Gender Stereotypes in *Tsitsi Dangarembga's* Nervous Conditions and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

in

English Studies

In the

Faculties of Humanities

(School of Languages and Communication Studies)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

SUPERVISOR: Prof O.J. Abodunrin

2021

Declaration

I, Ntala Norman Mohlamonyane, solemnly declare that this mini-dissertation is the product of my personal effort. This work is original and was never submitted anywhere before assessment. Throughout the writing of this study, I have taken reasonable care to acknowledge all sources I used and avoided plagiarism and intentional misrepresentation of the data. Where sources are not acknowledged it would be out of human error.

Signed ....   Date... 06/01/2021

Dedication

This mini - dissertation is dedicated to my beloved late wife, Nkatla, our children, Nnoi, Bontshi and Kau for providing me with unwavering support throughout the years of study and through the process of writing this study. Further, the study is dedicated to the memories of my parents, Tshukudu and Moshidi and my sister, Mrs Hlolo Ditshego. They throughout their lives inspired me to achieve by believing in me. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

Acknowledgements

ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this study is to examine gender stereotypes and their profound impact on the socialisation of females and males. Further, it analyses the extent to which these stereotypes inform the relations and interactions between males and females and their general deportment. *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) by Buchi Emecheta are the selected primary fictional texts to be textually examined and analysed. The study focuses on women oppression, discrimination, misogyny, sexism, marginalisation and subjugation that flow from gender socialisation. Furthermore, gender socialisation cultivates in the male a macho sense of self-importance, privilege, entitlement, invincibility and substantive power. Lastly, the study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge about the topical debate on women emancipation and gender equity transforming patriarchal societies.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, Gender socialisation, Women Emancipation, Marginalisation, Patriarchy, Commodification, Femininity and Masculinity.

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Chapter 1

Background and Motivation

1.1 Introduction

Relations and interactions between men and women have been, over centuries, largely influenced and determined by the way society has constructed different gender roles for men and women. The construction of gender roles has resulted in gender stereotypes. These stereotypes often define the roles of the different genders in social, political, religious, educational and economic spheres. Consequently, stereotypically speaking, society has different expectations for both men/males and women/females in these various spheres. Society generally expects men to be more aggressive, tough, confident and adventurous in order to demonstrate masculinity, power and authority; they engage in physically demanding jobs like engineering and sports such as rugby, boxing and soccer to demonstrate their sporting prowess (Pattman and Chege, 2003: 34). Men can get employment and earn a living in a variety of professions as soldiers and engineers and thereby enhance their capacity to provide for themselves and their families, access education to improve their skills and knowledge to enhance their prospects for employment, own properties and take decisions independently without consulting or seeking approval from their spouses. They can marry multiple wives in line with polygamous traditional practices, with or without the other wife's consent. What is more, men can indulge in extra marital relationships, in some cases with women young enough to be their daughters or granddaughters, without society condemning their conduct. Despite men's fallibilities and shortcomings, society readily accepts them in critical leadership positions in various structures like religious institutions, political parties, private and public institutions and government.

Women, on the contrary, are expected to be docile, respectful to and compliant with all social norms, values and customs. They are expected to be caring, nursing and nurturing to demonstrate femininity. Women in some traditional communities are denied access to education for personal and professional development, excluded from job opportunities, cannot own property and take decisions without getting approval or affirmation from their male partners. They are regarded as eternal minors to be chaperoned by their male spouses. Traditionally, women are highly regarded if they bear children, particularly male

children. As a result, a married woman who gives birth to girls, or just one or two children or cannot bear children at all, is derided, scorned and disrespected. A childless woman is unjustly condemned without confirming whether she is the one or her male partner who has infertility problems. No woman can practise polyandry, except in very few parts of the world. A woman who might attempt to marry two men or more will be roundly condemned for what society generally regards as an aberration or abomination. Any woman who happens to have a romantic relationship with a man younger than her is equally vilified, denigrated and scorned by society. In some traditional communities, women cannot represent themselves in traditional courts or acquire land to reside. In several instances, they should be accompanied by a male person from their clans before they can be assisted. In some religious denominations women cannot be ordained as ministers; they do not go to religious sites when they go through their monthly periods or access certain areas in their religious institutions that are said to be holy. Consequently, women are prejudiced by religion, tradition, culture, class and politics (Ouahmiche and Boughouas, 2-16: 4, Barfi, Kohzadi and Azizmohammudi, 2016: 28).

Society, generally speaking, affords men more privileges, power and authority than women. It is this unjust, unequal, biased and discriminatory treatment of women by society that constitutes the primary motivation of this study on gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes feed the whole notion of patriarchy. Following from patriarchy is women subjugation, marginalisation, physical and psychological abuse, exploitation and sexism (Ouahmiche and Boughouas, 2016). The study will examine and analyse the development of gender stereotypes, their effects and impact on both the boy-child and girl- child as well as the man/male and his woman/female counterpart. The study seeks to contribute to the topical and seminal debate on gender issues, efforts to improve the status of the girl-child, in particular and women, in general and evaluate progress made towards the attainment of gender equality. Similarly, it will evaluate the factors that inhibit the efforts to develop society that is free of gender stereotypes and proffer possible solutions to the problems that flow from gender stereotypes, patriarchy and discrimination based on gender. The literary texts that will constitute the primary focus of the study are Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions (1988)* and Buchl Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood (1994).*

1.2. Research Problem

Society stereotypically defines and constructs the various roles for men/males and women/females. These roles are informed by assumptions that men and women are intrinsically different from one another. These assumptions greatly influence the relations and interactions between men and women and their deportment in various social spheres. Besides, the assumptions inform gender stereotypes which affect women and men in all spheres of life, such as homes, communities, religious institutions as well as institutions of learning and places of work. As a consequence, society, because of gender stereotypes, has different expectations for boys and girls early in life and then for men and women later in their adult life. Gender stereotypes unjustly grant men more privileges, status, power and authority over women and subject women to oppression, exploitation, subjugation and marginalisation. Gender stereotypes are principally undergirded by patriarchy, religion, culture, customs and tradition (Pattman and Chege, 2003: 138; Derrickson, 2017: 2).

In communities where patriarchy, religious fundamentalism and inflexible cultural practices, customs and traditions are observed, the boy children and men are unfairly advantaged and privileged. The boy child enjoys preferential treatment from the day he is born; he is proffered the solicitous support to acquire education in order to venture into various careers of choice and establish himself as independent fully fledged adults. On the contrary, the girl children and young women in particular and women in general are pressured by society to religiously comply with the societal cultural and traditional value system. They are denied education, forced into early marriages and confined to working the fields and doing household chores. Their rights to education, freedom of choice, association and movement are violated willy-nilly. They cannot access education, follow post school careers of their choice or live independently of men. (Pattman and Chege, 2003: 138, Derrickson, 2017: 2)

1.3   Literature Review

This section on literature review deals specifically with what other researchers and scholars have uncovered about the issues under focus in this study. Literature review, according to Biggam (2008:51), ''is characterised by a layout of what other researchers have done in respect of the research topic, clear presentation of the work of others, in-depth critical evaluation, emphasis on pertinent or emerging issues and proper citation of various relevant sources''.

In this study the researcher will focus on the pertinent issues which flow from gender stereotypes and adversely impact on the girl child and the women folk in the predominantly patriarchal society. These issues include gender socialisation, patriarchy, women discrimination, oppression and sexism, marriage and motherhood, the commodification of the girl child and women and women self-actualisation and development.

1.3.1 Gender Stereotypes and Gender Socialisation

United Nations Human Rights High Commission (2014:1) defines gender stereotypes as "a belief and that belief may cause its holder to make assumptions about members of the subject group, women and/or men". Courtenay (2000:1387) states that "gender stereotypes are among the meanings used by society in the construction of gender, and are characteristics that are generally believed to be typical either of women or of men". Common in the two definitions is that the development of gender stereotypes in people is inspired by belief. The construction of gender stereotypes by society is not supported by any empirical evidence. Society simply assumes certain innate characteristics are typically feminine and/or masculine. Consequently, the stereotypes then, according to Courtenay (2000: 1387), provide "collective, organised – and dichotomous – meanings of gender" and define the roles for each gender. Once the different gender roles are determined "people are encouraged to conform to stereotypic beliefs and behaviours, and commonly do conform to and adopt dominant norms of femininity and masculinity" (Courtenay, 2000: 1387). The dominant norms of femininity and masculinity are not rigid, static and universal, however. They are shaped by culture and cultural practices, are flexible and dynamic and are consciously or unconsciously learnt and acquired.

Gender stereotypes are underpinned by gender ideology which principally informs the process of gender socialisation. Hussein (cited in Ouahmiche and Boughouas, 2016: 3) defines gender ideology as:

> a systematic set of cultural beliefs through which society constructs and wields its gender relations and practices. Gender ideology contains legends, narratives and myths about what it means to be a man or woman and suggests how should each behave in society.

Any man or woman who for some unknown reason shows uncharacteristic attributes is seen as an aberration. Often such a man or woman is severely pilloried and ostracised by society. But the condemnation and criticism become very severe if the person who shows the unacceptable gender traits is female (Ouahmiche and Boughouas, 2016).

1.3.2 The Construction of Patriarchy

Patriarchy could be described as 'society, system or country that is ruled or controlled by the men' (Hornby: 1069). Booker (cited in Mphiko, 2016: 8), states that patriarchy "literally means the rule by the father". In traditional patriarchal societies, men are the touchstone of acceptable standards and values by which everybody must live. In such traditional societies boy children and men are highly valued and have unfettered rights and privileges. On the contrary, girl-children and women are denied many rights and privileges. The inequality in such societies naturally flows from gender stereotypes. The construction of patriarchy stems from gender stereotyping of males and females. The different gender roles arbitrarily assigned to men and women perpetuate patriarchy. Patriarchal practices get internalised to the extent where both men and women see totally nothing wrong with the injustices and unfairness visited upon women and the girl-children (Pattman and Chege, 2003, Vesanummi, 2007, Fonchingong, 2006).

The internalisation of the societally gender defined roles of the males and females makes either gender impervious as well as resistant to change. Attempts by the proponents of Feminism and Post-Colonialism to undo the gender stereotypes on both males and females are often met with fierce antagonism and criticism. Ironically, women who are opposed to patriarchy are viewed with suspicion and regarded as deviant by both the

women and men folks. Consequently, these deviant women should be corrected or fixed. Similarly, men who identify with the feminist and post-colonial course are deemed as feminine, weak and less than men. (Pattman and Chege, 2003, Ledwaba, 2019, Vesanummi, 2007)

1.3.3 Women Discrimination, Oppression and Sexism

The patriarchal treatment women receive in gendered societies invariably results in discrimination against women, oppression and sexism. Discrimination can be defined as "the practice of treating somebody or a particular group in society less fairly than others" (Hornby, 2005: 417). Oppression, according to Nkereuwem (cited in Mohammed, 2010: 463), is "any burdensome exercise of power or authority over somebody with continual injustice and cruelty that makes that person being oppressed worried, uncomfortable or unhappy". Similarly, sexism could be defined as "the unfair treatment of people, especially women, because of their sex" (Hornby, 2005:1339). The discrimination, oppression and sexism that women face should, according to Mbatha (1998: 29), be placed in "wider political and economic framework" as black women face racial, gender and class oppression, as well. Particularly, women are discriminated against when it comes to the division of unremunerated labour in the house, access to education, development and job opportunities. What is more, they face gender and class discrimination. The combined burden of discrimination, oppression and sexism on women is worsened by early marriage, bearing and rearing of children, polygamy, poor wages and unemployment (Mohammed, 2000: 486: Uwakweh, 2016: 79-80). Ironically, older women, especially mothers and grandmothers, play a significant role in the perpetuation of the oppression of women. According to Mohammed (2010:468), "mothers continue to oppress and subject their daughters to inhuman and degrading circumstances in order to help maintain the position of man within their patriarchal society".

Sexism against women manifests itself in male-dominated societies through compulsory heterosexuality, rape, violence, condemnation for bareness, killing of young women, virginity testing and _ukuthwala_ (isiZulu and isiXhosa term for the abduction of a young unmarried woman by a man who intends to marry her without her parents' consent). In those communities, women eternally remain helpless victims.

Women discrimination, oppression and sexism are disconcertingly rife in societies where gender socialisation holds sway. Invariably, gender socialisation nurtures and entrenches gender stereotypes. In such communities the girl child and women are discriminated against in various social spaces, educational and religious institutions and places of work. The girl child and women are, except in countries where there are purposeful and deliberate programmes to address gender equity like in South Africa and Rwanda, discriminated against when it comes to the provision of education, leadership in political and religious organisations, employment opportunities and promotion at work. These discriminatory tendencies are coupled with oppression and sexism. Oppression and sexism assume different faces. In certain school subjects such as Hospitality and Consumer Studies or university programmes like Social Work and Nursing are dominated by female students. Courses in mining and engineering, for instance, are largely done by male students. These discriminatory practices, oppression and sexism condemn the girl child and the women folk to poverty and economic dependency (Pattman and Chege 2003, Crespi, nd, Mohammed, 2010, Nkereuwem, 1997).

1.3.4 Marriage and Motherhood

Marriage of a daughter marks an important milestone in her personal life and the life of her parents, particularly, the father. The consummation of the marriage happens when the young couple have children. In patriarchal societies, the preferred children are boys. They are the ones who will immortalise the parents and take care of them in old age, it is often assumed. Treasured as marriage is, it often becomes a millstone around the neck of the young bride, if she does not bring forth children. The affectionate warm relations between the wife and husband soon sour and deteriorate. Sometimes the marriage irrevocably unravels until there is a divorce or the man conveniently marries a second wife and neglects the "barren" one. The second wife will, it is stereotypically assumed, bear children as is shown by Amatokwu in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) (Vesanummi, 2007: 38 – 41).

Like marriage, motherhood is significantly treasured and valued. A woman without a child loses her dignity, prestige and status and is ultimately "cut from the group of the venerated" (Fonchingong, 2006: 140). Commenting on the importance of motherhood,

Amadiume (1987: 78) states that "The barren women might weep" on seeing women emotionally charged when they dance to the maternity songs when a baby is born. In such societies, it is assumed that motherhood fulfils the woman; it makes her appreciate that she has not disgraced her father, family and husband. In *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994), Nnu Ego gets fulfilled as a mother in her second marriage to Nnaife after the childless one with Amatokwu because the former has successfully made her the mother of many children, more importantly of sons. However, motherhood fills the woman with trepidation, heartache and anxiety as she has to ensure that the children are fed, clothed, healthy and educated. (Barfi, Kohzadi and Azizmohummadi, 2015: 31; Fonchigong, 2006: 140; Vesanummi M, 2007: 38-41).

1.3.5 The Commodification of Girl Children and Women

Patriarchy and gender stereotypes make society, in general and men, in particular, treat women as commodities they can dispense of. Mphiko (2016: 8), defines commodification as "the process through which goods, services, ideas, and human beings are reduced to the status of commodities in a capitalist society". In the context of this study, commodification refers to the treatment the girl children and women receive at the hands of patriarchal society. In the process of commodification, women are denied their human dignity, individuality, rights and freedoms which they should enjoy as human beings and men's equals.

The reduction of the girl children and women into ordinary transactional commodities is an affront on and a gross violation of their individual and collective human dignity and inalienable human rights. The girl children and women are regarded insofar as their manual labour in the homes, pride price their in-laws bring when they marry, fecundity and fulfilling the sexual needs of their male spouses. To realise complete commodification of the girl children and women, society in general and particularly men deny them educational opportunities and marry them off to young men they do not know. The young men continue to abuse these women as demonstrated by Nnu Ego and Mainini in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) and *Nervous Conditions* (1988) respectively.

1.3.6 Women Self-actualisation and Development

Engelbrecht et al (2001: 86), define self-actualisation as ''man's ability to express his potentialities in the most effective and complete manner". Development, according to Krech et al (1982: 30), is "any sequential and continuous process of change, both quantitative and qualitative in any physical or psychological structure or function in any direction". It is natural for human beings to self-actualise and develop. However, certain circumstances and conditions might significantly and permanently constrict, hamper and frustrate these critically important processes. In the case of women, it is gender stereotypes and patriarchy and their concomitant poverty, subjugation, marginalisation, oppression and denial of opportunities that are barriers to women's self-actualisation and development.

Self-actualisation and development are quintessential to the socio-economic advancement of singularly individuals and society generally. Denying any person, be it a male person due to racism or a female one due to gender stereotypes, is sacrilegious. The protagonist in *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Tambu, is intermittently made to withdraw from school once her parents cannot keep her and her brother, Nhamo in school due to poverty. The simple criterion to arrive at the decision to withdraw Tambu is her gender. Similarly, the twin girls, Kehinde and Taiwo suffer the same fate in *The Joys of Motherhood.* They are engaged in petty trade and subsistence farming as their education is not prioritised. But their brothers are supported with every available little financial resource and given the necessary moral support. Hence, they were able to study up to university abroad.

1.4 Role of Theory in the Study

Literary theory plays a pivotal role in the critical analysis of works of literature. It is to literary criticism what architectural framework and design is to civil construction. Literary theory constitutes the basis which informs critical literary analysis of texts. Importantly, literary theory assists the critic to situate literary texts within the particular cultural, historical and theoretical contexts and epochs. Besides, literary theory sharply raises the critical issues to be addressed. For instance, the Feminist theory addresses itself to the

myriad prejudicial issues that negatively affect girl children and women lives. Girl children and women are judged by patriarchal society through the male value system. Feminists advocate for the total overall of the theoretical regime to advance girl children and women emancipation from the clutches of patriarchy, gender stereotypes and all their unjust and oppressive ramifications. Similarly, the Post-Colonial theory challenges the universalisation of the Western value system which denigrates, demeans and condemns the Asian and African nations' civilisations. It calls for the complete rejection of the putative Western value system and the valorisation of the previously demeaned cultures, histories, languages, the arts and knowledge systems.

1.4.1 The Feminist and Post-Colonial Literary Theories

Feminist literary and Post-Colonial literary theories share some similarities and parallels. Both theories stand against ideologically constructed domination of the less powerful by the dominant group. Proponents of Feminism recognise that women have over the centuries been subjected to marginalisation, exploitation, abuse, oppression, inequality, social injustice and unpaid household labour, perpetrated by men and society. According to de Beauvior (cited in Abodunrin, 2017: 1404), "throughout history women have been reduced to objects" that society and men use as they please. Like women who were regarded as inferior to their male counterparts, the colonised people were equally regarded as inferior by the Western colonisers through the binary construction of the inferior Orient and superior Occident. This construction is termed "Orientalism" by Edward Said. According to Said (2014: 177), Orientalism has legitimised Western imperialism in the eyes of Western governments and their electorates and it "has also insidiously worked to convince the East that Western culture represented universal civilisation". Accepting Western culture could benefit the Eastern inhabitants and would, according to Said (2014: 177), make "them participants in the most advanced civilisation the world had ever seen"

The universalisation of the Western values makes the other civilisations, philosophies, cultures, literatures and customs, particularly of the African indigenes, to be disparaged, undermined and ridiculed. The Eurocentric approach to knowledge development and

acquisition robs humanity of the vast treasure of diverse cultures, myths, legends and indigenous medicinal and horoscopic knowledge of the Asian and African people.

It is the primary objective of Feminism and Post-Colonialism to disabuse the girl children, women and the colonised of the misconception about their inferiority and the spurious superiority of the boy children, men and the West. Feminism propagates that literary works written by women should be found and made to occupy the important place in literary studies. These works should be women centred, use the language and images that promote the status of women and culture of the colonised. Similarly, Post-Colonial theory rejects the putative Eurocentric works and demands that the colonised people should reclaim their historical and cultural past, write in their indigenous languages to escape "self-colonisation" (Barry, 1995: 120–124; 187 – 191; Davis and Schleifer, 1989: 465–466, Rice and Waugh, 1991:95).

In both Feminist Literary theory and Post-Colonial theory the ideology of authors informs the contents of their literary texts. Showalter (1989:94) recognises that unless women produce works that are gynocentric, men will undoubtedly continue to portray women in the negative light in literature. As the result women experiences will forever be silenced in the male dominated literary space. Showalter (1989: 94) observes: 'If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics and the limited role women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but what have thought women should be.' Showalter (1989: 94) advocates for gynocentricism which aims to 'construct a female framework for the analysis of women literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories' (1989:94). Women literature should deal with their daily challenges, themes and identities. Likewise, Post-Colonialism recognises the need to write from the colonized people's point of view in order to capture and represent their lived experiences. The literature the colonized produce should explore their society and its issues on all fronts (Barry, 1995: 187 – 189).

Coupled with content is the language men and the coloniser use in the production of literature. Language is a powerful tool that can be used to sustain, buttress and maintain discrimination, suppression and domination of one by the other. Language contains, Showalter (1989: 465) argues, that "inherently oppressive aspects for women of a male-

constructed language system". Hence, feminists felt it was time women writers developed their own language that would accurately and in an unbiased way reflect their own experiences. They argued that it was very necessary for women to "invent a language that is not oppressive, that does not leave them speechless but that loosens the tongue' (Showalter, 1989: 465). Similarly, some proponents of Post-Colonial theory, like Obi Wali and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, reject the continued use of the colonisers' languages. They advocate for the use of indigenous languages in the production of literary works. Their position is that the colonisers' language, according to Barry (2009: 188), "is permanently tainted, and that to write in it involves a crucial acquiescence in colonial structures". Therefore, colonial languages should be abandoned in favour of the indigenous languages. Consequently, the study will adopt the major tenets of feminist and post-colonial theories to illuminate and elucidate the construction of gender stereotypes and their debilitating effects in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions (1988).*

1.5 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The study is undertaken with the purpose to contribute to the development of knowledge in literary criticism specifically and women studies in general. What is more, it will advance the topical debate on gender equality, gender stereotypes and patriarchy and raise the society's level of consciousness about the injustices occasioned by gender stereotypes which undoubtedly flow from the social gender scripting of males and females in patriarchal communities across the world in general and in Africa in particular.

1.5.1 Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of the study is to evaluate and analyse thematic issues raised particularly around the whole notion of gender stereotypes in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) by Buchi Emecheta. The study will focus on how stereotypical gender attitudes affect the dichotomously defined relationships between the male and female characters in the texts, in particular, and society, in general.

Generally, gender stereotypes largely determine the roles of each gender in society. From the early days of the conception the pregnant woman, the prospective father, the grandparents from both sides and the entire clan wait with great anticipation for the unborn baby. Once the baby is born, his/her gender determines the type of reception he or she will get. The baby boy is received with huge fanfare, great joy and fitting celebration. A case in point is the celebrations to mark the births of Oshia and his young brothers in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994). The birth of the twin girls (Kehinde and Taiwo) is not celebrated with palm wine. Instead of welcoming the birth of the girls, the father, Nnaife, Emecheta writes, 'laughed loudly as he was wont to do when faced with an impossible situation' and asks: 'Nnu Ego, what are these? Could you not have done better? Where will we all sleep, eh? What will they eat? (127).' The girl child is from birth unwelcomed, rejected, devalued and commodified. Throughout her life she is disadvantaged. She is being prepared for the life of hardship bedevilled by early parent-organised marriage, unremunerated hard labour, burdensome motherhood, discrimination, subjugation, sexism, commodification and exploitation.

1.5.2 Research Questions

The study focuses on gender stereotypes in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood (1994).* The textual analyses of the texts will be guided by the following research questions:

I   How are gender stereotypes developed in young boys and girls?

Ii   How do young boys and girls treat one another and later in life when they are grown up adults in gendered societies?

iii   What role do women play in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes that disadvantage them?

Iv   What is the impact of gender stereotypes on the psychology and deportment of both men and women?

V   What active and transformative role can, in particular, both men and women and society, in general, play in changing society's gender attitudes?

The study will address itself to the research questions in order to come up with recommendations and findings on how to genuinely develop a true germane human society which is characterised by gender equality, total and full respect for the dignity of every individual irrespective of gender, equal opportunity and social justice.

1.6. Research Methodology

1.6.1 The Choice of Research Method

Research methodology involves general arrangement of the research, its focus and how the study will unfold generally. The research method is either quantitative or qualitative. Importantly, it is the research topic which determines the methodology the researcher uses in conducting the research. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will employ the qualitative research approach as the research focuses on the views, behaviour, perspectives and feelings.

The aspects which will be considered under the research methodology are research method and design, data collection, data analysis and quality criteria.

1.6.2 Research Method and Design

The research method to be used in the study is the qualitative research method. The qualitative research method involves, according to Denzin and Lincoln (cited in Biggim, 2008: 87), studying "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". Holloway and Wheeler (2002:30) define qualitative research as a "form of social enquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experience and the world in which they live."

The qualitative research method, through a person-centred holistic and humanistic perspective, grants the researcher an opportunity to carry out an in-depth and thorough exploration of the behaviour, perspectives, experiences and feelings of both the female and male characters in the sampled novels, namely, *Nervous Conditions* and *The Joys*

of Motherhood. The study will focus specifically on the interactions of male and female characters, male and male as well as female and female relations.

Research design, on the other hand, according to Burns and Grove (2003: 195), is "a blueprint for conducting a study with a maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings". Another scholar, Porahoo (1997: 142), defines a research design as "a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analysed".

The data for this study will be collected through the critical study of the two primary texts, *Nervous Conditions* and *The Joys of Motherhood* and other literary works. The other documentary sources which will be used for the collection of data are other scholars' dissertations, theses, journals as well as electronic sources. Besides, the researcher will regularly interact with the supervisor, fellow postgraduate students and ordinary people to source information.

1.6.3 Sampling

Sampling, according to Thomas et al (1985: 86), refers to "the group of subjects on which the study will be conducted". For the purpose of this study, the researcher has purposefully sampled the two feminist texts, to wit, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994*)* written by the Zimbabwean national, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Buchi Emecheta of Nigeria respectively, in order to analyse gender stereotypes and their impact on both male and female characters.

The two novels are sampled particularly because they specifically address themselves to gender stereotypes and the impact gender stereotypes have on the general conduct of both male and female characters. Dangarembga and Emecheta critique the patriarchal practices singularly in their respective countries, to wit, Zimbabwe and Nigeria and across the globe in general. Through their works they expose the injustice girl children and women face in societies where everything is judged by the normative male standards. Furthermore, the authors sufficiently demonstrate that the girl children and women are also abundantly endowed with irrepressible potential and ability as sufficiently demonstrated by Tambu and Lucia. Afforded the same opportunities and support as boy

children and men, girl children and women can undoubtedly match their male counterparts in all fields of human endeavour or even substantially outperform them.

1.6.4 Data Collection

This section deals with the process or methods which the researcher uses to gather data in order to illuminate the subject of research. The data will be gathered through textual analyses of the primary texts, the reading of various documentary sources and interviews with people where necessary.

Data on gender stereotypes will be collected from the primary texts, namely, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994). Subsequently, the data will be textually analysed from the Feminist and Post-Colonial perspectives. Over and above the primary texts, the researcher will study dissertations, theses, articles from various sources like the internet, journals, critical reviews and theoretical literary criticism texts and other literary texts by women writers to carry out the research.

1.6.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis entails the process of ordering, structuring and giving meaning to the volume of information collected in respect of the objective of the study (de Vos, 2011: 397). The collection of data per se is not exhaustive and conclusive. Logically, it leads to a phase where the data have to be coherently organised into thematic units, analysed and interpreted to gain new insights about the researched phenomenon, elucidate issues and validate or reject the available findings, theories or knowledge.

The collected data from the primary texts and supplementary literature will be synthesised and arranged thematically for the purpose of coherence and clarity. The data will be instrumental in making people, particularly the girl-children and women conscious of (i) the negative effects of gender stereotypes; (ii) campaigns such as the '100 Men March' and the 'Shut Down' march by women on the Union Buildings in Pretoria, South Africa, against stereotyping women, gender-based violence, sexism, discrimination and

marginalisation of girl-children and women will multiply and intensify; (iii) the struggle to transform society's attitude toward gender issues shall be inclusive; (iv) government departments, schools, religious institutions will amplify efforts to re-orientate society when it comes to issues of gender equality; and (v) more research will be done on vexing gender-related pay disparity, poverty amongst women, sexual harassment, in general and at work places, violence against girl-children and women, and crimes, such as, murder and rape.

1.6.6 Quality Criteria

Research is ''the organised, systematic search for answers to the questions we ask'' (Hatch and Lazaraton cited in Dornyei, 2007: 15). Dornyei (2007: 15) simply refers to research as a ''disciplined inquiry''. To obviate presenting work of sub-standard quality, it is imperative that the study should satisfy the universally acceptable standards for research.

Scholarly research needs to fulfil the four critical criteria for quality. These criteria, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Krefting (1991:214), are credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Of necessity, the research should reflect reality and ideas of participants and base argument on sound and strong evidence. Critically, the research should exclude the researcher's pre-conceived ideas and assumptions.

1.7. Credibility of Research

Credibility of research refers to the research's "confidence of the data", posits Polit (2001:32). According to Cameron (2011:6), credibility determines "how congruent the findings are with reality". The research findings should reflect the perceptions of the subject of research. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990: 160), theoretical concepts in research should be characterised by generalisability and transferability. Credibility is strengthened by prolonged involvement, persistent observation, triangulation and peer debriefing. To satisfy credibility criteria, the researcher shall carry out a review of existing

literature, consult other researchers' theses and dissertations and seek scholarly guidance from the supervisor.

The study concentrates on gender stereotypes, their adverse effects on the relationships between males and females, females and females and males and males. The data come from *Nervous Conditions* (1988*), The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) and other secondary sources such as plays, novels, journals, theses and dissertations.

1.8. Dependability of Research

A research is dependable if it is accurate and consistent and its data have been stable over time and over conditions. Dependability is defined by Cameron (2011: 6) as 'having sufficient details and documentation of methods employed so that the study can be scrutinised and replicated'. It is determined through using two methods, namely, stepwise replication and inquiry audit. In this study the researcher will use the inquiry audit through subjecting the study to the scrutiny of the supervisor and co-supervisor where applicable.

The inquiry audit refers to data and relevant documents being scrutinised by the external reviewer for validation. To subject the study to inquiry audit, the various chapters, to wit, the research proposal, chapters 2, 3 and 4 and the conclusion will be periodically submitted to the supervisor.

1.9. Confirmability of Research

The object of any empirical research is to arrive at unbiased and unprejudiced findings which truthfully reflect the genuine experiences of the participants in the research. It is from the participants' responses where the researcher should draw conclusive findings. The researcher's biases, assumptions and preoccupations do not have any place in the research findings. The untainted findings by the researcher and the supervisor's independent adjudication of the research enhance the confirmability of research.

Confirmability, according to Cameron (2011:6), "refers to ensuring that the findings are the result of the experiences of the informants rather than the preferences of the

researcher(s) and can be achieved through an audit trail of the raw data, memos, note, data reduction and analysis". This precludes the researcher's assumptions and perceptions from interfering with the findings of research through enhanced neutrality and objectivity. The researcher will analyse the primary texts, collect information from various documentary sources and work on the final research and periodically submit chapters to the supervisor of the study.

1.10. Transferability of Research

Dornyei (2007: 57) defines transferability of research as "the applicability of the results to other contexts". Every researcher carries out research in a particular context which has impactful variables that determine the findings at which the researcher arrives. Such findings, in the words of Cameron (2011: 6), should "provide sufficient data and context to enable the audience to judge whether the findings can be applied to other situations and contexts".

In this study the researcher will collect data on gender stereotypes from the primary texts, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) and other relevant sources that will assist him carry out the study. The novels focus on life in patriarchal societies in Zimbabwe and Nigeria where the boy children are highly valued *vis a vis* the girl children who are regarded in terms of the hard household labour they do and the pride price that they will bring into the family when they she marry at a tender age. In these patriarchal societies girl children and women are subjected to psychological and physical abuse, marginalisation, subjugation and are burdened with child - bearing and raising responsibilities. On the contrary, the boy children and men folk enjoy unfettered rights and unlimited privileges and advantages.

1.11 Significance of Study

The study is undertaken many years after Dangarembga and Emecheta wrote *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994; first published in 1979), respectively, to expose and protest against the prejudicial gender stereotypes and injustices that women face on a daily basis. The authors critique the universal ideological

system of patriarchy in different gendered societies despite the progress made on gender equity in some African societies, such as Rwanda and South Africa. Research into gender stereotypes is more singularly pertinent and topical, generally in patriarchal Africa and particularly in South Africa where violence against women and girl-children is on the increase. Therefore, this study on gender stereotypes will be singularly significant in several ways. It would:

- contribute to knowledge development in the field of women literature and gender studies and literary studies, in general.
- raise awareness about women's struggles against gender stereotypes and their many ramifications.
- educate society about the injustices of patriarchal practices and promote gender equality.
- aid efforts to transform society in order to realise every individual's potential in the world that is free of violence, marginalisation, exploitation, subjugation, inequality and the other forms of injustices that blight society because of gender stereotypes.
- make society, particularly girl children and women conscious about the negative effects of gender stereotypes.
- multiply and intensify campaigns such as the '100 Men March' and the 'Shut Down' march by women on the Union Buildings in Pretoria (South Africa) against stereotyping women, gender-based violence, sexism, discrimination and marginalisation of girl-children and women.
- make the struggle to transform society's attitude toward gender issues more inclusive.
- amplify efforts to re-orientate society when it comes to issues of gender equity by government departments, schools and religious institutions.
- do more research on vexing gender-related pay disparity, poverty amongst women, sexual harassment in general and at places of work, violence and crime against girl children and women, femicide and rape.

Gender stereotypes affect numerous facets of human life. They affect the way the girl children and the boy children are raised, their access to education and development opportunities, work opportunities and advancement at work and roles in marriage and family responsibilities, to mention but a few. For instance, many leadership positions in the middle and top management in both the private and public institutions are

predominantly occupied by males. On the contrary, the preponderance of females is found in the lower ranks with very low remuneration rates. Elderly and young women are often subjected to gender-inspired sexual harassment, psychological and physical abuse and violence in the places of work and in their homes. Therefore, the study will contribute to the transformation of societal attitude towards gender issues, sensitise people about the injustices occasioned by gender stereotypes, bring about gender parity and equality and be instructive to both young and old males and females that girl children and women deserve of every chance and space in the world to live freely and realise their full potential in all aspects of human life.

1.12 Ethical Considerations

Every scholarly research needs to comply with "the moral standards that the researcher should consider in all methods in all stages of research design" (http://ais.utm,my/researchportal. 2015. Accessed on 17.09.2018). The research topic submitted to the supervisor for consideration for approval was first discussed with him. The topic is empirical and qualitative. The qualitative research, according to Dornyei (2007: 64), "is inherently interested in people 's personal views and often targets sensitive and intimate issues." This makes it critically important to consider ethical issues before embarking on the research task at hand.

The key ethical issues that require thorough consideration are the protection of the participants in the research from any physical or mental harm. The researcher should strive to maintain a balance between the cost of the research to him and its benefit to the participants. The researcher's ability to share the required information with the participants is crucial. It is obligatory on the researcher to inform the participants of their rights to accept or decline participation in the research without being pressured or to withdraw from the research without furnishing reasons for the withdrawal to the researcher. Advisedly, the consent to take part in the research should be preferably in the written form. The relationship between the researcher and the participants should be empathetic and characterised by acceptable rapport. Additionally, the methods for collecting data should be cognisant of the legalistic requirements and protocols which

protect participants, particularly vulnerable groups such as children participants in the research. Once collected the data should be handled with the utmost care. The identity or anonymity of the participants should not be compromised; the ownership of the data needs to be expressly specified from the onset and the privacy and sensitivity of the data should be respected. Importantly, where the data involve test scores the research findings should not be purposefully manipulated to achieve predetermined research outcomes.

Research is carried out in particular legal contexts and specific educational institutions. Therefore, the researcher should at all material times before doing the research, during the research and until to the end of the study, studiously comply with the legalistic and institutional requirements. In line with the requirements, the research topic was discussed with the supervisor. Then the research proposal was submitted for his academic consideration and approval. Subsequently, the researcher appeared before the Senior Degree Committee of the School of Languages and Communication Studies. The School approved of the research proposal. It was then referred to the Faculty Committee for Faculty approval and submitted to Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) for ethical scrutiny and clearance.

The ethics of any research depends hugely on the researcher's professionalism, accountability and reliability (Dornyei, 2007: 66). According to Dornyei (2007: 66), ''at the heart of research ethics lies the moral character of the researcher.'' To uphold the ethically scholarly nature of the research, the researcher did not plagiarise, fabricate, falsify or misrepresent the authorship of any sources, evidence collected, dates, research findings or conclusions from documentary or electronic sources. Neither did the researcher knowingly or negligently use his professional role to fraudulently and unfairly advantage or benefit himself, did not disclose any relevant findings or information or selectively report his findings to some stakeholders during the process of doing the research and thereafter (Dornyei, 2007: 64 - 72, Leedy and Ormond, 2015: 120 - 126, Mouton, 2017: 238 - 246).

The researcher, therefore, truthfully commits that this study is entirely and honestly his own work. Any useful textual and relevant electronic sources that the researcher might have consulted, cited, and quoted and any information gathered from people were fully acknowledged.

Lastly, the names of the characters used in the primary texts, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1999) are fictional. They were used as such and could not be used to refer to any particular individuals whose dignity might be directly or indirectly impugned by the study thereby resulting in litigious action (Dornyei, 2007: 64 - 72, Leedy and Ormond, 2015: 120 -126, Mouton, 2017: 238 - 246).

1.13. Conclusion

Gender stereotypes are a very sensitive subject to research particularly in a society that has just come out of colonial subjugation and apartheid oppression, and one that is plagued by countless murders of women and young girls by their male partners and acquaintances, sky-rocketing rape statistics and physical and emotional abuse. Over the years, men used to enjoy countless privileges bestowed on them by patriarchal practices. This included access to education and employment so that men could provide for their families, have the privilege to marry as many wives as one pleased or conclude contracts with or without their spouses' consent and own properties. On the contrary, women were regarded as eternal minors. They were not allowed to engage in any economic activities other than working on the family fields and doing household chores. In addition, women were burdened with giving birth to many children, preferably male children and raising them. The marginalisation and subjugation of women denied them access to education, employment, ownership of properties and accumulation of wealth. Sadly, their intellectual and skill capacity was stifled, curtailed and undermined, chances of gainful employment were reduced and the acquisition of property and accumulation of wealth were non-existent. This rendered women significantly vulnerable and exploitable.

As women became aware of their oppression, they sought to find out what was the major cause of their suffering. It, therefore, became necessary for women to challenge patriarchy, oppression, marginalisation and sexism. The launch of the challenge for patriarchy is predicated on two theoretical bases, namely, Feminism and Post-Colonial theory.

The Feminist and Post-Colonial theoretical approaches contributed inordinately towards raising awareness about the oppression, subjugation, exploitation and marginalisation of

girl-children and women by patriarchal societies. Consequently, the proponents of these approaches relentlessly agitated for equal rights and total emancipation of girl children and women and the colonised nations across the world. Numerous campaigns have been organised in various countries nationally and at international fora to raise the multiple issues like discrimination at places of work, unremunerated household duties, femicide and abuse that still affect girl children and women. For example, in 2018, responding to the rising spate of rape and femicide, the president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa and the government leadership called a special sitting of parliament and a special conference to deliberate on the problems of gender-based violence and femicide in the country. At the conference women narrated harrowing stories of physical, mental and sexual abuses that left the audience, particularly the president and former Speaker, Baleka Mpete, visibly traumatised and shaken. Some women showed the scars and bodily deformities which were permanently left by the abusers and are a sad and constant reminder of the abuses they survived. Unfortunately, many young women such as Uyinene Mrwetyana, a female student at the University of Cape Town and Khensani Maseko, a female student at Rhodes University, were unable to relate their stories as they were brutally killed by men. Their deaths happened due to the spurious sense of entitlement men have to girls and women as well as their bodies which naturally flows from gender ideological socialisation that is undergirded by gender stereotypes.

Transformative attempts are afoot to correct the situation, encouragingly, however. For instance, South Africa has a Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities to focus particularly on and mainstream issues affecting these vulnerable populations in the country. Similarly, the Directorate of Women at the United Nations headed by the former first woman deputy president of South Africa, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is seized with the object of the advancement of the course for total women emancipation. But the road ahead is still long, steep and meandering and the journey is arduous and energy-sapping. Surely, the road ahead and the journey need single-minded and unrelenting effort to achieve gender parity.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on and explores gender stereotypes, gender socialisation, racism and patriarchy in African writings. The primary texts for the study are *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994). Over and above the sampled texts, the researcher will utilise other scholars' theses and dissertations, journals, literary texts and electronic sources to elucidate and develop his research.

2.2 Exploration of Stereotypes and Socialisation in African Women's Writings

The manner in which men and women socially relate and interact and the various roles that they assume in society and many various social institutions like the family, religious institutions and tribal courts are greatly influenced by gender socialisation that is carried out very early in life by the family, peer groups, media, teachers as well as political and religious leaders (Gneezy, Leonard and John 2006:2). According to Crespi (2006:2), gender socialisation is "a more focused form of socialisation, it is how children of different sexes are socialised into their gender roles and taught what it means to be male or female". Through gender socialisation males and females are raised believing that they are intrinsically different; males stereotypically possess superior intellectual ability, physical strength and emotional/psychological make-up. Besides, males are adventurous, assertive, aggressive, independent and task-oriented. On the contrary, females are sensitive, gentle, dependent, emotional and people-oriented (Pattman and Chege, 2003: 43-44; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003: 35; Crespi, nd: 2). Binary differentiation of males and females reinforces and entrenches gender stereotypes. Courtenay (2000: 1387) states that gender stereotypes "are among the meanings used by society in the construction of gender, and are characteristics that are generally believed to be typical of women or men". Gender stereotypes influence people to make unsubstantiated assumptions about members of the subject group (United Nations

Human Rights High Commission, 2014:1). Once the assumptions are established, people who hold them unquestioningly live by them. The people's general conduct, interactions and outlook on life are largely coloured by these unscientific assumptions.

Male and female writers who subscribe to this stereotypical view of gender produce literary works that promote, perpetuate, reinforce and sustain the stereotypes. Male characters in such works are portrayed as superior in all aspects whereas female characters are inferior and subservient as shown in works of pioneering, mainly male African writers, such as, Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka, for instance. Opposed to the adherents of gender stereotypes and everything negative and prejudicial that flows from them are the proponents of Feminist and other variants of Post-Colonial literary theories.

Feminists and Post-Colonial female writers, for example, brought a totally new understanding to the various challenges that women and the previously colonised confronted on a daily basis and proposed possible solutions to them. The Feminists and Post- Colonial writers agitate for equality, justice and fairness for women and the colonised respectively. Radical feminists are opposed to any unjust practice, discriminatory stereotypes and ideologies that place men at the centre and make them the standard norm but locate women on the margins (Barry, 2009: 117-120; Bartens, 2007: 156-157). However, post-colonial thinkers recognise the lived experiences, cultural and historical contexts and languages of the colonised as central in the production of literature and literary outputs of the colonised. The phenomenal impact of the two literary theories has conscientised, emboldened and spurred on women writers like Nwapa in *Efuru* (1966), Ama Ato Aidoo in *Change*s (1991), Emecheta in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), Dangarembga in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Ba' in *So Long a Letter* (1989), to mention just a few, to confront and challenge gender stereotypes and their attendant issues. These women writers, while recognising the shared legacy of colonial subjugation with their male counterparts, decry women discrimination, oppression and sexism, marriage and motherhood. What is more, they deplore polygamy, patriarchy, oppressive customs, culture, traditions and religion, the commodification of the girl children and women and denial of educational opportunities for girls for self-actualisation and self–development (Okafor, 2002; Uwakweh, 1995: 81). A detailed discussion on gender stereotypes will be presented in chapters three and four focusing on the sampled texts, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994), respectively.

Women voices were muted in the African literature prior to Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966)*.* In the novel, Nwapa, according to Okofar (2002: 7), "communicates the woman personality that contravenes the earlier depiction of docility and subservience in most of the novels written by men." Before *Efuru* was written, the literary scene was significantly dominated by male writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka, among others. Through these male writers' works, according to Showalter (1989), "we are not learning what women have felt, but what men have thought women should be". Invariably, their works were predominantly written from the male perspective. There was no way in which their works could escape to reflect the strictly patriarchal values they imbibed in gendered and colonised society. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959), for instance, focuses on the male protagonist Okwonkwo who treasures his tradition and values that are threatened by colonisation, Western education/values and Christianity. As patriarchy dictates, he is married to many wives, holds a prominent position in the community and is respected as a brave, blood-thirsty and violent warrior throughout Umoufia and the surrounding villages. In contrast to this depiction of brave and assertive male character(s), Achebe "presents his early women characters as victims of a society regulated by cultural norms and traditional values.'' (Fonchingong, 2007: 137)

Realising that their experiences in gendered societies are totally different to the men's and are not accurately reflected in literary works produced by men, women, emboldened by feminist/womanist and post-colonial perspectives, started to produce works that focus more on what they go through on a daily basis. They countered the stereotypically held view that men are the standard and norm by which all should live. Nwapa, Emecheta, Ba, Dangarembga and Ama Ato Aidoo put women at the centre of their literary works; rais critical issues of patriarchy, polygamy, women discrimination, widow inheritance, oppression and sexism; marriage and motherhood challenges, as well as the commodification of girl-children and women as a result of oppressive cultural practices, tradition, customs and religion and social expectations that shape women's behaviour and the denial of access to education that negatively affect women. These women writers, Reimenschneider (cited in Uwakweh, 2016: 76), argues "promise a fresh insight on women's reality and experiences that are generally inaccessible to the male tradition".

Commenting on the critical importance of women writers, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (cited in Ali: 2012: 188) in her essay, "The Female Writer and her Commitment" maintains that:

> The female writer should be committed in three ways: as a writer, as a woman and as a Third World person: and her biological womanhood is implicated in all three. As a writer, she has to be committed to her art, seeking to do justice to it at the highest levels of expertise…. being committed to one's womanhood…would mean delineating the experience of women as women…. destroying male stereotypes of women…. Being aware of oneself as a Third World person implies being politically conscious, offering perspectives on and perceptions of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism as they affect and shape our lives and historical destinies.

The role of women writers is threefold. They are artistically writers in their own right; anatomically women and geographically citizens of the Third World. These three roles or identities are subsumed by biological womanhood. In the execution of these three very important roles female writers should display their expert artistic skills. Their literary works need to be of consummate quality.

Critically, women writers committed to the course of liberation should truthfully delineate daily women experiences and debunk the negative gender stereotypes of women perpetuated by largely male writers and some women writers who sadly share the negativity. By doing so women writers will be mainstreaming critical gender issues which specifically affect girl children and women. Simultaneously, they will be educating society in general and boy children and men particularly about the lives of hardship and ineluctable experiences that girl children and women have had to endure on a daily basis through centuries.

Women writers are found in the particular geographical, historical, cultural and political contexts. Their lives and experiences are inextricably interwoven and bound with the historical and cultural realities of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism which have in great measure shaped and affected their lives and experiences. Therefore, the women writers' literary works should reflect their political consciousness, the perspectives and perceptions about their lives and historical destinies which were influenced by these historical realities of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism.

Women writers' unwavering commitment to these three cardinal roles will definitively define them as the genuine revolutionary champions of women emancipation and the fiercest opponents of patriarchy, colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism. Their

unrelenting fighting spirit will over time change the way both girl children and boy children are socialised.

Easthope (cited in Moyana, 1994:28) argues that "every society assigns its new arrivals (i.e newly born) particular roles including gender roles, which they have to learn. The little animal born into a human society becomes a socialised individual in a remarkably short time. This process of internalising is both conscious and unconscious". Once born into a patriarchal society, the young ones are socialised according to the patriarchal value system that regards men as the touchstone of the acceptable norm. The man is the critical figure; he controls everything, sets male-determined standards and expects girl-children and women to be sheepishly compliant and docile. Patriarchal societies elevate boy children and men whilst girl children and women are regarded as of lower status (Uwakweh: 1995:90, Mphiko, 2016: 76). Women writers like Nwapa, Ba, Ama Ato Aidoo, Emecheta and Dangarembga challenge patriarchy and all its stereotypical ramifications and seek new meaningful roles for women and girl-children. Adaku, the visionary and business-minded woman abandons Nnaife to provide for herself and her girl children in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994). Tambu, the ambitious and resolute young girl, gets herself back to school through a creative initiative of selling green mealies to whites in town after she has been withdrawn from school because her penurious family cannot afford the fees for her and Nhamo. Nyasha, the free-spirited young girl stands up against her overbearing father, Babamukuru and Lucia, the single and feisty woman challenges the patriarchal value system in *Nervous Conditions* (2004) (Okafor, 2002: 10-12; Uwakweh, 1995: 81-82).

Patriarchal value system promotes everything that affords men and boy children more privileges, powers and authority over women and girl children. It allows men to practise polygamy, inherit widows of deceased brothers or (friends in Islamic communities) and involve themselves in extramarital relationships. On the contrary, a woman, but in a few societies around the world, is not allowed to marry two or more men. In traditional societies, a widow, such as Ramatoulaye after the death of Modou in Ba's *So long a Letter* (1990) is not allowed to remarry irrespective of her age. She has to be inherited by the friend or brother of her late husband, thus resulting in a polygamous marriage. Polygamous marriages, a product of patriarchy, are characterised by a scramble for meagre financial and material resources, interminable tensions, rivalries and conflicts

because, as Ali (2012: 186) observes, "in a polygamous family situation, it is absolutely impossible to be fair and just at all, even if one earnestly desires to be so". The scramble and intermittent tensions, conflicts and rivalries singularly afflict women and adversely affect the relationships between the husband and wives, father and children, children and co-wives and contaminate children to children relationships. Emecheta, through Nnaife's dismal failure to provide for his family of several wives and children, critiques the practice of polygamy and patriarchy in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994). Nnaife's inability to provide for his family results in Adaku, whose greatest sin is her failure to bear male children, leaving the polygamous family set up. Unencumbered by the constraints of patriarchy and polygamy, Adaku abandons her husband to become a prostitute in Lagos. She later establishes herself as an independent and successful woman vendor who provides for herself and her children. Individually, Adaku educates her two daughters without the support of her husband, Nnaife, in absolute defiance of the oppressive practice of denying girls education.

2.3 Racism, patriarchy and gender stereotypes

Patriarchal ideology, like racism, is premised on the assumptions that men are stereotypically endowed with superior qualities which women do not possess. Invariably, the patriarchal ideology, undergirded by gender stereotypes, results in power relations which are disproportionately skewed in favour of boy children and men. As the consequence, boy children and men enjoy countless privileges that are denied girl-children and women by the colonial and traditional social systems. In these social systems, males are given boundless powers and absolute authority over women. Male values are universalised to the detriment and disadvantage of girl children and women. The universalisation of the male values creates unequal power relations. The unequal power relations between men and women results in discrimination against women, oppression and sexism (Okafor, 2006: 4). Discrimination is the "practice of treating somebody or a particular group in society less fairly than others" (Hornby, 2005: 417). Logically, discrimination that flows from gender stereotypes leads to the gendered oppression of girl children and women. Oppression, according to Nkereuwem (cited in Mohammed 1997: 463), is "any burdensome exercise of power or authority over somebody with continual injustice and cruelty that makes that person being oppressed worried, uncomfortable or unhappy". The discrimination and oppression of girl children

and women by their male counterparts and social system leave the former vulnerably exposed to sexism. Sexism could be defined as the "unfair treatment of people, especially women, because of their sex" (Hornby,2005: 1339). The injustice, cruelty, discrimination and sexism prevalent in patriarchal societies portrayed in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) are challenged as shall be further demonstrated in chapters three and four of this study.

Gender stereotypes dictate that society should have two different sets of expectations for young boys and girls. From a tender age the boys are stereotypically raised to provide for themselves, to be adventurous and participate in physically demanding activities. On the contrary, young girls are prepared for household chores, bearing and rearing of children, subservient attitudes and early marriage (Pattman and Chege, 2003: 42-43; Eckert and Mcconnell, 2003: 35; Crespi, 2002: 2)). The parents, particularly the fathers, want girl children to be raised according to the strict patriarchal societal traditions, values and customs so as not to bring shame on the family and to have a good pride price (*lobola*) when they get married. Immediately the young woman is married to a young man who in some instances she does not even know, she is expected to have children. According to Sanka et al (2013: 93), "marriage is meant for procreation. Marriage is not meant for satisfying fantasies that do not create any chances of procreation". Hence, the married woman has to fulfil her womanhood role of begetting many children without delay. The preferred offspring are boy children as they are, it is stereotypically assumed, the ones to carry forward the family lineage and care for their parents in old age.

Treasured as marriage and motherhood are, any woman who does not bear children or only begets female children loses her prestige, dignity, standing and status in society. Sanka et al (2013: 93) state that "when a woman is barren, it means she will not know peace on this earth. It is considered unfruitful in Africa to marry a barren woman". Similarly, if the woman cannot have boy children her life becomes equally miserable. In both instances, the woman's life will be filled with heartache, trepidation, anxiety and a deep sense of failure and shame. To rectify the situation, often the husband, on his own or egged on by his parents and/or other relatives, readily marries a second wife who will, it is stereotypically assumed, bear him children in a polygamous family context. Alternatively, the husband might physically and emotionally abuse or sexually and materially neglect the "barren" wife to the extent that she finds the situation at her marital

home extremely unbearable and eventually returns to her natal home (Sanka et al, 2013: 92-94). A case in point is Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) whose first marriage to Amadokwu fails because she cannot bring forth children. Although her second polygamous marriage to Nnaife is loveless and characterised by need and deprivation, Nnu Ego is thoroughly fulfilled because Nnaife has, unlike Amadokwu, made her a woman. Also, Lucia *in Nervous Conditions* (1988), because of gender stereotypes, is regarded as a social aberration simply because she is unmarried and childless.

The parental obsession with the marriage and motherhood of girl children reduces them to transactional commodities whose value should not be compromised by what is stereotypically defined as unacceptable conduct. From early childhood, girl children, therefore, are not regarded as the permanent and integral part of the family as they will soon be married off to some men in the future. They are commodified in terms of the bride price (*ilobola*) which will either be used to pay school fees for their brothers or expended on purchasing whatever necessities the family might require. Commodification, according to Mphiko (2016: 8), is "the process through which goods, services, ideas, and human beings are reduced to the status of commodities in a capitalist society". As a commodity, girl children are expected to kow-tow to the dictates of the patriarchal value system and the parents' decision. Girls have to obediently get married to whomsoever the parents approve of, compliantly bear as many children as fecundity allows in order to please the parents, husband(s) and the in-laws irrespective of the socio-economic conditions of the household and slave-like toil on the homestead and the fields (Uwakweh: 1995: 75-76; Ali, 2012: 188)). As a consequence, girl children, like their mothers in their youthful days, are victimised, particularly by the mothers, denied their basic human rights; their human dignity is undermined; their individuality is violated and their civil liberties and freedoms are grossly trampled upon (Mohammed, 2010: 463).

These flagrant violations of girl children's and women's rights have to be fought on all fronts and platforms through sisterly solidarity, collaborative efforts and every means possible and imaginable. To that effect, Dangarembga and Emecheta have found literary creativity a very potent weapon to speak on behalf of the oppressed women and advance the just course for women emancipation as evinced in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994).

Access to education provides every young person, irrespective of gender, with myriad opportunities for self-actualisation and development. Self-actualisation, Engelbrecht et al state (2001:86), is "man's ability to express his personalities in the most effective and complete manner". A self–actualised person effectively and beneficially uses his/her potential and talents to become a goal driven and completely independent individual. He/she is able to lead a happy, resourceful and fulfilled life. Development, according to Krech et al (1982: 30), is "any sequential and continuous process of change both quantitative and qualitative in any physical or psychological structure or function in any direction". However, in the patriarchal and sexist societies portrayed in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994), girl children are denied access to education and consequently all its concomitant developmental benefits. Invariably, this unfairly deprives girl children of the propitious opportunity to develop themselves into self-reliant and independent beings. As a result, girl children are deliberately incapacitated and made eternal dependents. Tambu's education is sacrificed to give her brother, Nhamo, a chance at education. Taiwo and Kehinde, Nnu Ego's twin sisters, are denied access to self-actualisation and development as their education is not prioritised like their brothers'. Instead of being treated as deserving of education as all young children have a right to education, they are viewed as the most convenient source of income through early marriage. The young women are, Ali (2012: 188), points out, ''allured by the illusion that through these marriages, they would be offered security and safety.'' The *ilobola* (pride price) the parents receive, sadly, will be used to educate their male siblings. Therefore, it is the object of Feminism and Post-Colonial women writers to counter any form of sexist discriminatory and unjust practices that are visited upon girl children and women.

The vexing issues raised in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) flow from gender stereotypes. Girl children and women are, because of gender stereotypes, subjected to various forms of injustices, marginalisation, discrimination, cruelty, and subjugation by the patriarchal system and its beneficiaries, men and the boy-children. The primary aim of this study is to analyse *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Nervous Conditions* from a Feminist and Post-Colonial literary perspectives in chapters three and four.

The origins of Feminist thoughts in cultural and literary terms can be traced back to Virginia Woolf's seminal work, *In a Room of her Own* (1927) and Simone de Beaviour's *The Second Sex* (1949). These pioneering works exposed the inequality with which women are confronted daily in a society whose value system is determined by men. Women were marginalised, denied equal rights with men and subjected to dehumanising treatment at the hands of men and patriarchal society. Recognising the inequalities and injustice women faced, the Women Movement of the 1960s campaigned for equality, fairness, justice and an end to the domination of women by men. Flowing from the Movement, feminist thoughts and theory have been grafted onto the field of cultural and literary criticism. Thus, feminism identifies women's marginalisation, subjugation, exploitation, abuse, oppression, inequality and social injustice as the ramifications of gender stereotypes in gendered society. Such a society universalises men as the norm and women as the inferior 'other'. Otherness, according to Okafor (2002: 2):

> … is the theory of objectification of women in a world where men constitute the centre and standard. It clarifies the predicament of women in the social, political and cultural life in terms of their marginalisation and construction as inferior reflections of the standard which is male: a woman as a man's inferior 'other'.

In such a world, women's interests and aspirations are of no consequence. To change the status quo, the various strands of feminism must collectively fight against women oppression, domination, discrimination and misogyny by the social system of patriarchy. Liberal Feminism, for example, advocates for equality, social justice and equal opportunities for all people. Additionally, Marxist Feminism concerns itself with the oppression and exploitation of women through paid and unpaid labour in the capitalist economy. In spite of the many "Feminisms" however, their overarching objective is to fight against all forms of injustices visited upon the women folk and to establish a fair and just society.

Feminism advances women's interests on various platforms in social, economic, political and cultural spaces. Women's experiences, the Feminists maintain, should be at the centre and reflected in literary works from the women's point of view. These works should be written in the language that is gynocentric and "not oppressive" (Showalter, 1989: 94). Further, they argue that women can escape oppression and restriction through feminine writing or "*encriture feminine*" and writing from their bodies as "women writing proceeds from the body" (Showalter, 1989: 463). Such literary works inspired by women's

experiences should be canonised, studied and analysed through woman-focused critical theory. Character representation, in literary works inspired by "*encriture feminine,*" must be positive in their depictions of the female subject, unlike the stereotypically negative and demeaning images produced by largely male writers and some female writers who subscribe to the dominant patriarchal ideology (Barry, 2002: 116-130; Davis and Schleifer, 1989: 449-475)

Post-Colonial theory, on the other hand, was largely inspired by Franz Fanon's seminal work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1975). Fanon deplores the post-colonial states' failure to promote their economies, arts, languages and cultures and the continued elevation and glorification of the colonisers. This continued elevation and glorification is as a result of the construction of the negative colonial East (Orient) and the positive representation of the West (the Occident), which Said, has termed as "Orientalism" (Said, 2014: 177). Said (2014:177), argues that Orientalism:

> … has legitimized Western imperialism in the eyes of the Western governments and their electorates and it has insidiously worked to convince the East that Western culture represented universal civilisation. Accepting Western culture could benefit the East's inhabitants and would make them participants in the most advanced civilization the world had ever seen. Consequently, the West appropriates to itself the superior status whilst it defines the East as the inferior 'other'.

The West promotes Eurocentricism through the universal application of its colonial ideology in culture, history and literature to the detriment and disadvantage of the formerly colonised. Consequently, Post-Colonial literary theory and criticism, like Feminism, is against the binary distinction of the superior "self" who is rational and moral and the inferior "other" who is irrational, decadent, sensual, cruel and immoral. It decries oppression, marginalisation and subjugation of the colonised by the coloniser. Post-Colonial cultural theory propagates the view that literature cannot be written outside the cultural and historical contexts of the colonised. What is more, literature of the colonised and oppressed should be articulated from their point of view, written in their cultural and historical contexts, preferably in indigenous languages of the colonised to avoid "self-inflicted neo-colonization" (Bertens, 2008: 155), and analysed using relevant critical approaches. Alternatively, the language of the coloniser, whether it is English, French or Spanish, in which writers prefer to write should be adapted to the idiom, ideological orientations, history and the culture of the colonized (Barry, 2002, 185-194; Bertens, 2008: 154-176).

Human beings are by nature relational. The relationship between males and females are largely influenced and determined by the manner in which the adult members of the society, the media, religious and political leaders, teachers and peers, socialise young ones. The socialisation of young people along gender lines insidiously establishes different gender roles for males and females in society and its various institutions. Supposedly, males have to be adventurous, goal oriented, aggressive, independent and tough and females should display feminine qualities. The latter need to be gentle, nurturing, people oriented and dependent. Anyone who conducts themselves in the manner that is inconsistent with their pre-assigned gender roles is immediately reminded of their supposedly appropriate conduct (Pattman and Chege, 2003).

2.4 Conclusion

Gender stereotypes permeate the entire fabric of society. They are considered when young people decide on future career paths, influence the outlook of male and female literary figures and the contents of their works; they establish men as the standard norm, relegate women to the periphery of society and bestow on men more powers, privileges and authority over girl-children and women. Girl children and women are stripped of any privileges and authority. Due to gender stereotypes, men subject women to marginalisation, subordination, inequality, patriarchy, polygamy, discrimination, physical and sexual abuse, oppression and sexism. Women get trapped in polygamous marriages and work like slaves on the fields and in the homes to conform to what patriarchal society glibly defines as the "hardworking, all-enduring, self-sacrificing woman" (Uwakweh, 1995: 76). Young girls who are supposed to be attending school are denied education. Once they have reached puberty, girls are married off to men whom sometimes they have neither met nor seen. The early marriages are utilised as the convenient source of income as the prospective bride grooms have to pay the pride price. The bride price (*ilobola*) parents of the young maidens receive pays school fees for the brothers or is used for other household necessities. Once married, the young women are 'owned' by their husbands. They are expected to beget many children, preferably males, sometimes under

harrowing circumstances, while they "man the man" (Okafor, 2002: 4), punctiliously keep the household and slavishly work the fields. To free women from the onerous "weight of womanhood" (Dangaregmba, 1988: 16), both Feminist and Post-Colonial thoughts and theory challenge patriarchy, gender and colonial stereotypes and the attendant discriminatory practices that flow from them. The adherents of these theoretical thoughts advocate for a society that is free from inequality, social injustice and gender prejudice. This ideal society will materialise through sisterly solidarity, sustained collaborative educational programmes and sustained campaigns and continual engagements on all fronts. This pattern of depiction is examined in chapters three (3) and four (4) of this study, focusing on Damgarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) respectively.

Chapter 3

Gender Stereotypes in *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dandgarembga

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on *Nervous Conditions* (1988), a semi-autobiographical novel written by a (formerly Rhodesian) Zimbabwean national, Tsitsi Dangarembga. A textual analysis of the novel will be undertaken, concentrating on the extent to which gender stereotypes influence the general deportment and comportment of characters and shape relations and interactions between male and female characters, female and female characters, as well as male and male characters.

Generally, gender stereotypes are insidiously established in the human psyche by parents, teachers, the other adult people and social institutions. These stereotypes are actualised through social interactions at various levels as males and females co-exist. Once they have been firmly established, gender stereotypes are extremely difficult to dislodge. This is abundantly illustrated by the erudite couple – Babanukuru and Maiguru. Maiguru, dominated by her hidebound husband, is overly submissive, docile and compliant. Although she does not agree with everything that Babamukuru does or says, her gender socialisation impels her to comply and conform. For instance, she flatly refuses to join Lucia and the other women who intend to confront and disrupt the male-dominated family (*dare)* meeting that hears the extramarital matter between Lucia and Takesure. Throughout her married life, Maiguru always endeavours to be the real feminine Shona woman whose principal obligation is to generally serve her husband and please the in-laws. On the contrary, Babamukuru is authoritarian, domineering and patriarchal. He has total control over Maiguru's teaching salary and does whatever he pleases with it.

Mainini and Jeremiah are the foil of Maiguru and Babamukuru. They are thoroughly poor. Mainini and Jeremiah have many children they can barely feed. Mainini's labour-averse husband depends largely on Babamukuru's magnanimity. Given her penurious situation, she tries very hard to provide for the family whilst Jeremiah galivants and drinks around with Takesure. Jeremiah prioritises Nhamo's education at the expense of Tambu's

despite her significant intelligence. It is Jeremiah's firm belief that girls need not receive any formal education. Educating girls is but an absolute waste of money as they will marry and go to help another man.

Nyasha and Tambu are subjected to numerous gender-induced abuses. The former is accused by Babamukuru of being flirtatious, rebellious and pig-headed. She gets physically assaulted for her infractions. Tambu stereotypically does much of the household chores whilst Nhamo concentrates on his studies, she is denied access to education by her myopic and indolent father because of her female gender and gets corporally punished for objecting to her parents' corrective Christian wedding organised by Babamukuru and defying her benefactor, Babamukuru.

3.2 The Influence of Gender Stereotypes on Male Characters

Every child is born into a society that has established unique traditions, customs, values and   stereotypes. Either it is a boy or girl. Immediately, the child is socialised according to the highly cherished and established traditions, customs, values and stereotypes of society. If the child is a boy, he is taught to be tough, insensitive, aggressive, independent and self-reliant. Besides, the boy child is arbitrarily bestowed with superior status. Similarly, the girl-child is raised to be gentle, emotional, people–oriented, dependent, nurturing and self-effacing. Unlike the boy child, the girl child is readily assigned inferior status. The pattern the socialisation process follows and the roles assigned to either a boy or girl are largely influenced by gender stereotypes (Pattman and Chege, 2003: 43 – 44; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003: 35; Crespi, 2002: 3). According to Courtenay (2000:1387), gender stereotypes 'are characteristics that are generally believed to be typical of women or men". These stereotypes make society have two distinct sets of expectations for the boy children and men, on the one hand vis-à-vis the girl children and women on the other hand. Consequently, men and boy children, through the help of various agents of socialisation, such as the family, the church, media and school in society, subject women and girl-children to a plethora of unjust treatments, subjugation, marginalisation, oppression and sexism. Similarly, boys or men like Jeremiah and Takesure who fail to measure up to the society's expectations bear the brunt of stronger and/or successful men like Babamukuru and gendered society at large.

Unlike men, women are expected to be compliant with and conform to the societal traditions, customs, values and stereotypes. In Mbuyiselo Botha's words, "For girls, complying means accepting violence, injustice and a lesser value in society" (Botha, 2019: 7). Any conduct or action on the part of a woman or girl that challenges the status quo is construed to be an affront on patriarchy and is roundly condemned. Such a girl or woman, Botha (2019: 17), argues, is "considered less of a woman, disrespectful, arrogant and in need of physical punishment, including sexual assault, 'to put her in her place'". A case in point is Nyasha who suffers at the hands of the inflexible patriarch, Babamukuru, because of her outspokenness, ebullience and seemingly Westernised character.

3.3 Babamukuru

Babamukuru is the oldest man in the Sigauke clan. As tradition and patriarchy dictate, he holds a very senior and influential position in the clan and wields boundless power over everyone in the family. In addition to the superior status bestowed on him by the advantage of birth, Babamukuru has been able to receive education at the mission school, courtesy of the Western missionaries, train as a teacher first in apartheid South Africa and later in England. This has solidified his patriarchal status and elevated him to God-like status. Babamukuru's decision on any matter affecting the clan or his family cannot be challenged. It is a *fait accompli*. He has absolute control over his wife, Maiguru; he uses Maiguru's salary as he pleases to assist the indigent Jeremiah and his family and other members of the extended family like Takesure and holds Christmas party annually at the homestead, for, according to Mphiko (2016: 75), 'boosting his own male inflated ego and delusion of grandeur.' Babamukuru's Western education and exposure to English culture during his three-years study leave in England notwithstanding, he still religiously subscribes to the patriarchal ideology. According to Moghsdam (cited in Ouahmiche and Boughouas, 2016: 8), patriarchal society 'does not acknowledge a role for women except within socially accepted conditions and within which the limits of certain confines that they should not violate'. Sadly, ''education did not alter his views towards the other gender'' (Ouahmiche and Boughouas, 2016: 6). To him, girl children, such as Tambu and Nyasha, are raised to marry and be good wives, while wives, such as Maiguru and Mainini have to wait on their husbands and always be unquestioningly in agreement with what husbands say; girl children need to be obsequiously obedient to the parents, singularly the father, and the father's word in the house should never be opposed.

Accessing education for girls is not a priority (Ouahmiche and Boughhouas, 2016: 6). But his views about the boy-child are totally different. On the Contrary, boy-children have to be provided with every available financial resources, necessary support and opportunity to receive education. Education, Babamukuru maintains, empowers boys with the requisite skills and knowledge that will enable them to provide for themselves and their families. Babamukuru states emphatically:

> Nhamo is a promising scholar...What we must do is to let Nhamo stay with us at the mission, let him go to school there. He must come at once, because the sooner he is given the best, the sooner will the best be returned (46).

Education definitively extricates families from the clutches of poverty, need and deprivation. Babamukuru substantiates his position about the exceptional value of education by citing Thomas's family as a good example. Proudly, he states:

> Thomas is also in no trouble – he may not have a degree, but his teacher training is a solid qualification. The family does not go hungry. They live in a comfortable house. They wear decent clothes. When the children are of school-going age they will be able to go to school. These children who can go to school today are the ones who will prosper tomorrow (45).

Babamukuru's glorification of education for boys sharply contradicts his views about the value of education for girls. Ironically, he maintains that girls need to be very obedient, submissive and happy to be married and have children. Boys are, unlike girls, free to associate with whomsoever without much parental scrutiny and can come and go as they please without any strict curfews. These stereotypical views of Babamuru's make him have "'bad nerves,' disapprove of the novel, *The Lady of Chatterley's Lover* by D H Lawrence, Nyasha reads, the mini-skirt she wears, the friends she consorts with and personal preferences. "When he is greeted, he just grunts. He spends much time at work and ''no longer interacts with his family freely and naturally. He is always aloof and people should not talk or make noise in his presence" (Moyana, 1994:32). In his stifling presence, Nyasha and Tambu cannot talk or laugh either.

The combined influence of gender stereotypes, Western colonial education and Christian value system on Babamukuru is phenomenal. Collectively, they are underpinned by the binary distinction of the superior self and the inferior 'other'. Gender stereotypes put males and females in a superior category and inferior category respectively. Similarly, Western colonial education puts its values on the pedestal whilst the values of the colonised are

regarded as inferior. Also, Christianity extols its 'virtuous values' over indigenous African religion. The latter is often regarded as a religion of pagans or non-believers by Babamukuru and his Western benefactors, the white missionaries. Babamukuru as a product of the three, to wit, gender stereotypes, Western colonial education and Christian value system, is an unflinching enforcer of patriarchal ideology. This ideology is premised on the assumption that men are the touchstone of acceptable standards and values by which society must live. Besides, they are the ones to exercise control over girl-children and women, protect and provide for them in society (Botha, 2019: 17). As a typical patriarch, Babamukuru has embarked on a commendable mission to ensure that a member from each branch of his big family is educated up to Form IV. Convinced of the plausibility of his decision, he says: 'I have observed that Nhamo is a promising scholar,' (46). 'What we must do is to let Nhamo stay with us at the mission, let him go to school there. He must come at once, because the sooner he is given the best, the sooner will the best be returned' (46). The decision to take Nhamo to the mission and not his sister, Tambu who is significantly intelligent, although praise-worthy, is singularly motivated by the obnoxious patriarchal tendencies. Babamukuru, motivated by gender stereotypes, does not realise the gross injustice he visits upon Tambu – whose only disqualification is being of the 'wrong gender,' female.

The ideology of patriarchy is a fertile seed bed for polygamy, women discrimination, oppression, subjugation, marginalisation and sexism. It unjustly affords men and boy-children more privileges than women and girl-children in all spheres of human interactions, encourages men to marry many wives and have many children that they often struggle to feed. Contrarily, patriarchal ideology violates and undermines girl-children and women's human rights (United Nations Human Rights, 2014: 1). Although the colonially educated Babamukuru is married to one wife, Maiguru, he unwittingly promotes polygamy. Instead of condemning Takesure who is married to two wives he barely can feed, Babamukuru, after having been approached by Jeremiah for extra hands to help on the fields, engages the former at the homestead to help him accumulate money to pay the outstanding (*roora*) bride-price for the former's second wife. Unbeknown to him, Takesure does not do much to help Jeremiah at the homestead but instead flirts with Lucia and goes on drinking sprees with Jeremiah.

Patriarchal stereotypes commodify, oppress, discriminate and practise sexism against girl-children and women. Additionally, they coerce girl-children and women into early marriage and motherhood. Babamukuru should, one would expect, have a deeper grasp of inequality and injustice that is visited upon women and girl-children by patriarchy and fight it. Ironically, he still holds the view that girl-children and women should have no say in matters affecting them directly or indirectly nor receive education. With no iota of shame, Babamukuru receives Maiguru's monthly teaching salary, uses it to support his extended family without her consent and decides on every matter in the house and clan without Maiguru's input. Nyasha is, like her mother, subjected to marginalisation and unfair treatment. She is physically assaulted for any infraction, compelled to finish her food even if she does not want to eat, criticised for the type of book she reads, the dress she wears, her general conduct and the friends she associates with. Distressed about Nyasha's general conduct, Babamukuru asks Maiguru:

> Do you see the type of book your daughter reads? I don't know
> what is wrong with our daughter. She has no sense of decency,
> none whatsoever (…) No daughter of mine is going to read such books (82)

In his stereotypic effort to raise well-mannered young women, Babamukuru is preoccupied with producing obedient, submissive and decent women who are exemplary in all feminine aspects. Obviously, he wants Tambu and Nyasha 'to develop into a good woman' (89) who will not disgrace him as young girls and in the future when they are married. When welcoming Tambu to the mission, he cautions her that: 'There is nothing that pleases parents more than to see their own children settled in their own families' (89). Women have, according to Babamukuru, no ambitions to get education, acquire skills and become financially independent. Therefore, in Babamukuru's words 'anyone who defies my authority is an evil thing in the house bent on destroying what I have made' (169). His rigid gender socialisation of Nyasha and Tambu is very disturbing given his educational background. Also, it sufficiently demonstrates that reorienting society to gender equality is a tall order. It requires sustained campaigns and targeted focus.

Supposedly, Babamukuru should, as a living example of the extent to which education facilitates self-actualisation and development and transforms one's socio-economic circumstances, champion the course for equal education for all. Ironically, gender stereotypes have made him emphasise the education of the boy-child over the girl-child. Chido, his son, is taken to a multi-racial school in town through the scholarship acquired

corruptly through the help of Baker. Nyasha, because she is a girl, remains at the mission school. Similarly, Nhamo, the son of the indigent Jeremiah, is taken from Ritivi Primary School to escape deprivation and poverty to the mission to realise his educational objective in order to extricate his family from grinding poverty. But his younger sister Tambu, whose education has been repeatedly disrupted by a lack of school fees, is left at the homestead. This develops a bitter rivalry between siblings and results in Tambu intensely hating Nhamo. It is only after the sudden death of Nhamo that Tambu is offered the opportunity to study at the mission because there is no other boy in Jeremiah's house to educate. Typical of his patriarchal tendencies, Babamukuru already saves money monthly for the education of the little Dambudzo. Because education for girls is not a priority, the educational needs of Netsai and Rambanai, the sisters to Dambudzo, are not provided for. They will inevitably face the same challenges as their sister, Tambu.

3.4 Jeremiah and Takesure

Society stereotypically and rigidly defines the distinct roles for both males and females. It is generally assumed that all males and females should conform to their roles. Males should display masculinity and females should show feminine attributes. The man as the head of the family is expected to provide for his wife and children without failure. Failure on the part of the man to provide for his family wins him societal ridicule and condemnation. Jeremiah and Takesure unfortunately fall within this category of male pathetic failures. The former is very poor; he cannot support his family nor keep all his children in school. Hence Tambu's education is compromised to allow Nhamo to receive education. As a failed father, Jeremiah depends largely on his well erudite elder brother, Babamukuru. Like Jeremiah, Takesure is a complete failure of a man. He is married to two wives whose pride prices he has not fully paid up, cannot feed his families and he just galivants together with Jeremiah and drinks beer instead of helping with the work for which he has been brought to the homestead.

Jeremiah and Takesure are cousins. As the two share some similarities, they will be discussed simultaneously. Jeremiah, Babamukuru's younger brother, leads an obsequious and parasitic life. He depends on asking for financial and material help from his middle-class brother. Unlike his industrious brother, Jeremiah is lazy. He is dismally unable to provide for his children, Nhamo, Tambu, Netsai and Rambanai and wife,

Mainini. Unperturbed by the suffering in his family, Jeremiah goes about trumpeting his brother's academic successes and material possessions and advances ridiculously implausible reasons for his failure and poverty.

Education is, according to Jeremiah, a preserve for the young boys like Nhamo and not for girls like Tambu. Once his family experiences financial difficulties when Babamukuru was on study leave in England, Jeremiah, without considering the devastating consequences of his decision on her daughter, simply says Tambu shall have to drop out of school so that her brother can continue with his schooling. Jeremiah, unabashedly, says: 'Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables' (15). Educating girls, Jeremia argues, is a waste of money as they will soon get married and their education will benefit strangers. His stereotypical views define Tambu as a home-bound woman who should do mundane women chores like cultivating the fields, begetting many children, raising children and caring for her husband. Women are, in the words of Ouahmiche and Boughoaus (2016: 60) ''considered as men's assets whose responsibility entails serving men, accomplishing chores work and in some cases working outside the household without getting any benefit in return.'' Furthermore, his unreasonableness is revealed when he opposes Tambu's bold initiative to plant mealies to sell in town to raise money for her school fees. Furthermore, he excludes Tambu from accompanying him and Nhamo to welcome Babamukuru and family from England.

Poor as he is, Jeremiah, who in Lucia's words has 'a roving eye and lazy hand' (247) wants to marry Lucia who is pregnant with Takesure's baby. His preoccupation is that, because he does not have a son, as Nhamo is no more, perhaps Lucia, a hard worker who will be helpful at the homestead, might give birth to a baby boy. In another ironic collusion of Western and indigenous patriarchy, Babamukuru, because of his Western education and Christianity, is vehemently opposed to having 'a bigamist in his family' as this is 'sinful and will bring the wrath of God on the entire family' (129).

Takesure is a distant cousin of the Sigaukes. Like Jeremiah, 'he is averse to labour' (28). But as there is much farming work to be done at the homestead, he is requested by Babamukuru to come and lend a hand to Jeremiah. With the money he earns, Babamukuru has for a long time believed, will 'be able to finish off the payments of his second wife' because 'her family kept on reminding Takesure of the outstanding amounts'

(128). His failure to settle the outstanding pride price for his first wife, an embarrassing indictment on him as a man, has eventually resulted in the family allowing 'their reimbursement to lapse' (128.

To escape from his family responsibilities and the two wives 'whom he did not like' (128), according to Lucia, Takesure readily accepts the offer and leaves. At the homestead, he, together with Jeremiah, does very little of the work assigned to him. Instead Takesure accompanies Jeremiah when he goes out to drink. The two immediately get involved in a promiscuous extra-marital relationship with Lucia, the unmarried younger sister to Mainini, whom Takesure impregnates shortly after her arrival at the homestead.

Jeremiah and Takesure rank very lowly in the hierarchical order of the gendered society where men are supposed to provide for their families. This puts them under tremendous pressure and makes them the butt of all forms of ridicule and condemnation. For instance, Lucia refers to Takesure as 'something' or 'a cockroach' with which she can at least live. But because Jeremiah and Takesure are men, the patriarchal system allows them to oppress women and girl-children. Jeremiah oppresses Tambu and her mother, Mainini. Similarly, Takesure leaves behind his wives to escape fatherly responsibility in the full knowledge that they are vulnerable and cannot hold him accountable. And at the homestead he treats Lucia as his personal property for lascivious gratification.

3.5 Nhamo and Chido

Nhamo and Chido are the Sigauke cousins from two different socio-economic backgrounds. Nhamo, the son of Jeremiah and Mainini, comes from a very poor family. His childhood has been characterised by the ghastliness of need and deprivation and hard labour on the fields. On the contrary, Chido, the son of the headmaster, Babamukuru and lady teacher, Maiguru, hails from a middle-class family where need and deprivation are unknown. Their different backgrounds notwithstanding, Nhamo and Chido have views similarly shaped by gender stereotypes.

From early childhood, Nhamo has been alive to the preferential treatments he receives from his clan, particularly his parents at home because he is a boy. He sees himself as

superior to his sibling sisters who have to do multiple household chores like helping Mainini in the fields with planting, hoeing and harvesting, cooking, fetching water from Nyamirira - the nearby river, cleaning the kitchen utensils like pots and dishes and keeping the homestead clean. Filled with a sense of self-importance, Nhamo does very little to help except doing what is stereotypically regarded as the men's chores like watering cattle and milking cows. Nevertheless, his parents afford him time to focus on his school work. Unlike Nhamo's, Tambu's education is disrupted once there are insufficient funds to pay school fees. Boastfully and disrespectfully, Nhamo says to Tambu when she tells him of what their father has said about his hectic juggling of school work and homestead chores like taking the herd to the pastures, helping on the fields and milking cows: 'I'm at school, aren't I? It doesn't worry me what he says about me. So what is your problem?' (23). When Tambu expresses her deep desire to go back to school, Nhamo, hesitantly dismisses her ambition: 'It's the same everywhere. Because you are a girl' (23). This reveals the segregation and ubiquitous exclusion of girls from education in all gendered societies. Obviously, Tambu's chance of returning to school, unlike Nhamo's and the other boys', is nil. Because he is a boy, Nhamo enjoys sending the young girls on errands and willy-nilly whips little Netsai when he feels like to demonstrate his masculinity and dominance. This infinitely infuriates Tambu.

Nhamo's outstanding scholastic performances at the local Riviti Primary School makes his uncle, Babamukuru, offer to take him to the mission school where he teaches to realise his full potential. If given a chance at education, Nhamo will 'lift our branch of the family out of squalor in which we were living (4). When he is about to leave for the mission, Nhamo gloating to his sister, Tambu, says: 'Did you ever hear of a girl being taken to a school? You are lucky you even managed to go back to Rutivi. With me it's different. I was meant to be educated' (48) Instead of positively influencing Nhamo to embrace his culture and people, the education he receives at the mission and the middle-class life at Babamukuru's 'palace' make him egoistic, arrogant and snobbish (Moyana, 1994: 33). He despises poor people, becomes aloof and no longer wants to travel by bus as the passengers smell repugnantly and women 'smelt of unhealthy reproductive odours' (1). The penurious circumstances at his home infinitely offend and embarrass him. Everybody in his family, particularly his mother, Mainini, but his feeble-minded father, Jeremiah, have 'begun to worry about Nhamo's development' (6). These concerning developmental changes have made Tambu intensely dislike her brother.

Chido is, like Nhamo, given the requisite support by his erudite family to get quality education. Unlike his sister Nyasha who is forever under the watchful eye of Babamukuru, Chido is allowed a great measure of freedom. Chido associates freely with the Bakers, he is seldom at home and rarely travels with the family when they visit the homestead. Chido's education is prioritised over that of his sister, Nyasha. Through corruption and nepotism Chido acquires a lucrative scholarship to study at a very expensive multi-racial school in town.

Chido reveals his stereotypical views when he, returning from the Bakers, remarks: 'I hope Nyasha's made my cake' (2004: 89). In his stereotype-infected mind, it is only women or girl-children who must bake cakes. Aware that Nyasha is not a typical acquiescent model girl, Chido expresses his doubts about her when he says: 'You are never sure with Nyasha' (89).

3.6 The Influence of Gender Stereotypes on Female Characters

'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman,' Simone de Beauvior (cited in Abodunrin, 2017 1402), once famously remarked. The assertion explains that deportment and expected general behaviour of women and girl children is not natural, it is the product of socio-cultural construction and influences. In gendered societies, young girls are raised according to strict traditional, customary and cultural values so that they can become good models of 'feminine virtue.' The manner in which women relate and interact with their male partners, sons, other women and daughters is immeasurably influenced by their gender socialisation and gender roles that have been taught and assigned to them from childhood (Botha, 2019: 17, Gneezy, 2006: 2 – 3). The women characters in *Nervous Conditions* (2004), to wit, Maiguru, Mainini, Tambu, Nyasha and Lucia, reflect their upbringing, socialisation, various levels of consciousness, growth and change. Dangarembga distinguishes the women into three groups, namely, 'the entrapped,' 'the escaped' and the 'rebellious.' Maiguru and Mainini are the entrapped, Tambu and Lucia are the 'escaped' and Nyasha is rebellious.

3.7 Maiguru

Maiguru, unlike Mainini and Lucia, lives a middle-class life and has a woman house helper to reduce the burden of household duties and responsibilities. Like her husband, Babamukuru, Maiguru holds a South African teaching qualification and a Master's degree from England and teaches at the mission school with her husband. Her academic achievements are a rarity in a society that does not value the education of girl-children but stereotypically puts a huge premium on the boy children's. Because Maiguru has been raised in accordance with gender socialisation, she is still submissive and obedient to the incarnation of patriarchy, Babamukuru. She is self-effacing and has given her husband complete control over the family and clan, her personal life and financial affairs. As a consequence, she does not receive her monthly teaching salary – something that shocks Tambu. She has, like the many unemployed women, remained financially dependent on her husband. Besides, although her family has two cars, Maiguru cannot drive. This restricts her mobility and freedom as she cannot go anywhere unless Babamukuru drives her. All decisions in the family are taken by Babamukuru without her input. For instance, Babamukuru annually provides substantial provisions at the homestead to entertain members of his extended family at Christmas, educates Nhamo and later on Tambu, organises the Christian wedding of Mainini and Jeremiah to annul their 'heathen and sinful' one and gives Jeremiah the house at the homestead as a gift. Maiguru tries very hard to please her husband and members of her extended family: 'She is concerned about everybody. She was gentle, conscientious and caring' (80). She follows a strict order when she ritually dishes out food for her husband at the dinner table, admonishes Nyasha when she serves herself before Babamukuru is served and expresses her disapproval about the novel Nyasha reads. According to Moyana (94: 33), 'Maiguru is nervous, unsure of herself, scared of her husband, appears delicate and childish'. Like an infatuated teenage girl, she addresses her husband in endearment terms like 'my lovely-dove,' 'my daddy-dear,' and uses 'my lovely pie' when she speaks to Nyasha.

Indubitably, Maiguru has internalised women suffering, stereotypes and oppression, to the extent that she sees nothing amiss with them. Only once does she show her displeasure when Tambu tells her that the village talk says she was in England to take care of Babamukuru. Irritated, Maiguru bluntly says 'your uncle would n' t be able to do half the things he does if I didn't work as well' (103). But when Mainini, Lucia and

Thomas's wife want to violently challenge the unfairly constituted patriarchal (*dare*) family hearing of Takesure, Maiguru dissociates herself from them. The three women, in the spirit of women solidarity championed by feminine allegiance, do not comprehend the inexplicable exclusion of Lucia, who is implicated in witchcraft and all other manner of bad conduct. As a senior woman in the clan, she does not want to be seen to be against the status quo. Her action, unfortunately, defeats the solidarity that Feminists foster that women sorely need to fight against male dominance, oppression, discrimination and misogyny.

Maiguru as a mother and woman who has been exposed to the African and English cultures together with her children, finds herself having to deal with her culturally hybridised children. Nyasha and Chido have been Anglicized during their parents' three years of study leave in England. Sadly, they have lost their Shona language, identity, decorum and mannerism. This estranges her children from their people and peers. Because of her hybrid identity and cultural alienation, Nyasha often quarrels with her father, Babamukuru, who demands that Nyasha should conform to the role of a typical subservient, obedient and well-behaved African girl. Maiguru, to Tambu's disgust, tries to justify her children's Anglicisation when she says: 'They don't understand Shona very well anymore…They have been speaking nothing but English for so long that most of their Shona has gone' (2004: 42). Maiguru, as a hybridised person herself or what Frantz Fanon (1952) would describe in neo-colonial terms as a 'Black skin, White mask' phenomenon, has dismally failed to teach her children their language, develop their identity and cultivate good African values in them. Resignedly, Maiguru says her children 'picked up these disrespectful ways in England' (2004: 74).

Over the passage of time, Maiguru gradually becomes aware of the onerous burden of patriarchy that she carries both as a woman and mother. Uncharacteristically, Maiguru buys Nyasha a skimpy dress for the hard work the latter has put in during the examinations. Babamukuru disapproves of it. This act is symbolic of Maiguru's inchoate protest against patriarchy. Furthermore, she objects to Babamukuru's imprudent purchase of groceries and meat when they visit their rural home at Christmas and cooking for the extended family during the vacation. During the preparations for the belated Christian wedding of Jeremiah and Mainini, Maiguru prevaricates to buy the required cloth for the wedding gown and other necessities until Nyasha intervenes. Resolutely, Maiguru

refuses to lend Mainini her wedding gown except the veil. As her level of consciousness rises, she defies Babamukuru on numerous occasions like when he has gifted a house to Jeremiah and punishes Tambu. These series of objections lead to her leaving the mission. Her belated efforts at emancipation have led her to leave Babamukuru and go to another man, her brother, in Salisbury. This greatly disappoints Nyasha because Maiguru, instead of going it alone or going to a woman for support, has left one man (Babamukuru) for another man (her brother).

3.8 Mainini

Mainini, the wife to Jeremiah for thirteen years, comes from a family poorer than Tambu's. Typical of many young women of her time, she has not been to school. During her teenage years she was impregnated by Jeremiah who ultimately married her. Her pride-price, because of premarital pregnancy, got significantly reduced, thus not benefitting her family that much. Four of her boy children have died – three in infancy and one (Nhamo) as a teenager. Her surviving children are three girls and the little boy, Dambudzo. This fills her with much trepidation and worry as she has lost four boys – children who are highly valued in her gendered society.

As a mother, Mainini faces the great responsibility for providing for her family as her husband is hopelessly incapable and lazy. But due to a lack of education and job opportunities flowing from the exclusion of young girls and subsequently women, she becomes the hawker and small-scale farmer to make ends meet. The little money she makes feeds the family and pays Nhamo's school fees. The hefty responsibility to raise the family, poverty, pregnancy and failing health negatively affect her. She can no longer work the piece of land bequeathed to her by her mother-in-law, clean her pit-latrine, bathe herself and do other household chores until Tambu's intervention.

Mainini recognises the burden that women carry in life. She cautions her daughter about things that cannot be changed. She succinctly captures the burdensome women's life when she counsels her daughter, Tambu. She says:

> This business of womanhood is a heavy burden. How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age (16).

In her uncomplicated mind, Mainini has analysed and internalised women suffering and oppression. Women, according to how she has been socialised, have to meekly shoulder the burdens without any protest. Mainini does not approve of the charade of the Christian wedding for her and Jeremiah organised by Bababamukuru, however. But because of gender stereotypes, she does not object to the wedding or make up her mind about it because that is not within her capacity. Decision-making, in her opinion, is for men.

However, Mainini is acutely aware of the negative effects of Western education on her children. First, she is troubled by Nhamo who behaves egoistically, no longer speaks Shona but English only, talks disparagingly of his people and shuns his people and has assumed strange English mannerisms. After Nhamo's sudden death, she blames it on Babamukuru, Maiguru and Western education. She is fiercely against Tambu being taken to the mission school by Babamukuru. Later when Tambu qualifies to go to the Sacred Heart College after passing the rigorous selection test, Mainini becomes severely depressed and starves herself. As her condition worsens, Lucia intervenes and restores her to health. In Mainini's foreboding words, 'It's the Englishness…. It'll kill them all if they aren't careful' (207). The bad influence of colonial education is telling on Babamukuru who 'may look all right, but there's no telling what price he's paying' (207).

3.9 Tambu and Nyasha

A discussion on Tambu's and Nyasha's consciousness about gender stereotypes, their effects particularly on their personal lives and mothers' and reaction thereto shall be done simultaneously. Tambu and Nyasha are the Sigauke cousins. As young girls they grow up in totally different socio-economic and cultural contexts. Nyasha comes from a wealthy middle-class family at the Protestant mission school where she has been exposed to both the African and English cultures. The two cultures have greatly influenced her general conduct, values and mannerisms. Tambu is the daughter of very poor parents, namely, Jeremiah and Mainini. Her social scripting/socialisation has been strictly in accordance with her Shona culture, gender stereotypes and cultural values. Their different backgrounds notwithstanding, Tambu and Nyasha experience injustice, oppression, discrimination, sexism and misogyny at the hands of the male folks and gendered society

that flow from gender stereotypes. The two cousins 'protest and rebel against their gender or feminine roles, which their society accords female children' (Moyana, 1994: 26).

The challenges Nyasha and Tambu confront in their pursuit for education are different. Nyasha, a daughter of Babamukuru and Maiguru, the headmaster and lady teacher of the mission school respectively, attends school without any serious hurdles. She gets the requisite material and moral support. Because of her 'egalitarian nature', 'multi-directional mind to solutions,' boldness, sharpness of mind, exposure to both African and English cultures and education, Nyasha questions the effects of colonial Western education on her people. Moreover, she is widely read about discrimination and oppression across the world and apartheid in neighbouring South Africa. This raises her level of consciousness about injustice and inequality. Consequently, Nyasha is able to recognise the oppression, discrimination and sexism that the colonial Western education, ably abetted and assisted by Babamukuru and his ilk, promotes. Besides, she is keenly aware of patriarchy and its debilitating effects on girl children and women. Therefore, Nyasha takes upon herself the huge mission of challenging patriarchy, discrimination, sexism and oppression. This pits her against her authoritarian and puritanical father, Babamukuru.

Tambu, unlike her cousin Nyasha, comes from a penurious family background. With a lazy and feeble-minded father, Jeremiah, and a sickly illiterate mother, Mainini, accessing formal education is a hugely difficult challenge. Through her grandmother, Tambu has learnt a great deal about the history of her people, their self-sufficiency, their colonisation by the 'white evil wizards', land dispossession, spread of Christianity and formal education which Babamukuru has acquired through the support of white missionaries. As a peasant's daughter, she is aware of the material advantage education brings. Complaining to her mother about her father's position regarding her education, Tambu says: 'Baba says I do not need to be educated, (…). He says I must learn to be a good wife. Look at Maiguru (…….). She is a better wife than you' (16). But due to poverty and gender stereotypes, she intermittently attends school depending on the availability of school fees. The available school fee is, although raised by her mother through hard work, always reserved for her brother, Nhamo.

To demonstrate her self-reliance and independence unlike Nhamo, Tambu resolves to cultivate green mealies on a piece of land given to her mother by her mother-in-law to sell to white people in town to raise money for her fees. At a tender age of eight years, this is 'a feat few could achieve' (Moyana, 94: 31). Unbeknown to her, Nhamo, blinded by gender stereotypes and possibly bruised macho ego, sabotages her bold initiative by giving the green mealies to his girlfriends. On learning about Nhamo's nefarious activities, Tambu single-handedly fights him at the Sunday school. Against all odds, Tambu returns to school after having raised the sufficient money from Whites in town through the help of her teacher, Mr Matimba, to pay school fees for several years in advance. Whilst excited at returning to school, Jeremiah unsuccessfully demands the money from the teacher to undermine Tambu's bold efforts. Fortunately, Tambu's education receives priority after the unexpected death of Nhamo at the mission.

Unlike Nyasha who is very critical of colonial Western education, Tambu is very excited at having had a chance at education at the mission school that has a library and better resources than the rural Rutivi. She voraciously reads Enid Blyton and the Bronte sisters, imbibes the Western values propounded and extolled in these books and appreciates the influence of these books on her. On the contrary, Nyasha, having seen discrimination and oppression in England, reads books about real people and their suffering and seeks solutions thereto. Tambu, unlike Nyasha, has not been to England. Therefore, her experience of discrimination and oppression is not as profound as Nhamo's. She has been exposed to the stereotypic ill-treatment she receives at the hands of Jeremiah, Mainini and Nhamo.

The effects of colonial Western education on Tambu and Nyasha vary. Tambu's grounding in her Shona language, culture and identity fills her with a sense of pride. She sees herself as superior to Nyasha who cannot prepare *shadza* (porridge), work in the fields and do other typical women chores. Nyasha, returning from England with her parents, refuses to play panda, pound maize or go to the nearby river, Nyamirira and has lost her language and cultural identity. She regards all these as inferior to the Western

values she has acquired in England. In Tambu's own words 'the bold ebullient companion I had had who had gone to England but not returned from there' (52).

The reaction of Tambu and Nyasha to the discriminatory and stereotypic treatments they experience is largely influenced by their socialisation, formal and informal education and exposure to different cultures and influences. The informal education from Tambu's grandmother has given her a very firm foundational knowledge about her history and culture. However, she has been raised believing that girl children or women have to sacrifice, care for the men and children, work hard and respect the men folk, particularly the father. When Lucia threatens to take Mainini away from the homestead, Tambu is ready to sacrifice her education to look after her father and siblings. Her traditional upbringing makes her question Nyasha's dress code, mannerism and outspokenness. She, because of 'her rural background and different cultural understanding of how children should talk to their parents' (Moyana, 94: 34), fails to understand Nyasha's morose and taciturn attitude and regards her as ungrateful as she has almost everything she needs – a good school, new clothes and educated parents. What disgusted and shocked her beyond measure is when Nyasha strikes back at her father after the latter has unleashed a ferocious slap across the former's face. This has resulted in the unheard-of father and daughter fist fight with Babamukuru threatening to kill Nyasha and then commit suicide.

As Tambu's consciousness about discrimination improves, she disapproves of the burdensome work women do during the Christmas parties to feed people, the ridiculous Christian wedding of Jeremiah and Mainini that Babamukuru organises instead of the traditional cleansing ceremony proposed by Jeremiah. She states clearly that she 'didn't like the idea of my parents performing a wedding' (153). Tambu disapproves of the wedding because 'it placed doubt on my legitimate existence in this world.' (165). Uncharacteristically, Tambu, regardless of the threats of discontinuing paying school fees and buying clothes for her made by Babamukuru, defies him and refuses to take part in the wedding. This earns her severe corporal punishment of several strokes and several weeks of household chores. Nyasha's influence on Tambu is appreciable. She has

realised that Nyasha 'is always moving towards some state that she had seen and accepted' (154). As such, Tambu wants to go with her. She determinedly says: 'I did not want to be left behind' (154). Hence, when Maiguru and Mainini ululate and kneel in front of Babamukuru to praise him for having found work for Lucia at the girls' boarding house, Nyasha stealthily orders Tambu who is about to ululate: 'Don 't you dare' (161). Readily, Tambu obliges.

The colonial Western education and Christianity have robbed Nyasha of crucial cultural basis and knowledge. What is more, the English culture has moulded her in a manner that is diametrically different to the stereotypic African culture. She is outspoken, exuberant, ebullient, outgoing and rumbustious. These qualities contrast sharply with obedience, submissiveness, sacrifice and conformity – the hallmarks of traditional African girls and women. They do not make her irritable, hide-bound and authoritarian father, Babamukuru, happy at all: 'He deeply feels the misfortune of having a daughter like her' (157).

Nyasha defies oppressive authority, stands against discrimination and inequality. Typical of Nyasha, she encourages her mother to learn to drive and leave Babamukuru to seek her emancipation. She questions the value of the education the missionary schools spread throughout Africa and the motives of the white missionaries. Hence, she advises Tambu not to take the scholarship to the Sacred Heart College and warns her about the bad influence the colonial education and Roman Catholic Church might have on her critical capacity and intellectual growth that have been already stunted by Babamukuru. Having read the history books written from the conqueror's biased perspectives, Nyasha, seized by delirium, tears the books into pieces, breaks mirrors and clay pots as a form of rejection of the lies the books propagate and Western values. She is taken to a white psychiatrist in Salisbury by her parents who, sadly said 'Nyasha could not be ill, that Africans did not suffer in the way we had described. She was making a scene' (206). The psychiatrist's diagnosis is utterly racist and discriminatory. Instead of focusing on the disease, the shrink focuses on the patient's skin pigmentation.

Nyasha, on two occasions, refuses to eat her food to reject her father's overbearing authority. First, she 'shovelled the food into her mouth, swallowing without chewing' (202), after having been ordered to finish helping her. Then she goes to the bathroom and regurgitates it. Second, she starves herself in pursuit of a petite body by European standards until she becomes emaciated, gaunt and anorexic before she gets medical attention. In her incessant search for who she really is, Nyasha develops a keen interest in traditional clay pots and diligently perfects her pot-making skills. This, in the post-colonial sense, symbolises her self-discovery and cultural emancipation and independence from the clutches of colonialism and Western domination.

3.10 Conclusion

Nervous Conditions (1988) demonstrates Dangarembga's incontestably deep understanding of inequality, marginalisation, suffering and exclusionary tendencies that have blighted girls' and women's lives in gendered societies. She is keenly aware of the preferential treatment of boys and men and the discrimination and ill-treatment girls and women are subjected to on a daily basis. However, through Nyasha, Tambu and Lucia, Dangaregmba, writing from an Afro-centric and Feminist perspective, demonstrates that oppression, inequality and discrimination women face can be individually and collectively challenged and eventually defeated. The struggle for women's emancipation and equality will be met with the fiercest resistance from the beneficiaries of patriarchal ideology, however. There are going to be casualties. But eventually women will be emancipated as demonstrated by Lucia. The future for equality for all genders is certain.

Chapter 4

Gender Stereotypes in *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on gender stereotypes in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood (1994).* The primary aim of the chapter is to examine the impact of gender stereotypes on the general conduct of both the male and female characters in the novel, how the relations and interactions between female and male, female and female as well as male and male are influenced and moulded by gender stereotypes.

The conduct of the male and female characters in the selected novels is invariably impacted upon by the way they were gender-socialised as young people by the parents and the large society. The characters carry these gender stereotypes and all their ramifications into their adult lives. To a great extent the father and mother perpetuate the way they were stereotypically brought up. In turn their children continue with the same gender stereotypes when they raise their own children. The parents in different generations hold firmly to the gender stereotypes and resist any attempts at transforming gender relations that are shaped by gender stereotypes. In *Nervous Conditions* (1988) Babamukuru, albeit highly educated together with his wife, Maikuru, expects to be treated like any other patriarch. Maikuru should serve him food each time they have meals. She should have no say as to how the money is used in the house despite the fact that she also works and brings income to the family. Instead of protesting, Maikuru sheepishly acquiesces. In *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994*).* Nnu Ego is excessively obsessed with being the good daughter to her father and the good senior wife to her husband, Nnaife. In the words of Agbadi, Nnu Ego has 'already proved you are a good daughter, but a good daughter must also be a good wife' (155). Her life of poverty and hardship notwithstanding, she bears many children to be a good wife and denies her daughters education. Kehinde and Taiwo are surely going to replicate her life.

4.2 The Influence of Gender Stereotypes on Male Characters

Every society has values, norms, customs and tradition it holds dearly. A good number of these values, norms, customs and traditions are largely influenced by gender socialisation of the society's young ones fostered by the adults in the society and social institutions. Gender socialisation defines different roles in society for males and females right from birth, through childhood until adulthood; attaches different values to the sexes, expects young boys to be tough, assertive, aggressive and independent whereas young girls are expected to be gentle, submissive, compliant and dependent. This promotes gender inequality. Flowing from gender socialisation and the resultant gender inequality are different degrees of discrimination, oppression and sexism against women, arranged marriage and motherhood, the commodification of the girl-child and women and denial of educational opportunities for self-actualisation and development (Pattman and Chege, 2003:43 – 44; Botha, 20119: 17; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003: 35; Crespi, 2002: 3).

The impact of gender socialisation on the male characters in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) is unmistakable. Agbadi, the famous chief in Ibuza, displays unmitigated chauvinistic and macho conduct that has been thoroughly moulded by gender socialisation. He disdainfully treats his wives as his commodities, neglects their sexual desires as he is preoccupied with his mistress, Ona, and considers chief Umunna as stupid and weak because he has no sons. Obi Umunna, Emecheta writes:

> despite having several wives, had few children, and in fact no living son at all, but Ona grew to fill her father's expectation. He had maintained that she must never marry; his daughter was never going to stoop to any man. She was free to have men, however, and if she bore a son, he would take her father's name, thereby rectifying the omission nature had made (11-12).

Unfortunately, the arrangement Ona had made with her father did not materialise. Ona begot a baby girl Nnu Ego by Agbadi. Her second pregnancy did not go a full term. Ona birthed a premature son. Shortly after the birth of the son Ona died and was immediately followed by her weak and sickly son. Through this scene in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) Emecheta ridicules human attempt at immortalisation through their sons, condemns gender stereotypes and critiques men's manipulation of girl children and women for selfish interests. Umunna should have just accepted that he was never meant to have a son and should have allowed Ona to live her life without trying to rectify 'the omission nature had made' (12).

Amatokwu, the traditional farmer who is hardened by hard labour and is a model of the Igbo masculinity in the rural Ibuza setting, subjects her wife, Nnu Ego, to physical and psychological abuse because of her inability to give him an heir. Nnaife, the migratory worker in the colonial Nigerian city, Lagos, finds himself caught in the socio-economic, cultural and political transition. On the one hand, he still holds firmly to the rural cultural practices and tradition of his people. He has unquestioningly accepted to marry Nnu Ego, the woman he has not ever seen or met because his parents (the Owulums) and Agbadi have arranged the marriage as per their tradition. On the other hand, he finds himself in the city where he works as a washer man for the Meers earning pittance. His poor economic circumstances notwithstanding, Nnaife procreates many children, inherits his late brother's wives and marries another young wife, Okpo. This puts a serious strain on his meagre financial resources and results in rivalry between his wives. Oshia and his younger brother, Adim, Nnaife's and Nnu Ego's sons, are highly valued in the gendered Igbo society. Unlike their twin sisters, Kehinde and Taiwo, they are not burdened with household chores. Besides, their parents do everything possible to get the boys educated whilst Kehinde and Taiwo are kept at home to help their mother with petty trading. Their education is not a priority. Undoubtedly, gender stereotypes have a profound impact on the male characters, their interactions and relations with female and other male characters. For the purpose of this study, the following sections will focus on Agbadi, Amatokwu, Nnaife and the two brothers, Oshia and Adim.

4.3 Agbadi

The impact of gender social scripting or socialisation on the individual is made obvious by their actions, general deportment, what they say and the type of relations and interactions they have with people of the opposite gender or those of the same gender that are regarded as unqualified to belong to their gender category (Botha, 2019: 17, Derrickson, 2017: 24). In the case of Agbadi, his relationship with his many wives, his mistress, Ona, daughter, Nnu Ego, Amatokwu and other male characters will be the focus of this analysis. The analysis will reveal the extent of his gender socialisation in the context of a gendered Igbo society.

Agbadi is 'a very wealthy local chief' (10) in Ibuza. His royalty, matchless skills as a wrestler, giftedness in oratory and physical prowess make him a much-sought man in the society that treasures marriage, motherhood and children. Growing up during the times when neighbouring villages would occasionally rise against one another, Agbadi, Emecheta writes, 'was sure to come back with the best-looking women' (10) during raids, like war trophies. His preference is for women from the 'big houses, daughters of chiefs and rich men' (10). This penchant of his is fuelled by the ill-intentioned desire to humiliate these women. Probably this fills him with a great sense of fulfilment and achievement when he makes these confident and arrogant women realise that as the man he is stereotypically masculine, more powerful and superior to them. After having accumulated these many wives through traditional marriage or military raids, Agbadi selfishly neglects their sexual needs. Emecheta observes that Agbadi 'watched each of them sink into domesticity and motherhood he was soon bored and would go further afield for some other exciting, tall and proud female' (10). His gendered view about marriage and sex is totally stereotypically skewed. Once he is 'reminded to do his duty by them, then when they became pregnant he would not be seen in their huts until the time came for him to mate them again' (12 -13). Obviously, he sees nothing wrong with what he makes his wives and several mistresses go through. His preoccupation is about satisfying his egoistic male sexual ego.

Much as Agbadi does not treat his wives well, he is besotted to chief Obi Umunna's daughter, Ona. Unfortunately, Ona does not accept the proposal to be married to him. Ona is a male-daughter who cannot marry in order to give her father a male heir. Raised by her doting father who does not have a son who will take over the chieftainship when he dies, Ona is raised differently from other typical women. Her father's influence over her is recognisable. She has turned out to be brave, assertive, arrogant and confident. As a consequence, people cannot understand why Agbadi, a chief with multiple wives and mistresses, spends much of his time with the woman who is spitefully described as 'wild and uncontrollable woman' and rude and egocentric (14).

Following Agbadi's near fatal attack by an elephant during a hunting expedition, Ona, when Agbadi's wives are shooed away by men carrying the injured Agbadi home, stubbornly insists, though not married to Agbadi, to stay at his compound and nurse him. It is during this time that Agbadi, one night, when his condition has significantly improved

becomes sexually desirous of Ona. He masterfully works on Ona's resistance. Immediately Ona starts to moan and groan, Agbadi rejoices because he 'knew he had won. He wanted her completely humiliated in her burning desire' (20). Here, Agbadi is portrayed as the winner because 'women never win because they are female, powerless and always dependent on male power' (Barfi, Kohzadi and Azizmohammadi, 2015: 34). Unsuccessfully, Ona tries to counter her ravaging feelings. Eventually, unable to bear the sexual longing and craving for Agbadi, Ona then pleads: 'Please, I am in pain'. They eventually copulate. It is during this copulation that Agbadi demonstrates his callousness and indifference. Following a 'passionate thrust' by Agbadi, Ona cries out: 'Agbadi, you are splitting me into two' (20). The racket wakes up people in the compound who come hurriedly to check if Agbadi is well. Responding to his concerned friend Idayi, Agbadi contentedly and sadistically says 'I am fine, my friend. You go to sleep. I am only giving my woman some pleasures' (21). As sexual satisfaction for the woman is not a priority for Agbadi, Emecheta again observes: 'he left her abruptly, still unsatisfied and rolled painfully away to the other side of the goatskin. Having hurt her on purpose for the benefit of his people sleeping in the courtyard, he had had his satisfaction' (21). This portrayal reveals the extent to which gender socialisation has desensitised Agbadi to women's sexual needs, gratification and personal dignity. To him, Ona is the sex object meant solely for his satisfaction.

After the birth of Ona's daughter, Nnu Ego, Agbadi visits her father's place. In their conversation, Umunna and Agbadi argue about where Ona should stay and who should keep the baby girl. Agbadi and Umunna enter into a bargaining tussle. Umunna says: 'Yes the baby is yours, but my daughter remains here. I have not accepted any money from you' (26). Agbadi arrogantly retorts: 'How much do you want for her? What else do you expect? Is it her fault that you have no son?' (26). The exchange between Umunna and Agbadi reveals that women in the Igbo society are devalued and regarded as commercial commodities over which men can bargain while sons are highly valued. Agbadi makes Umunna feel that he is not man enough because the latter has no sons. This concept of women being commodified is further delineated and reinforced when Agbadi remarks on seeing Nnu Ego: 'This child is priceless, more than twenty bags of cowries' (26). He already considers the pride price the newly born will be worth when she marries in a few years' time as a young woman.

Agbadi's attitude towards and treatment of her daughter, Nnu Ego, differ markedly with his attitude and treatment of his wives. Carefully and thoroughly, he considers who should marry his daughter before he gives his blessings. Agbadi's friend, Idayi, advises him to get one of the young men to marry his daughter as she has already past puberty and her age mates already have a child or two. Idayi raises this important issue because, in the words of Sanka *et al* (2013: 91), 'marriage is an important aspect of the way of life of Africans. In most African societies, marriage is not an option but an obligation in every adult's life.' Because Nnu Ego has come of age, she already 'Dreams of her man and her home' (30). As tradition demands, Agbadi has already been approached by the Amatokwus and he is impressed with their son who 'has been a great help to his father during the past year' (30). He is convinced that the young man will make a perfect husband as he will be able to provide for his daughter. What is more, he wants his daughter to be the senior wife as this position has additional status compared to just being a woman and mother. As the senior wife, Nnu Ego, will be closer to her husband and assist him to supervise the junior wives. When the Amatokwus come for Nnu Ego, Agbadi stops at nothing to impress and make the celebration memorable. He accepts the normal bride price and gives his daughter many gifts – seven goats, many yards of cloth, several lappas, Hausa trinkets and coral beads – to express his satisfaction at her daughter's marriage.

Agbadi's 'heart is full to bursting point' (30) when the Amatokwus return on the second day to thank him for having given them a virtuous woman. He proudly states: 'my daughter has been found an unspoiled virgin. Her husband's people are here to thank us' (31). Happy for Agbadi's achievement and fulfilment, Idayi declares: 'There is nothing that makes a man prouder than to hear that his daughter is virtuous' (31). This gender and cultural stereotypes put daughters and parents, particularly the fathers under tremendous pressure. Young women are expected to abstain from sexual activity and remain virtuous. Their parents should keep a watchful eye over them. Contrarily, nothing is said about the virtuousness of the young man who is happy to marry a virtuous and untainted young woman. As Nnu Ego is virtuous, her father anticipates her to soon fall pregnant and the in-laws will return to express their thanks.

The protagonist's unexpected failure to bear children and emaciation immensely concern her father. During one of her visits to her natal home, Agbadi realises that Nnu Ego is

'thin and juiceless' (33). As a caring father would do, he advises his daughter that 'if you find life unbearable, you can always come here to live' (33). He does not subscribe to the African notion that once married, the woman should persevere despite the abuses and hardships she suffers. This exposes him as hypocritical. On the one hand, he does not worry much about the conditions of his wives and how he treats them. But, on the other hand, he is overly concerned about the man who is to marry his daughter, his ability to love, provide and care for her in marriage and her general welfare.

4.4 Amatokwu

Amatokwu, the Agbadi – preferred husband to Nnu Ego is a typical traditional Igbo farmer. Initially, his marriage to Nnu Ego is thoroughly blissful. According to Igbo cultural expectation, once married, the young couple should start bearing children. And these children should be boys as they stereotypically have more value than girls. Sanka *et al* (2013) accurately capture the importance of children when they state that ''marriage is meant for procreation. Marriage is not meant for satisfying fantasies that do not create any chance of procreation.'' As months go by and the woman does not show any signs of conception, the woman, her spouse, in-laws and parents start to worry and complain. Unfortunately, the high expectation to bring forth children by Nnu Ego and Amatokwu, like in the case of Ato and Eulallie in Ama Ata Aidoo's drama of early postcolonial Akan society in contemporary Ghana, *The Dilemma of the Ghost*, does not materialise. At the beginning the husband is very understanding and considerate. When Nnu Ego complains to Amatokwu, he calmly advises her to: 'Just make sacrifices to that slave woman, and pay your father a visit. He may have a suggestion to make' (31). This is done in the hope that Nnu Ego may fall pregnant and give the Amatokwus the much-wanted male heir. As Nnu Ego does not conceive, the family puts pressure on Amatokwu to have the heir as he is the 'first son of the family and his people want an heir from him as soon as possible' (32) to ensure his immortality.

As the pressure from the family to get children mounts, the second wife is conveniently sought and found for Amatokwu. In the first month of their marriage, the second wife falls pregnant. Unfortunately for Nnu Ego, this, justifiably or unjustifiably, confirms the generally held view that she is barren, indeed. Barrenness, Sanka et al write (2013: 93)

'is considered a curse in traditional Africa and in Akan society due to the value that is placed on children in every marriage.' This puts a strain on the affectionate relations between Nnu Ego and Amatokwu. The treatment of Nnu Ego by her husband changes drastically. He moves her to the hut kept for older wives; takes her to the farm to harvest with him and orders her about as an ordinary farm help whilst the pregnant second wife stays at home.

When Nnu Ego complains about the abusive treatment she receives, Amotokwu rudely responds:

> What do you want me to do? I am a busy man. I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line. If you really want to know, you don't appeal to me anymore. You are dry and jumpy. (32)

The above response, coming from a husband, is extremely insensitive, demeaning, humiliating and insulting. Nnu Ego's failure to have children is, due to gender stereotypes, squarely blamed on her. Sadly, her husband no longer sees himself as part of the problem and a sought solution. Now that his second wife is pregnant, he discards his wife as a dispensable commodity. He no longer regards Nnu Ego as deserving of his emotional and psychological support during this challenging time in her childless marriage. Being a chauvinist that he is, Amatokwu, responding to his senior wife's complaint about his sexual neglect, arrogantly says to Nnu Ego: 'I will do my duty by you. I will come to your hut when my wife starts nursing her child. But now, if you can't produce sons, at least you can help harvest yams' (33). Effectively Amatokwu has downgraded Nnu Ego as a senior wife; he sees her as just another woman who will satisfy his sexual desires soon as his wife shall be nursing the new baby.

Gender–inspired preoccupation with having children, particularly male ones, can, if not properly managed, make the husband ruthlessly violent or turn the wife into a total emotional wreck. One evening when the second wife is in Amatokwu's hut and the baby is with Nnu Ego, he cries. Out of frustration as she cannot take the baby to his mother, lest she will be accused of being jealous of the attention Amatokwu gives to the young wife, Nnu Ego breastfeeds the baby boy. Emecheta depicts this seeming act of feminine affection and solidarity as follows: 'She closed her eyes as contentment ran through her whole body' (34). This first-time experience makes her feel like a true mother. For the first

time, Nnu Ego feels 'some of the fulfilment for which she yearned' (34). On the second occasion, unbeknown to her that she is being watched, Nnu Ego tries to breastfeed the baby. No sooner has she given the baby her virgin breast than she 'felt a double blow from behind' (35) by her husband. When the matter is heard, Agbadi does not blame Amatokwu for beating Nnu Ego badly. But as a father who always aspires that his daughter should be well cared for, he resolves to get his daughter away from the strained and abusive marriage. His hope is that she will recuperate and the child-forming juice might be regenerated in her if she is amongst her people because "the family provides support for the individual in time of need" (Sanka et al: 2013: 94). Ultimately, the marriage between Amatokwu and Nnu Ego is dissolved by mutual consent between Agbadi and the Owulums and the bride-price is duly returned.

4.5 Nnaife

The socio-economic and cultural changes sweeping across Nigeria following colonisation have impacted on able-bodied young men. Young men have been obliged to abandon agrarian rural life to seek employment in cosmopolitan Lagos as dock and rail workers. Unfortunately, some, like Nnaife and Ubani, have had to do demeaning menial jobs like working in the Whites' kitchens as cooks and in their laundries as washer men. Nnaife is employed by the English expatriates, the Meers. Following Nnaife's failed marriage with Amatokwu, another marriage is hurriedly arranged by Agbadi and the Oluwums between Nnaife and Nnu Ego in accordance with the Igbo traditional practices. The bride price is duly sent from Lagos by Nnaife and arrangements are made to take Nnu Ego, like a commodified item, to her new groom by her elder brother in-law. Upon arrival in Lagos, Nnu Ego is disgusted by 'a man with a belly like a pregnant cow, wobbling first to this side and then to that' (42). Her disappointment makes Nnu Ego scrutinise the groom's every physical feature. She finds him unappealing to her. Nnaife is short in body stature, has overgrown hair, pale skin, puffy cheeks and wears khaki shorts with holes and a loose white singlet. Nnu Ego sees him as a weak man who does not meet the definition of the traditional Igbo man. Unlike young men in Ibuza who are hardened by physical exertion, Nnaife is 'a jelly of a man' (42).

Recognising that Nnu Ego does not approve of him, Nnaife is pleased at least that his new wife does not run away as unimpressed brides that have been brought to their

grooms in Lagos are wont to do. Nnaife, Emecheta opines: 'demanded his marital right as if determined not to give her a chance to change her mind' (44). The sexual encounter has not been a pleasant experience. It is described in negative terms as 'animal passion,' 'never seen a woman before' and the sexual appetite 'was insatiable' to reveal Nnu Ego's revulsion. To help her bear the agony and ordeal, she relaxes and pretends the 'man lying on her was Amatokwu, her first sweetheart of husband' (44). Luckily for Nnaife, the bride resolves not to return to Ibuza because she does not want to disgrace her family, particularly her father, Agbadi. Shortly after her arrival in Lagos, Nnu Ego sees strange signs on her body that herald her first pregnancy. One Sunday afternoon before she tells her husband the good news, Nnaife picks up a quarrel with his wife who, contrary to her nature and custom, sits and watches him when he eats. Nnaife bursts out:

> You stare at me as if you don't want me to eat the food you cooked.
> You know a wife is not allowed to do that (48).

To which Nnu Ego retorts:

> 'That applies in Ibuza, not here' (48). Nnaife, his macho ego bruised, responds: 'Well, whether we're in Ibuza or not, I am still your husband and still a man. You should not sit there staring at me' (48). Nnu Ego rubs it on: 'A man, huh? Some man.' Nnaife retaliates: 'What did you say? Did I not pay your bride price? Am I not your owner? (48)

The altercation between Nnaife and Nuu Ego underlines the negatively corrosive effects of colonialism and modernisation on the traditional Igbo value system. Nnaife still stereotypically believes that he is the superior traditional man who must be respected and worshipped by his inferior wife. Because he has paid the bride price, Nnaife claims that he owns Nnu Ego and has the right to beat her if she, in his chauvinistic and macho opinion, disrespects him. But his wife is aware that her husband is emasculated, robbed and denuded of his superior status stereotypically ascribed to men by the colonial and capitalist system taking root in Nigeria. He works as a mere laundry man and is extremely obsequious to the Meers. His wife does not expect him to conduct himself like her former husband, Amatokwu, or any other men back in Ibuza worth their salt.

Unable to keep pace with the socio-economic, cultural and political changes, Nnaife still believes in his tradition and customs. He believes in having many children, inheriting his late brother's wives, polygamy and arranging marriage for his daughters. In line with gender stereotypes, Nnaife treasures children, singularly male children. The birth of

Ngozi, the first son of Nnaife and Nnu Ego, is celebrated because it has proven his impeccable manhood. After Ngozi's untimely death, Oshia is born. Nnaife becomes very preoccupied with his well-being and quarrels with his wife that she neglects their son as she focuses on her petty trade to make money. Nnaife says to his wife: 'But woman, you have to look after your child. That at least is a woman's job' 86). Gender stereotypes make him fail to appreciate the great effort Nnu Ego expends to provide for the family as he has been jobless since the Meers have returned to England. Despite the poverty in the household, Adim the second son and the twin girls are born in quick succession. When he is told of the birth of the daughters, instead of celebrating like when the sons are born, Nnaife reveals his gender bias and disgust. He disappointedly questions:

'Nnu Ego, what are these? Could you have not done better? Where will they sleep, eh? What will they eat? (127)

If these baby girls were boys surely Nnaife would be singing a totally different tune. But now that they are girls, he becomes aware of the lack of space in the room and food for the children. Besides, there is no naming ceremony nor palm wine to celebrate their birth. His revulsion at and disappointment in the birth of the twin girls is underlined by the names he gives them – Taiwo (she who came first) and Kehinde (she who came second). On the contrary, a few weeks later when Adaku gives birth to a baby boy, Nnaife is very joyous. Sadly, the baby dies after a few weeks.

Inheriting his late brother's wives, Adankwo and Adaku, puts more responsibility on Nnaife. Adaku relocates to Lagos – a city with limited job opportunities, particularly for women. On her arrival Nnu Ego, anticipating the inevitable rivalry between the co-wives, does not receive her warmly as they are obviously going to compete over their husband's already stretched meagre financial resources. Nnaife, oblivious of the extent of the financial challenges he faces, is excited to find Adaku at his place and he beams 'like a child presented with a new toy' (120) as he shows her around the yard as his wife. Unconcerned about his penurious condition, he goes on to procreate with Adaku, Nnu Ego and Adankwo thereby worsening his situation.

Outrun by cultural, political and social changes, Nnaife insists he still wants to traditionally arrange the marriages of Taiwo and Kehinde – the girls for whom he has 'never had time' (204), practise polygamy and expects his sons, Oshia and Adim, to assist him provide for his big family according to the traditional practice. Denied equal access to education due

to gender stereotypes, the daughters have not had any formal education except elementary reading and writing and sewing skills. Taiwo is, without any problems, married to a young clerk who pays the acceptable pride price. When Nnaife broaches the subject of marriage to a young man in Ibuza to Kehinde, Nnaife meets strong resistance. Instead of relenting, he tells his daughter that 'You don't need to know him in advance. You must marry him. You are lucky you know this one…' (204). Contrary to the Ibuza tradition, Kehinde, in pursuance of her freedom and independence, resolutely rejects out of hand the young man. Her defiant conduct is abominable in her traditional Igbo society as the Igbos and Yorubas do not intermarry. Infuriated by her daughter's unheard-of conduct, he storms out of his room with a cutlass threatening death to the young Yoruba man and his father on hearing that her daughter has fled to her lover's place. The resultant violence lands him in goal. Eventually, when his claim that he pays the fees for his sons who study abroad is contradicted by Nnu Ego, Nnaife is exposed in court as the father who is unable to provide for his many children and wives. This is utterly embarrassing to the African man who is seen as a total failure.

Married to Nnu Ego and Okpo and having inherited Adankwo and Adaku from his late brother, Nnaife is unable to provide for them and their children. This does not seem to bother him because 'a man's status and wealth is greater the more wives he has' (Vesanummi, 2007: 31). Correspondingly, the more wives he has means he will have many children because they are 'great wealth' (Vesanummi, 2007: 31). Besides his big family, Nnaife's financial situation is worsened by his imprudent use of money. Upon return from Fernado Po, Nnaife uses money wastefully to entertain his friends with alcoholic beverages. Instead of listening to Nnu Ego when she cautions him to use money frugally, he instead engages in domestic violence and alcohol abuse as an outlet of his 'unresolved emotional wounds and pain' (Botha:2019:17).

The sons, Oshia and Adim, unlike the girls, are given preferential treatment because they are highly valued. Traditionally, they are the ones who should help the father by looking after their younger siblings. Contrary to tradition, they break with the practice. They both have acquired scholarships to study at prestigious institutions abroad. Oshia, in whom Nniafe and Nnu Ego have invested substantially, neglects his parents. He does not even write to nor care for them. This hurts Nnaife to the extent that the relations between the father and the son are permanently severed. Infuriated by Kehinde's rebellious conduct,

the sons' abandonment of their parents and dereliction of filial responsibility, Nnaife blames Nnu Ego for the children's unconventional and un-Igbo like conduct.

4.6 Oshia and Adim

Gender socialisation takes place when children are still very young and gets accentuated and reinforced during the puberty and adulthood stages. Children are raised to behave in line with their socially and stereotypically different roles defined for boys and girls. (Botha, 2019: 10; Chege and Pattman, 2003: 43 – 44; Ackert and Mcannell, 2003: 35; Crespi, 2003:3). Boys and girls are expected to conduct themselves in line with the gender expectations in the gendered society. As the hugely treasured gender, Oshia and Adim are aware of the preferential treatment they get from their parents, Nnu Ego and Nnaife and other members of society. Nnu Ego invests her time, energy and resources to raise the boys in the hope that they will take care of her in old age. Similarly, the father, Nnaife, does the same. The two boys, like Nhamo in *Nervous Conditions,* are, despite the financial challenges that intermittently disrupt their schooling, allowed to go to acquire education. Both parents are prepared to sacrifice their little financial resources to educate them up to college level. Nnaife is even prepared to spend all his money on Oshia's education because the eldest son will, it is traditionally believed, provide for the family in the future. The special treatment the boys receive make them regard chores assigned to girls with disdain and disrespect girls and women and anything associated with them

Raised believing that boys are worth more than girls and do not do girl chores, Oshia is aware that he is 'worth more than ten Dumbis' (128) – Dumbi is Adaku's daughter. This exaggerated sense of immense import makes Oshia refuse to help his half-sister fetch water as Adaku asks him to lend a hand. Adaku asks him:

> Oshia, did you not hear me call you? Go fetch some water.
> Dumbi is already on her way (128).

Rudely and disrespectfully, Oshia responds: 'I am not going! I am a boy. Why should I help in the cooking? That is a woman's job' (128). Instead of collectively rebuking Oshia, all people in the compound, stereotypically just remark: 'Just like a boy' (128). This kind of deplorable conduct on Oshia's side as well as the people who fail to reprimand him, reinforces his stereotypic view about the worthlessness of girls and women. They are the

ones who should be burdened with all household chores whilst boys idle around. Besides, it is a slap in the face of Adaku and a rude reminder that she actually is not worth much as a mother because she sadly does not have sons.

Furthermore, it makes her poignantly feel the loss of her only baby son. In a childish, myopic and stereotypic solidarity with his father against Nnu Ego and Adaku, Oshia finds fault with his mother and her co-wife for not cooking for his father. Ironically, he finds the wives' cooking strike to pressure Nnaife to give them money to buy food for the children uncalled for.

Unlike Oshia's, Adim's education does not receive the same priority attention. Adim complains that his elder brother receives all support required to see him through school. Adim, his mother, Nnu Ego, advises, needs to pass standard six and then go for apprenticeship. Recognising the unfair and unequal treatment he receives at home, Adim accuses his mother that: 'Everything in this house is Oshia's. He must have the best of everything. Mother, you answer to his every whim. Sometimes I think the rest of your children don't exist for you at all' (190). Despite Adim's objection, his mother maintains that Oshia as the eldest son and heir should be 'specially treated' (191), allowed to finish school and then help with his siblings' school fees because 'he is the direct heir, the first son of your father' (191). Unfortunately, Nnu Ego's fervent wishes dissipate into nothing as Oshia and Adim study and work abroad and do not write nor care for her, Nnaife and the other siblings.

4.7 The Impact of Gender Stereotypes on the Female Characters

The patriarchal ideology in gendered societies undergirds gender stereotypes. Its impact on women is very profound. Either women accept the maintenance of the stereotypes through sheepish compliance with the traditional cultural expectations and norms or strive individually and collectively to oppose the *status quo.* Whatever women and girls do in their interactions with men and/or boys as well as other women is informed by their gender socialisation. Ona, the daughter of chief Umonna, is raised by her father. Because her father does not have a son, Ona is given the status of the male daughter. Supposedly, she has to birth a son for her father. Unlike the submissive and self-effacing Igbo women, Ona   is brave, stubborn, confident and arrogant. Nnu Ego, born out of wedlock to Ona

and Agbadi, is raised according to the strict traditional Igbo value system that treasures marriage, motherhood and children, particularly male ones. Throughout her life, she strives to be the ideal Igbo woman. Adankwo is the typical Igbo senior wife who believes that an unmarried woman is an incomplete being. She regards polygamy and its attendant rivalries and problems as something that women should wholeheartedly embrace. Adanku, the co-wife to Adankwo, has a different outlook on life. After her husband's death, she is inherited by Nnaife – the younger brother to her husband. After her relocation to Lagos, she realises the onerous life of polygamy and the 'sin' of failing to beget sons and resolves to take a new path in life without the man. Kehinde and Taiwo are Nnu Ego's and Nnaife's twin daughters. They are raised under penurious conditions by the out and out traditionalist parents in Lagos – the city that is at variance with the cherished and esteemed Igbo value system

4.8 Ona – 'a priceless jewel'

Through Ona, Emecheta demonstrates the extent to which the preoccupation with boy children becomes a hindrance in one's life. Chief Umonna has many wives and a few children but does not have a son. To rectify the 'omission nature had made' (12), he has given his daughter the status of a male-daughter. Under this arrangement the daughter remains 'at her childhood home, in a family that has no heir, that is a son. If everything worked out as hoped, the son of a male-daughter inherited the land and property of his mother's father' (Ezeigbo, 1990 cited in Vesanummi: 2007: 23). Therefore, Ona shall not marry but can have men in order to give her father a male heir. This arrangement sharply contradicts the normal course of traditional social practice where the young woman marries. As the beautiful royal maiden, one might have expected that due to traditional norms and practice, Ona might want to marry. But because of gender stereotypes, she readily obliges because the father's word has to be respected and honoured. In this case, her life is torn between two men, her father, Obi Umonna and lover, Agbadi. Because she is raised differently by chief Umunna, Ona is not like the typical Igbo woman who is submissive and docile. The confident, proud, stubborn and arrogant Ona is, though she loves him, able to turn down Agbadi's marriage proposal. Because of her unorthodox character, Ona is thought to have bewitched Agbadi. What is more, she is described as 'troublesome', impetuous, 'a rude, egocentric woman who had been spoilt by her father' and 'bad woman' (12) because her personality defies the typical definition of the woman.

Ona is portrayed as the fearless, strong-willed, tenacious and strong woman. To the dismay of many women and even men, she is able to withstand the difficult character of Agbadi, the man whose tongue bites 'like the edge of a circumcision blade' and rules 'his family and children as if he were a god' (15). When Agbadi is almost fatally trampled on by an elephant, the men drive away all his wives. But it is the strong-willed Ona who single-handedly fights and forces her way into her lover's compound to be the only one to look after him until his recuperation. As a woman raised in a traditional Igbo social context, Ona refuses to go to Agbadi's compound after the birth of Nnu Ego. The pride price, she insists, must first be paid to her father before she can live permanently with her lover. The experiences of a life dominated by men's decisions have made her realise that it is crucial for her daughter, Nnu Ego to be free to independently make decisions on the trajectory of her life. When on her deathbed, Ona pleads with Agbadi that 'however much you love our daughter, Nnu Ego, you must allow her to have a life of her own, a husband if she wants. Allow her to be a woman' (28). Ona is aware of the debilitating effects of gender stereotypes perpetuated by parents, particularly fathers on their children, especially the girl-children. Besides, she envisions the future when girl children are going to be free and self-reliant. Ironically, Nnu Ego becomes a staunch traditionalist who is married to Nnaife – the man who believes in polygamy.

4.9 Nnu Ego

The story of *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) is principally based on Nnu Ego, the daughter of the famous wrestler and wealthy chief Agbadi and Ona –the daughter of chief Umuona. Raised in a traditional Igbo society that stereotypically esteems women for their reproductive capacity, sheepish docility, respect for parental and spousal authority, and treasures male children, Nnu Ego has internalised all these gender stereotypes. These stereotypes immensely influence her decisions, conduct, relations and interactions with her parents, lover, co-wives, children, other women and husbands. As a result of her religious adherence to her Igbo tradition and norms, the character strives strenuously throughout her life to be the ideal woman who will marry, have children and live a fulfilling life. Ironically, her life as a married woman is unpleasant. The first marriage is characterised by barrenness and abuse. The second marriage of many children is loveless. But it has given Nnu Ego a deep sense of fulfilment. Sadly, it is marked by

oppression, discrimination, sexism, commodification and a lack of opportunities for self-actualisation and development (Barfi, Kohzadi and Azizmohammadi, 2015: 34 -35; Vesinummi, 2007:26 – 27).

The protagonist's father, Agbadi, loves her immensely. He wants everything good for his daughter. When Nnu Ego is of marriageable age, her father's bosom friend, Idayi, advises him: 'let someone marry this girl. She has long passed the age of puberty.' (29). According to the Igbo tradition, the marriage is arranged by the father immediately the daughter reaches puberty. Readily, Agbadi informs his friend that the Amatokwus have approached him and he has satisfied himself that they are good people and their son is industrious. He is the perfect match for his daughter. Commenting on the significant role parents play in the arrangement of marriage in African, Sanka *et al* state (2013: 91) that 'two individuals cannot just meet and decide to marry. It is an issue that involves families, clans, communities, and so on.' Similarly, Sarpong (cited in Sanka et al, 2013:89) avers that:

> In Africa, one may say without risking accusation of exaggeration that marriage is not simply an affair between individuals who have fallen in love. It is a matter in which the lineage of the contracting parties is greatly interested. In a way marriage concerns the whole society in which it takes place for which reason, ……in particular.

Ultimately the marriage takes place and Agbadi receives the 'normal bride price'. After the festivities Nnu Ego goes to her in-laws at Umu-Iso accompanied by the delegation of men and girls. As a wealthy chief, Agbadi gifted her daughter numerous presents. The father is over the moon when on the second day the in-laws return to thank him "for having given them'' an unspoilt virtuous virgin' (31). Immediately, he entertains the hope that Nnu Ego will soon fall pregnant and the in-laws will return to express their gratitude again. Sadly, Nnu Ego does not conceive and, like her father, starts to worry and see herself as a failed woman. Her father finds it difficult to 'accept that anything that comes from him can be imperfect' (33).

Realising her failure to bear children, Nnu Ego discusses the problem with her loving husband. First, he understands his wife's plight and supports her. The protagonist, without considering the other variables, because of gender stereotype, readily blames herself for the childless marriage. She concernedly states: 'I am sure the fault is on my side. You do everything right. How can I face my father and tell him I have failed? (31). The stereotypic self-criticism and deprecation flow from the cultural expectation that the woman once

married should procreate. According to Vesanummi (2007: 38), 'motherhood has a special status in African societies.' In addition, 'motherhood is the peak of rites of passage to womanhood,' according to Okere (cited in Vesanummi: 2007: 38 – 39). Failure to have a child brings more anxiety, trepidation, pressure and condemnation from the husband and the in-laws. Similarly, the woman's parents worry infinitely and find fault with themselves and their daughter. Once there are no changes, the pressure to have a child becomes unbearable as Amatokwu, the in-laws and other relatives demand an heir. Conveniently, the family finds another wife who immediately falls pregnant and consequently puts Nnu Ego under severe strain. This drives her to total desperation and hopelessness. Instead of being supported, the protagonist is jettisoned by her husband. He moves her into the hut for older wives, makes her work the fields and subject her to physical, emotional and psychological abuse. Eventually, the marriage is dissolved through mutual consent between the two families and Nnu Ego is returned to her parental home.

Against his will, Agbadi arranges another marriage with the Oluwums' Lagos-based young man whom the prospective bride does not know or has ever seen. The father hopes against hope that his daughter might, her *chi* – the personal god willing, have many children. Crucially, he wants to keep her away from the disparaging village gossip. After the receipt of the bride price, the new bride is, like a freshly packaged commercial article, taken to her new husband in Lagos.

Disappointingly, the groom the protagonist finds in the new urban setting is the direct opposite of the labour - hardened traditional Ibuza young men. The groom is repulsively obese, has overgrown hair, a pale complexion, and puffy cheeks and is dressed in an unconventional and unman-like manner. Despite the revolting appearance of the man, Nnu Ego resolves to endure because the traditional woman needs to honour her father and her own womanhood. The first sexual encounter of the newly wed on the first night is an agonising ordeal which she ameliorates by pretending that she is sleeping with Amotokwu. It is after this encounter that the protagonist conceives and realises her long-cherished dream of being a mother. Instead of celebrating her pregnancy, Nnu Ego finds herself having to conceal it from the Meers because she and Nnaife are not married in the Christian church. The obsequious Nnaife fears that Mrs Meers might sack him. This makes his wife angrily state that: 'If she sacks you because of that, I shall go home to my

father. I want to live with a man, not a woman-made man' (50). Raised by the great chief Agbadi, she does not really fathom how a man can be scared of a woman and be sacked for doing his manly duties by impregnating his wife.

She finds it extremely humiliating and disturbing for her husband to be bullied by the white woman for that matter. She sees him as less of a man. The birth of her first son Ngozi fills her with boundless joy and a deep sense of fulfilment. Overwhelmed with joy, Nnu Ego says to Owerri, the woman who helped her with the delivery of the baby: 'only now with this son I am going to start loving this man. He has made me into a real woman – all I want to be, a woman and a mother' (53). Her loveless marriage has disproved the claim of barrenness and enhanced her status both as mother and woman. According to Derrickson (2017: 20), 'in Igbo society having children was the primary index of a woman's worth, and therefore the straitened circumstances brought about by childbearing were of little consequence, for they were far outweighed by the symbolic value of being a mother.' The son's sudden death shatters her dream and drives her to a frantic attempt at suicide. The loss of her only proof to all and sundry that she is not barren is utterly unbearable. She cannot bear the fact that she failed in the first marriage and the second one seems destined for a similar fate.

The late Ngozi is succeeded by Oshima and many other children. This fills the protagonist with boundless joy and fulfilment. Her position as a mother and woman is firmly established. This African gender stereotype is accurately captured by Vesanummi (2007:40) as follows: 'An infertile woman is despised. If the family receives no heirs, the woman is always to blame. However, when a woman does have children, especially sons, she is looked up to. Sons are the guarantee of secured old age. They will be the ones taking care of their parents, while girls are sent away to be married.' Whilst the number of children increases, the financial resources remain inadequate. The increasing number of children stretches the already meagre financial resources of Nnu Ego's family. There is a chronic shortage of food; Nnu Ego does not have enough outfits and the family struggles to pay the boy children's school fees. As the father and husband fails dismally to provide for the family, the mother, through the sisterly advice and encouragement of Ibuza women resident in Lagos, initiates a hawking business. Much of her time is taken up by her child rearing responsibilities and hawking business. This robs her of the critical support network that the other women provide to one another.

The death of Nnaife's elder brother worsens the financial situation because the surviving brother, the Igbo tradition dictates, has to take over the fatherly responsibilities in his late brother's house. This increases the number of mouths to feed and women to take care of. Invariably, Nnu Ego finds herself in a polygamous marriage. Inevitably, the marriage is characterised by ceaseless rivalry, fights over resources and jealousy. Hence, Nnu Ego does not accept the arrival of Aduku in Lagos. The protagonist's reaction to the arrival of the co-wife is aptly captured in these words: 'Jealousy and anger seized Nnu Ego in turns. She hated this type of woman who would flatter a man, depend on him, need him. Yes, Nnaife would like that'. (118). Much as Adaku tries to nurture good relations between her and Nnu Ego, she fails hopelessly. Therefore, it is not surprising that the two wives' cooking strike initiated by Adaku to pressure Nnaife to give them more money for food fizzles out.

Realising that their husband is not ready to give them more money, Nnu Ego individually capitulates in the interest of her many children. Throughout her life, she focuses on working very hard hawking cigarettes, paraffin and firewood to feed, clothe, and educate her children but the girls. Her fervent dream is that her intelligent and oversea-educated sons will take care of her in old age and they will be surrounding her when she dies an old woman. In an ironic twist of events, Nnu Ego dies alone by the side of the road with 'no child to hold her hand and no friend to talk to her' (224). The shrine erected posthumously in her honour underlines the point that even after death, Nnu Ego is expected to take care of her grandchildren who will come to 'appeal to her should they be barren.' (224). The expectations are not met as Nnu Ego, possibly because of her realisation later in her life that having many children does not necessarily guarantee a fulfilling life, does not answer to her grandchildren's pleas. Emecheta summarises Nnu Ego's bitterness and belated realisation of the futility of having many children as follows:

> Nnu Ego was a wicked woman even in death because, however many
> children appealed to her to make women fertile, she never did. Poor
> Nnu Ego, even in death she had no peace! Still, many agreed she had
> given all to her children, the joy of being a mother was the joy of giving
> all to your children, they said. (224)

Ironically, Nnu Ego died a bitter woman despite having laboured all her life to be a good daughter to her father, good wife to her husband and a good mother to her children. Her

lonely demise debunks the gender stereotypes and throws a bright light on the need for a thorough relook at how society socialises its young ones.

4.10 Adankwo and Adaku

Brought together by their marriage to Nnaife's elder brother, the two wives are typical Igbo women who respect and uphold the traditional values of the Igbo society. Hence after the death of their husband they remain faithful to their tradition and get inherited by their husband's younger brother, Nnaife. As a staunch traditionalist, Adankwo refuses to relocate to Lagos and remains in Ibuza. Her younger co-wife, Adaku, resettles in Lagos. Adaku's arrival in the city brings up a whole new set of challenges for Nnaife and Nnu Ego. The single rented room is not big enough for the newly bloated family; there is only one bed that Nnu Ego has to painfully prepare for the new pride, Adaku and Nnaife. Moreover, there are more children and wives to feed on a pittance and there are constant quarrels over the little available resources. Besides, Adaku, unlike Nnu Ego who has boys and girls, only has girls. This puts her in an unenviable position as she is not accorded the same respect as her rival.

Adankwo occupies the senior wife position in the household of Nnaife's brother. Raised strictly according to the Igbo tradition, she firmly believes that a woman should ''speak in measured tones, show respect and submit'' (Botha, 2019: 17). She firmly believes that a woman is not complete if she does not have a husband, and a senior wife should diligently carry out her supervisory responsibilities over junior co-wives. A woman has, Adankwo avers, her roots deep at her marital home if she has sons and is highly respected. Adankwo, according to Barfi *et al* (2015: 34), 'not only accepts the patriarchal hierarchies but also cooperates in oppressing and silencing "the other."' Ordinarily, she does not have problems with polygamy. On realising that Nnu Ego does not return to Lagos seven months after the death and burial of her father, Agbadi, Adankwo advises her to return to the city. Alive to Nnu Ego's strong traditional background, Adankwo cleverly mentions the protagonist's father, her position as senior wife and *chi*. The great respect Nnu Ego has for her father and personal god will surely make her quickly realise the enormity of dereliction of the responsibility given to her by her society, father and personal god.

Whatever Adankwo says about Adaku is negative. Because Adaku does not have a son, she is said to be desperate to have one. Therefore, Adaku will, according to the senior wife, do everything in her power to discredit Nnu Ego so that she can have Nnaife for herself in the hope that he will give her a baby boy. Adankwo reproves Nnu Ego: 'Can't you see that you are running from the position your *chi* has given you leaving it for a woman your husband inherited from his brother, woman whom we here all know to be very ambitious, a woman who has not even born a son for this family' (158). Adanku is described as the 'ambitious' woman and the 'clever thing' that selfishly seeks the attention of their husband because she does not fit the narrow description of the self–effacing, self-sacrificing and docile woman. Such a woman, in the words of Botha (2019: 17), "is considered less of a woman, disrespectful, arrogant and in need of physical punishment … to put her in her place." Adankwo advises Nnu Ego: 'Don't forget that she is desperate for a son and you have three already' (159). Stereotypically, the advisor puts more value on the boy-child and devalues the two daughters Adaku has and even the twin sisters, Kehinde and Taiwo. All daughters are only viewed as the commodity that has to be exchanged for the bride price that will help to put Oshia and the other brothers in school.

Emecheta skilfully juxtaposes Adaku and Nnu Ego to accentuate the feminist search for self-reliance and independence in her novel. Although a traditionalist, the former immediately realises the stifling effects of gender socialisation and marginalisation she suffers because she does not have boy children. In settling the misunderstanding between Nnu Ego and Adaku following the display of un-Igbo-like anti-social conduct to Igbonoba's wife, Nwakusor biasedly and scathingly admonishes Adaku:

> 'Adaku, the daughter of whoever you are, are committing an unforgivable sin? Our life starts from immortality and ends in immortality. If Nniafe had been married to only you, you would have ended his life on this round of his visiting earth. I know you have children, but they are girls, who in a few years' time will go and help build another man's immortality' (166).

This admonition by Nwakosor reveals that Adaku is not as highly esteemed as her co-wife because she has no sons. Umeh (1982: 43) states: "That she is a failure and considered insignificant because she has no sons." Nwakusor rubs it in: 'I know you have children, but they are girls, who in a few years' time will go and help build another man's immortality. The only woman who is immortalising your husband you make unhappy with your fine clothes and lucrative business' (166). Infuriated by contempt and insults she

suffers because she does not have a son, Adaku seeks fulfilment as the business woman selling fabric in the marketplace.' On the contrary, Nnu Ego escapes with a mere 'word of caution' to guard against her reputation as a senior wife and the mother to many boys. Aware that she is able to provide for herself through her successful trade, Adaku does not hesitate to abandon the 'stinking room' (168) and 'stuffy room' (168) she shares with her husband Nnaife and disavow her traditional Igbo religion and become a prostitute. Adaku resolutely states: 'I am going to live with those women in Montgomery Road. Yes, I'm going to join them, to make some of our men who return from the fighting happy' (168). Clearly, she is acutely aware of the bad reputational damage and ignominy her action will bring on her two daughters, Dumbi and her younger sister. Adaku knows very well that 'No Ibuza man will marry girls brought up by a prostitute' (168). The gender stereotypes that dominate the Ibuza society or village gossip are not going to deter or dissuade her. Whatever result that flows from her action, Adaku is ready to live with it.

The heightened self-consciousness of Adaku makes her take the uncharacteristically radical feminist decisions in her own interest and importantly in the interest of her two daughters. Aware that she is actually reproducing her shackled self through taking her daughters to the market, training them in domestic duties and expecting them to follow their Igbo tribe's cultural stereotypes, she definitely desists and enrols them in as school like the many rich Yoruba families that educate girls. Adaku, convinced about the infinite value of education to her daughters, states: 'I shall see that they get enrolled in a good school. I think that will benefit them in the future' (168). Adaku is very visionary. She is aware that education is not exclusively for boys, but ''is also important in women's lives because it gives them strength and independence in life'' (Kwatsha, 2015: 6). She envisions the future in which her daughters, 'will have to take their own chances in this world' (169) not bothered, encumbered or restricted by men. Independently, she resolves that Nnaife cannot marry the daughters away to any husbands before they are done with education and are ready to marry. Aware of the crippling effect of her traditional religion, she becomes a turncoat and condemns her *chi*. Adaku's realisation that 'women set impossible standards for ourselves' makes her consequently conclude that 'I cannot live up to your standards, senior wife. So I have to set my own' (169). Therefore, she decides on the independent life that she wants to lead and simultaneously prepare for her daughters.

4.11 Kehinde and Taiwo

The birth of the twin sisters, Kehinde and Taiwo, has not brought joy to the father, Nnaife, because they are girls. To register his disappointment, there is no naming ceremony nor palm wine and Nnaife just gives them names according to the order in which they were born. They are respectively named Kehinde – the one who came first and Taiwo – the one who came second. The stereotypic value society attaches to male children is aptly captured in the rhetorical questions Nnaife asks:

> 'Nnu Ego, what are these? Could you not have done better? Where will they sleep, eh? What will they eat? It is only Adaku who, realising the husband's myopic foolhardiness, counters their husband when she says 'In twelve years' time, when their bride prices start rolling in, you'll begin to sing another tune' (127).

However, Adaku, like the Igbo men folk and women folk, reveals the ingrained stereotype that girl children are immediately after birth seen as prospective wives to bring bride prices at the tender age of twelve. She cautions her husband, Nnaife, who does not appreciate the birth of the girl twins that "In twelve years' time, when their bride prices start rolling in, you 'll begin to sing another tone' (127). In preparing the girls for marriage, according to Vesanummi (2007: 26), ''it is especially the mother's responsibility to make sure the girl remains chaste up until her marriage.'' The socialisation of the girls by society stresses ''sexual restraint and preparation for their roles as wives and mothers. If a girl, however, does not restrain herself from sexual activity, it will be "seemingly difficult for her and for her sisters to marry well'' (2007:26). The girls' education or development of skills that will enhance job opportunities for them and subsequent independence and freedom are not prioritised in the gendered Igbo society. These twin girls have to be strictly raised in the traditional Igbo culture by the mother. To be good wives, they need to be less talkative, docile, adhere to the value system without questioning anything and take care of the household. And the enforcer of these stereotypic practices is the mother, whom Palmer calls an effective 'tool of patriarchy' (cited in Mohammed, 2000: 466). The daughters' marriages are to be organised particularly by their father. And then they will bear and raise children, importantly male ones and take care of all their husbands' needs and man the house.

The personalities of the two sisters differ distinctly. Kehinde is described as the 'quieter and deeper of the twins' (174) and Taiwo is generally known 'in the family as the moaner' (175). To assist their mother to raise more money to feed, clothe and educate her boy children, the girls fetch and sell firewood, cigarettes and various other stuff and hawk the foodstuffs from one street to another whilst the boys are attending to their private tutorials. Registering her protest against the girls watering their mother's garden whilst the boys are doing nothing, Taiwo grumbles: 'The boys can help too' (175). Instead of asking the boys to help, the mother stereotypically replies: 'They have to go to their lesson, Taiwo; and stop moaning. You are a girl, you know' (175).

Nnu Ego's expectation is that Taiwo should comply with what is expected of her as a girl. She should not disrupt the gender power structure. Instead of accepting her mother's reproof, Taiwo retorts, 'I know that, Mother. You remind us all the time' (175). Effectively, Taiwo says to her mother that she knows she is a girl but that does not necessarily mean that she and Kehinde must bear the household and hawking duties alone whilst their brothers, the beneficiaries of their hard labour, are doing nothing. The twin girls have not had the opportunity to attend school. Their education has now and then been disrupted by the parents' inability to pay fees for all children and the traditional practice of denying girls educational opportunities. The little education they have received has equipped them with elementary reading and writing skills and the ability to sew. Ironically, Nnu Ego believes that the brothers once educated through the efforts of the mother and sisters 'they will be able to look after the family. When your husbands are nasty to you, they will defend you' (176). Commenting on the discriminatory provisioning of education to boy children Mohammed (2000:466), argues: ''That a mother deprives her girl child the same opportunities that she allows the boy child are enough oppression to the girl to cause her unhappiness, besides thwarting her ambitions.'' The deprivation of educational opportunities has put the daughters at a disadvantage. Their futures as adult women are likely to be like their mother's.

Once the twin girls have reached puberty, Nnaife readies himself to organise their marriages in order to receive bride prices. Without any hiccups, Taiwo is married to a clerk who, despite her lack of education, likes her to carry out wifely duties of bearing him children, cleaning his room and washing his clothes. What the new groom regards as a bonus is her quiet personality and beauty. On the contrary, Kehinde rejects completely

her father's arranged marriage with a young man in Ibuza. Against the old practice forbidding love relationship and/or marriage between the young Igbo and Yoruba men and women, Kehinde has a relationship with a Yoruba young man. This enrages Nnaife and makes him threaten the son and father with death. Vesanummi (2007: 26) observes that: 'He (Nnaife) is distressed not only because of the reputation of the family, but because he knows he will miss out on his pension received from the bride price. It is not customary to give the bride's parents any financial consolation for the loss of their daughter in the Yoroba tradition.' He emphatically states that 'No child of mine is marrying a tribe that hates us' (210). His daughter has fled defiantly to her boyfriend's home. Her action contradicts her father's stereotypical position that he is the one who must choose husbands for his daughters as they are young to 'know their minds' (210).

4.12 Conclusion

The Joys of Motherhood (1994) is written by a woman from the point of view of a woman. It focuses on gender stereotypes that flow from gender socialisation. Through the different female and male characters, Emecheta criticises the stereotypic views that prefer boy children over girls, polygamy over monogamy, marriage over singlehood and motherhood and childlessness. This view results in women's marginalisation and subjugation and commodification of girl children and women. It further denies girls and women educational opportunities and defines womanhood and motherhood by the number of children the woman has and their gender. Through the protagonist, the author rejects the notion that the mother of many children lives a fulfilling life, ages graciously, dies and is buried with dignity and honour. Having struggled through her entire life to raise many children, Nnu Ego dies a lonely mother by the side of the road with no child or grandchild to hold her hand.

Women in search of their freedom and independence are represented by the new generation of Adaku and Kehinde. Adaku frees herself from the polygamous marriage with Nnaife and demonstrates that it is possible for a woman to live independently of a man and to sufficiently provide for herself and educate her children unaided. Kehinde also rejects the practice of arranged marriages and crosses the cultural barrier that prevents intermarriage between the Igbos and Yorubas. The struggle for change notwithstanding, there are women like Adankwo and Nnu Ego who want the *status quo* to remain.

Through Nnaife, the author illustrates the challenges young men face in the traditionally gendered society that goes through socio-cultural, political and economic changes due to British colonisation and indigenous patriarchal practices. Unlike the rural men, he works for the whites who treat him as inferior to them. In trying to assert his manhood he marries many wives, sires many children and often becomes aggressive and violent with his wives. Nnaife is bitterly disappointed when his daughter, Kahinde, defies him and the sons abandon him.

Emecheta's penetrating artistic eye zooms in on the myriad societal challenges that generally blight human existence, particularly girls and women. Through the efforts of feminist authors like Emecheta, Mariama Ba, Nwapa and Ama Ata Aidoo women issues are raised sharply with renewed literary vigour and deep insight. Hence women are taken seriously when they agitate for equality and women emancipation.

Chapter 5

5.1 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter comprises the researcher's reflections, conclusions and recommendations. It also proffers suggestions for further areas of research in the field of literary and cultural studies.

Gender stereotypes have since time immemorial defined and determined the interactions between males and females. Unconsciously, parents, adult 'others', peers, religious and social institutions like churches, mosques, schools and traditional courts to this day still continue to socialise young ones in line with their gender across Africa and the entire world. Gender stereotypes, despite numerous purposeful and targeted efforts like the 'Take the Girl-child to Work' campaigns and a raft of legislations against gender discrimination and oppression in South Africa the girl children and women still suffer. The girl children and women in countries where patriarchy still reigns supreme, like amongst the Masaai of Kenya, are still subjected to arranged marriages and hard household labour of carrying water, fetching firewood, cooking, cleaning and looking after siblings. Once the young girls have gone through the rite of passage to womanhood through initiation at the tender age of fourteen, they are married off to men who are much older than them as attested to by the forty-year-old woman, Kakenya Ntaiya of Kenya (Ledwaba, 2019: 8).

Once married these vulnerable young girls are obliged to drop out of school, like Taiwo and Kehinde in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994), are made to concentrate on their responsibilities as mothers. Consequently, their opportunity to receive education so that they can self-actualise and develop are nullified. Therefore, they remain eternal dependents on their male partners. Immediately they are married they become the property of their husbands, begin to beget children and concentrate their energies and attention on taking care of their husbands and raising children like Nnu Ego, the main character in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) and Mainini in *Nervous Conditions* (1988). Hence, they easily become the easy targets for discrimination, oppression, marginalisation, subjugation and sexism as they are helplessly caught in a powerless and inferior position. This condemns them to grinding poverty and a life of

relentless hardship. It is these countless oppressive practices that majority of women have had to contend with in their daily lives and gender-biased artistic representations by male writers that have necessitated women resistance to patriarchy and misogyny through various literary theoretical orientations like Feminism and Post-Colonialism as discussed in Chapter two.

Men and boys, unlike women and girls, are advantaged by gender socialisation that flows from gender stereotypes. Young boys and men are not traditionally burdened with the household chores like cleaning the homestead, cooking, doing laundry, working on the fields and caring for siblings. They, like Chido and Nhamo, generally have easy access to opportunities for education at various levels to advance themselves in a multiplicity of careers. This enhances their chances to self-actualise and develop and advantages them in homes, communities, social institutions like tribal courts, political organisations and the corporate world. As a consequence, there is a preponderance of men in influential positions of leadership in political parties, middle and top management of public institutions like schools and colleges and private corporations. Unlike women, who have to work twofold or more to prove their mettle if they are appointed in senior managerial positions, men are stereotypically regarded to be deserving of these positions. Even if men do not demonstrate excellent leadership as demonstrated by the state of decay and stratospheric failure in various countries and places of work, society readily pardons them and gives them another chance *ad infinitum*. This is sufficiently illustrated in political circles in several countries in Africa by the lack of women presidents. For instance, when the African Union (AU) occasionally meets, one can hardly see a woman's face after the departure from the political scene of the likes of Ms Joyce Banda and Ms Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the former female presidents of Malawi and Liberia, respectively.

Gender stereotypes are the bedrock of all injustices visited upon girl children and women in patriarchal societies globally. They are grounded on tradition, culture, custom and religion, all of which buttress gender stereotypes. Following from gender stereotypes are oppression, discrimination, commodification, gender-based violence, bartering, sexism, misogyny, to mention but a few. Often, girl children and women are sexually violated, bartered, commodified, subjected to sexism as well as misogyny and, at worst, murdered by their intimate male partners. Sadly, society, in general and men, in particular are the active perpetrators of these injustices against the inferior 'other' - women and girl children.

To counter the incessant onslaught on girl children's and women's human dignity and inalienable human rights, women writers have found succour in various forms of artistic works premised on the Feminist and Post-Colonial literary perspectives to express their (1994) frustrations of many centuries. In *Nervous Conditions* (1988*)* and *The Joys of Motherhood* Dangarembga and Emecheta, respectively, found the medium to express women's lived experiences in their own language from authentically women's perspective. Their works are not clouded by the stereotypically negative male perspectives which often consistently represent women in the manner that reinforces, sustains and buttresses negative stereotypes about girl children and women. In the spirit of feminist and post-colonial cultural theories, the authors are, through their literary works, able to critique patriarchy, misogyny, sexism, commodification of girl children and women, oppression and discrimination. They further demonstrate that girl children like Tambu, Taiwo and Kehinde and women such as Lucia and Adaku can also aspire for education and economic independence rather than domesticity, marriage and motherhood only. These women stridently, uncompromisingly and unconditionally demand social justice and equality with their male counterparts

Dangarembga and Emecheta demonstrate in their works that girl children and women also deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Besides, they need to access educational opportunities in order to realise their full potential in all spheres in life in order to compete on an equal footing with their male counterparts. Girl children's and women's lives should not be narrowly equated to marriage, motherhood, bearing and rearing of children and menial chores. Through Tambu's single-handed efforts and resolve to get herself back to school and satisfactory academic progress at school, Lucia's determination to find a job to provide for herself and register as a part time learner, and Adaku's firm determination to leave Nnaife's 'stinking room' and quit the troubled and fractious polygamous marriage, the authors demonstrate that women have extraordinary resilience and matchless capacity that patriarchal society undermines to the detriment to its social, economic, cultural and political progress and advancement. These women are the torchbearers of the modern women who are found in increasing numbers in various centres of learning, labour, political and corporate leadership across the world and particularly in South Africa. Amongst these trailblazers are outstanding women like Prof Mamokgethi Phakeng, the current vice-chancellor and principal of the University of Cape Town; Dr Naledi Pandor, Minister of Department of International Relations and

Cooperation in South Africa who distinguished herself in the Departments of Home Affairs and Higher Education in the past and capped her illustrious political and educational achievements with a Doctorate degree with the University of Pretoria (UP) at the advanced age of seventy three (73); Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of the United Nations Women Directorate and former first female Deputy President of South Africa; and Ms Zingiswa Losi, the first female President of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), to mention just but four. These women have exploded the mythical and stereotypical assumptions that girl children and women are intellectually inferior, child bearers and minders, who belong to the kitchen and are incapable of excellent leadership.

Despite these great women leaders, there are women whose lives are still hamstrung and burdened by society's traditional patriarchal expectations, however. These women still continue to see themselves as naturally inferior to their male partners. They work extremely hard in homesteads to satisfy men's macho ego and see women's most important role as strictly to beget children and raise them with motherly love and satisfy their men's interests. These women do not see themselves as men 's equal. They obediently fit into social scripting and stereotypes which undermine their talent and potential. Maiguru in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) is a typical example of women who, despite their educational achievements, still allow men to dominate them in all spheres of life. These women unwittingly maintain and sustain gender stereotypes to the detriment of women emancipation, self-reliance and development.

The other representatives of women who have resigned themselves to their fate are Mainini and Nnu Ego, in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) respectively. To them, women's life is characterised by eternal hardship that does not have the prospect of change for a better life in future. Women like them solely depend on their men to provide for them. Where husbands are unable to provide for their families like Nnaife, Takesure and Jeremiah, life becomes an interminable struggle and unbearably hard. *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994) are relevant studies in patriarchal societies, in general and particularly in South Africa where gender-induced violence against girl children and women has reached disconcertingly high levels. Such women should learn from Tambu, Nyasha, Adaku and Lucia that it is through their unfailing individual and collective efforts and sisterhood that they will liberate

themselves from the clutches of deprivation, ignorance and poverty if they find the irrepressible self-worth in themselves and entirely reject patriarchy and all its multiple manifestations.

To change society's stereotypical perceptions about men and boys as being the superior lodestar and women and girl children the inferior 'other', Dangarembga and Emecheta portray the male characters as flaw - ridden. For example, Babamukuru is highly educated and holds several very influential leadership positions as senior member of his clan, principal of a school and leader in the church. But due to gender socialisation, his high educational qualifications notwithstanding, he oppresses his obsequious wife, Maiguru, prescribes to Nyasha what books to read, which type of attire to wear, with whom to associate and when and what to eat. He religiously believes that girl children and women should not express their opinions. Their role is to sheepishly comply with the social expectations and values as defined by patriarchy. On the contrary, his son, Chido, and nephew, Nhamo, are treated differently simply because they are boys. They receive education without any disruptions and interact with whomsoever without the patriarch prescribing to them what to do.

To help extricate Jeremiah's family from poverty through education, the headmaster takes Nhamo to the boarding school where he teaches and leaves Tambu at the homestead because she is a girl. Babamukuru is inflexible, irritable, aloof and hidebound. Jeremiah and Takesure, unlike Babamukuru, are good-for-nothing men. They are not educated and well off as Babamukuru. They are both averse to hard work and unable to provide for their families. Despite their inability to provide for their wives and low social standing, gender stereotypes have afforded them more privileges than their wives. They take advantage of Lucia who is unmarried and selfishly use her for their macho sexual gratification. Jeremiah worships his brother, Babamukuru, and trumpets his successes wherever he goes. Instead of finding ways to provide for his family, Jeremiah prefers to largely depend on his brother for material and financial support.

Takesure is a disastrous failure who has not fully paid up the bride price or *ilobola* for his second wife and cannot provide for his two wives and their children. Despite his failures he has the audacity to flirt with Lucia and eventually impregnate her. Due to gender

stereotypes, South Africa, for example, still has patriarchal societies, particularly in rural areas, who still have males like Babamukuru, Jeremiah and Takesure. These men are a stumbling block to women emancipation, equality and social justice.

In *The Joys of Motherhood* (1994), Nnaife is portrayed as the total obverse of the ideal young man by the standards of traditional Ibuza-Igbo society. His superior status as a man is severely undermined by his relocation to Lagos during colonisation and the menial work he does as laundry man for the white family - the Meers. But he still clings to the traditional gender stereotypes which make him think he still has power over his wife, Nnu Ego. Deservedly, he demands to be treated with the same respect by his wife as all men at his rural village. Despite the financial challenges he has, Nnaife, driven by gender stereotypes, is married to two wives. Besides, he has inherited his late brother's two wives and his many children. This results in him having a big family that he cannot feed. His situation notwithstanding, Nnaife is very imprudent and wasteful. Upon return from the military expedition, he extravagantly spends his savings on palm wine to entertain his friends and gloatingly show off his 'wealth.' Nnaife stereotypically believes that he owns his wives. He blames his wife, Nnu Ego as the bad influence on Oshia who refuses to assist him to provide for the large family and Kehinde who rejects outrightly the organised marriage.

Agbadi is the brave hunter, wrestler and philanderer who believes in the supremacy of men and enjoys his macho dominance of his multiple wives. To him women are his personal property. Similarly, Amatokwu, inspired by gender socialisation, marries a second wife once he realises that Nnu Ego cannot beget children. Subsequently, he divorces her after having subjected her to sexual deprivation, emotional and physical abuse. Barren women, according to him, are not supposed to be loved and treated with respect and dignity. They can be readily disposed of any time like a decrepit piece of facecloth.

The stereotypical views held by these male characters are still prevalent in patriarchal societies despite transformational efforts. Girl children still face many challenges in the developing world. In Kenya, for instance, the Masaai girls are married off at puberty immediately after being initiated into womanhood through the traditional female genital mutilation (FGM). This negatively affects their educational prospects, robs them of

developmental opportunities and confines them to abject poverty. Similarly, men continue to take advantage of the vulnerable girl children and women twenty-five years into multiparty democracy in South Africa. A case in point is the rape of a young woman, Andiswa Khoza, who was raped when undergoing initiation to become a traditional healer. The daily newspaper, *Sowetan* of 16 July 2019 reported that the trainer (*gobela*) demanded sex from the trainee. Andiswa said when she refused 'he would get angry, beat me up and throw me around the room' (Marupeng, 2019: 8). Gender stereotypes gave the trainer a spurious sense of entitlement and invincibility. It is not surprising, therefore, to read that the Centre for the Study of Violence and Research (CSVR) reported in 2017 that 'South Africa had the world's highest rate of rape, estimated at 138 rapes per 100 000 women. Women are, despite a graft of legislations like Employment Equity Act (EEA) and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and the institutions like the Commission for Gender Equality and the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities in the presidency, still discriminated against in various spheres in South Africa. Gender based violence is on the increase in South Africa. Moleko (2019: 5) writes that "violence against women and children has increased over the past decade, with South Africa's femicide rate now five times higher than the global average, and more than one in five women experiencing physical violence, worsening to one in three in low-income areas" This plainly explains that a lack of education commonly results in gender-violence which has a profoundly negative impact on girl children and women.

The women struggle against gender stereotypes is naturally interwoven with the struggle for freedom, equality, human rights and women emancipation. Any conduct on the part of males or females which unconsciously or otherwise promotes and sustains gender stereotypes is a blatant affront on human rights and delays total women emancipation and frustrates human advancement. It should be fought and challenged unrelentingly by all progressive people as individuals and collectives. It is only when every individual regardless of gender or sexual orientations enjoys their inalienable human rights that their dignity and respect will be regained and potential maximally realised. But this cannot happen by chance in social contexts that extol boys and men and denigrate girl children and women. Importantly, there is a definite need for a purposeful transformational agenda and programmes to re-orientate society in general towards a new social paradigm, human rights culture and a new set of non-sexist values. The efforts to promote the paradigm shift, human rights culture and set of non-sexist values should be led by the various state

institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society to promote gender equality and foster social justice.

5.2 Gender Stereotypes: The way forward

To counter girl children and women oppression, discrimination and sexism, specific legislations should be developed, promulgated and effectively implemented. These legislations should clearly spell out what constitutes oppression, discrimination and sexism and the corrective measures that should be employed if one is found on the wrong side of the law. This will expedite the internalisation of the new laws and value system. Marriage and motherhood should not be viewed as the only ultimate superior goal or ambition for girl children and women. Instead, they should be allowed unfettered access to education and be given substantial support in schools, colleges and universities as well as in various careers and entrepreneurial endeavours.

The Departments of Social Development and Health should, working together with educational institutions and other critical stakeholders like Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), educate girl children about their rights and responsibilities. Girl children and women should be empowered with the requisite knowledge and skills to make considered decisions as to when to marry and how many children to have. The well- informed girl children or woman who is keenly aware of her rights will immediately be able to challenge attempts to exploit or commodify her for the sheer benefit of macho interests. Then she will be able to demand that she be treated with the same dignity and respect as her male counterparts.

Education is extremely important in the self-actualisation and development of an individual. Therefore, it is sacrilegious and hypocritical for the male section of society to receive education and then deny the girl-children and women the same educational opportunities. To undo the historical harm caused by gender stereotypes and gender socialisation, Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education need to prioritise education for all. In the primary and secondary schools, for example, both male and female learners should be taught a curriculum that is devoid of negative gender

stereotypes. The centres of learning should be imbued with the human rights culture. Girl learners should be encouraged to take gateway subjects like Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Technology which were previously the exclusive preserve of boy learners. Similarly, boy learners should do all school activities that were exclusively for girls like cleaning the classrooms, studying service-oriented subjects such as Consumer Studies, Hospitality and other related subjects. At institutions of higher education there should be purposeful bias or affirmative action towards female students and women lecturers when it comes to the allocation of scholarship programmes and bursary schemes. Once at institutions of learning, it is imperative that the necessary special psycho-social support mechanisms should be put in place to assist those students and learners who struggle with the study programmes or might have experienced rape, physical or emotional abuse or any other form of prejudice arising from gender stereotypes. The establishment of the Office of Gender Equality at the institutions for higher education charged solely with the promotion of gender equality will make these institutions safe for female students. Any offences inspired by gender stereotypes should be speedily and decisively resolved through the relevant structures and mechanisms for justice.

Gender stereotypes are predicated on tradition, culture, customs and religious practices. These practices often undermine efforts to transform patriarchal society into one where gender is no longer of material significance. The transformation agenda should be spearheaded by governmental institutions. Sufficient material and financial resources should be deployed to conduct awareness campaigns. Much as every society upholds its tradition, culture, customs and religion, care should be taken that human rights are not violated. In instances where any violations occur, the relevant state organs and institutions should intervene. Gender-induced oppressive practices like _ukuthwala_ (the abduction of a young woman by a man who intends to marry her often without the consent of parents), arranged marriages of the under-age girls and the practice of widow inheritance against the widow's will should be outlawed. Any person who breaks the law should be summarily dealt with accordingly.

In conclusion, this study has focused on gender stereotypes in _Nervous Conditions_ (1988) and _The Joys of Motherhood_ (1994) because of its conviction that gender stereotypes and gender socialisation are the major causes of numerous challenges which girl children and women face daily throughout their lives. Several ills that blight women's lives need

further thorough and scholarly research to assist society understand their causes and suggest possible solutions to them. The struggle for equality, social justice and better life for women in the constantly changing human rights context is interminable. This study has through it analyses endeavoured to unmask the concomitant effects of gender stereotypes in a bid to make a significant contribution to the struggle for women emancipation. But it cannot purport to have exhaustively explored and dealt with all the vexing social issues flowing from gender socialisation. It adds to the development of knowledge in the field of women studies, in general and literature, in particular, and serves as the basis for further research into gender related matters. Future researchers could focus on the politics of gender, how gender stereotypes impact on employment, human trafficking and sex work. The big number of women in the government's short - term employment programme referred to as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) loudly calls for research. Is it because of gender bias that women are many in this programme? Are there any useful skills which these women could use beyond the programme? Surely, for the girl children's and women's lives to improve in material terms more research is required. Once women have shaken off the yoke of oppressive gender stereotypes globally, their potential will be developed to the fullest to the benefit of all. Africa, the continent that is afflicted by poverty and intermittent civil wars will immensely benefit from the empowered girl children in particular and women in general. This sentiment is aptly captured by the Executive Director of United Nations for Women, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (cited in Mphiko, 2016: 92) when she says that jointly we must strive for ''an Africa where gender equality and women empowerment are recognised as being important for all people, men and boys [because] when women are empowered; their families and children are empowered; their communities are empowered; their country is empowered; and their continent can flourish.''

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