of living far away from his family is to avoid to take his responsibility spending a lot of money that should be used for the most useful expenses of his family in courting prostitute young girls.

Adichie uses a metaphor to describe Akunna’s uncle who is an obstacle hindering her to prosper in her life. As she is already threaten, the only solution to avoid being harmed by her uncle’s wife is to leave him as early as possible. She feels strange and abnormal to have sex with her own relative; then it would not sound good when her parents hear that she is now involved in prostitution. They would think that she has been impressed by the American life and has forgotten to attain her objectives. Then she is afraid of her uncle’s wife given that she does not know what could be her attitude when she learns that she has become his second wife. But, her strong resistance against the sexual harassment makes her sink into misery given that the salary she receives from her job is not sufficient to afford the life of America. Yet, she does not have any relative to look after her. Akunna’s current life conditions in the USA is described by the narrator in “The Thing around Your Neck”.

You locked yourself in the bathroom until went back upstairs, and the next morning, you left, walking the long windy road, smelling the baby fish in the lake. You saw him drive past...And he didn't honk. You walked into the restaurant with bright, clean awning and said you would work for two dollars less than other waitresses..." "He'd pay you a dollars less," "You could not afford to go to school, because now you paid rent for a tiny room with the stained carpet..."(2009 : 63).

Text based evidences have shown that women are treated differently from men in some aspects of the social life. That is the reason why Akunna is less paid than other workers in Juan’s restaurant because the female human rights are not respected. And Juan should be punished because the management of the the human resources working in restaurant is full of injustice. In *We should all be Feminists*, Chimamanda argues “in the US, a man and a woman are doing the same job with the same qualifications, the man is paid more because he is a man.”(204:10).

“The Thing around Your Neck” is metaphorical. It is the strange new behaviour that Akunna has adopted. Facing various difficulties, she is unable to afford the American life which, in fact, motivates her to be involved in prostitution. But she ends up regretting acting in such a way that goes against the tradition of her homeland. As it is depicted in the text, the narrator shows that Akunna was educated in an environment that did not encourage prostitution. Then she never dreams to become harlot in her life. But she is now imposed by miserable life conditions under which she living. Her attitude in front of this obstacle confirms that the woman ends up acting in a strange way when she is in trouble. The narrator demonstrates the way Akunna is led into temptation and she remains strict in her decision.

He brushed your hand when you set the glass of water down. The fourth day, when you saw him arrive, you told Juan you didn't want that table anymore... You said no the four following days you are not going out with him, because you were uncomfortable with the way he looked at your face... And then the fifth night you panicked when was not standing at door after your shift... That day you didn't moan when he was inside you, you bit your lips and pretended that you didn't come because you knew he would worry." (2009 : 64-65-66).

Akunna's ability to resist against sexual harassment confirms that the woman is a decision maker. She understands that no matter how difficult is her life, she must not give in to any whim.

### 3. Prejudice against the woman

The woman's life is jeopardized because she has no rights to education. In "The Arrangers of the Marriage", for instance, Agatha is unhappy because her guardians are only exploiters. They have failed to pay her the academic fees imposing her to spend much time conducting their business instead of taking care of her studies. Her aunt's business has negatively impacted her studies. Of course, it is impossible for a school primary child to be able to manage business and studies at the same time. Agatha expresses her disappointment in her guardians this way.

I did not remind them that I wanted to take the JAMB exam again, and try for the university that while going to secondary school I had sold more bread in aunt Ada's bakery than all the other bakeries in Unugu sold. That is the furniture and floors in the house shone because of me (2009 : 90).

Having lived bad experiences at primary school, Agatha is disappointed to tell her guardians that she is in need of being registered at university. She is aware that they cannot accept to respond to her needs since a woman is only devoted to marriage. So she has been trained in such a way that should help her manage the household duties.

As patriarchy has a strong power over the woman, regardless various risks the poor Agatha would undergo in her marriage, she is forced to marry an American doctor and she must agree with them because it could be abnormal on their part if she fails to marry Dave. Then she could sound ungrateful to the people who brought her up since her childhood. Agatha's guardians claim to express their discontent with her. "What have not we done for you? We raise you as our own and then find you an *ezigbo di!* A doctor in America! It is like we won a lottery for you!" (2009:90). Such beliefs grounded in phallogocentric societies are also denounced by Chimamanda in *We should all be Feminists* in which she argues " We raise girls to see each other as competitors- not for jobs or accomplishments, which in my opinion can be a good thing- but for the attention of men." (2014:14)

Agatha is disappointed with her relatives' behaviour because she has not been given the opportunity to assess Dave before she gets married. Now lives in a bad small apartment which even misses pieces of furniture in it. She describes. "The room was hot; old musty smells hung heavy in the air... Still, both rooms lacked a sense of space,

as though the walls had become uncomfortable with each other, with so little between them" (2009:89).

Worst of it, the consequence of deciding on the woman's behalf jeopardizes her health. It sounds paradoxical. The evidences based on the narrative assert that Dave is a victim of sexually transmitted diseases. He does his very best to hide his health state before getting married to Agatha using trickery to gain confidence of his both father-in-law and mother-in-law. As a matter of fact, the pressure she has received from her guardians as well as her husband's ploy have made her suffer from an incurable disease which endangers her life. Agatha has been bitterly complaining about her health. "The sickness between my legs itched."(2009:90).

Indeed, Agatha's sickness symbolizes a heavy burden sinking the woman into misery.

Truth is the key factor for success in marriage. It helps the two fiancés know one another before they get married. Accordingly, Dave's attitude brings Agatha to break her marriage because she is afraid to keep on living with a husband who does not tell her lies and who is open to her.

## Conclusion

The thematic content of most Adichie's works has always proved to be thought-provoking if we consider the different interpretations they raise in the contemporary literary scholarship. This research paper has addressed the themes related to the social conditions that do not enable the female characters to prosper in their lives and the way they are viewed by the community. Behind the reading of the four selected stories of the corpus, different assumptions relating to the woman were raised so as to depict the lack of social harmony and stability, to warn the society to beware of the factors that hinder the economic growth and development of the community. The feminist approach has helped depict the real social life issues faced by the woman. The analysis was based on the instances of disparity and prejudice against the woman, the consequences of male-centred favouritism, sexual harassment, man's infidelity, as well as injustice as the fundamental issues that do not enable the female characters to prosper in their life.

The quality of this paper lies with the textual evidences that show to which extent *The Thing around Your Neck* depicts the strange behaviour that the woman ends up adopting because she is thrown into misery; as well as the heavy burden which does not make her voice to be heard in the community because she is expected to be weak. She is underestimated and does not deserve any rights to be treated in the same way as man since it is believed that man is superior to the woman by nature and is more important than the woman in society. Male-centred favouritism leads to corruption, spoilage of the male youth, impoliteness, theft, the society impoverishment because parents invest more to respond to man's needs to the woman's needs. Similarly, the portrayal of corrupt workers of some social classes denotes the total

absence of justice symbolizing the mismanagement as well as the incompetence of Nigerian's government. The high school drop-outs of most young Nigerian girls are caused by sexual harassment preventing the woman from attaining her goals. The woman stands for a slave to be exploited and to decide over her. Furthermore, man's cuckoldry leads to the household disturbance and lack of social harmony between husbands and their wives in their households; it also exposes the woman to catch sexual transmitted diseases since she is raised in such a way that does not give her the opportunities in order to develop her spirit for her well-being in society.

Without claiming -exhaustiveness, the present study has been able to bring out the basic threads from fiction to mirror the way our societies are woven and the problems which prevent women from getting their way through. Chimamanda's literature remains an object of constant and unceasing investigations so that this paper is just a modest contribution.

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