



An Appraisal of the Conduct and Character of Men in the Society: Perspectives of Yorùbá Female Novelists

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Abstract: In Yorùbá literature, the focus has often been on the roles, struggles and societal expectations of women. However, a notable silence exists on the exploration of men's character. This apparent oversight exposes the prevailing patriarchal system which has historically cast men into roles defined by fatherhood and as the head of the family. This narrative portrays men as guardians of traditions, providers and the pillars of family structures. Yet, beneath the surface lies the curiosity concerning the authenticity of these portrayals. Two questions become pertinent, one; do these depictions truly reflect the male identity or are they just shadows cast by a societal construct designed to reinforce established norms? Two, are men truly capable of meeting the standards set for them or are they merely being shielded from scrutiny by a narrative that perpetuates their idealized roles? Using the Feminist theory and a Sociological Approach, with narratives from fifteen selected novels authored by Yorùbá women, this study scrutinizes the narratives surrounding the portrayal of male conduct and characters in the society by questioning the authenticity of the pedestal upon which men are placed and the realities that shape their lives arising from their conducts and the character displayed. Findings from the Yorùbá female novelists' perspectives reveal that lots of men act contrary to the assumed pattern of portrayal. Their shortcomings are unknown to the society because the women in the men's lives cover up the inadequacies of such men. These revelations confirm that the portrayal of men as superhuman beings does not truly represent their conduct and character in the society.

Keywords: Men, Traditions, Feminism, Female Novels, Sociological Approach.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Novel writing and literary criticism in the Yorùbá society was pioneered by men, thus, most of their writings have portrayed women in the character of weak beings who depend on men for survival. On the hand, men have been portrayed as the symbol of strength, authority and perfection. While it is true that Yorùbá men started novel writing and literary criticism, a number of Yorùbá women have also joined the league and have competed with the men in this area. While there are several novels

by Yorùbá female writers that have also focused on literary criticism, previous studies have only examined the portrayal of male character as presented by both male and female Yorùbá novelists. This study which focuses entirely on the works of Yorùbá female novelists examines how they effectively capture the attention of readers by scrutinizing and analyzing the conduct and character of men in their novels. With a review of fifteen novels written by some notable Yorùbá female writers, this study evaluates the thoughts of these Yorùbá female writers on the conduct and character of men in the

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society as drawn from their personal experiences to portray the male characters in their novels.

2. Previous Studies on Yorùbá Literary Works

Several studies have examined different concepts, aspects theme and portrayal of characters in Yorùbá literary works in general and have come up with interesting findings. For example, highlighting the position and roles of women in crime related novels, Adébòwálé & Adéjùmò (1996) observe that majority of the societal problems are caused by men while women merely assist in crime commission. Also, Aṣíwájú (2007) and Ọlòfinsao (2011) surveyed the portrayal of men in women written poetry, 'Alámò', and 'Orin Obitun'. Ọlòfinsao (2017) also examined the depiction of men in the song of a Nigerian female musician Sàláwà Àbèní. These scholars conclude that although the society places men in the position of leadership with responsibilities such as taking care of their wives, children and family, men still fail in these responsibilities and the society does not emphasize and dwell on their misdemeanours. Aṣíwájú (2007) opines that all bad attributes ascribed to women such as, jealousy, envy, covetousness, adultery, wickedness, stealing and robbery are found in men as evident in the poems of Adébòwálé (1998, 2003) and Adéjùmò (2001, 2002).

Ọlòfinsao (2011) concludes that although men possess some good character as shown in 'Alámò' and 'Orin Obitun', many of them equally possess bad character. Furthermore, Ọlòfinsao (20017) reveals how the popular female singer, Sàláwà Àbèní portrayed men as insatiable covetous beings when it depicted a man having sex with his step mother while his father was still alive. The studies reviewed above revealed the portrayal of the conduct of men in literary works (novels, prose and drama) of Yorùbá writers both male and female. However, there is no known study that has examined the portrayal of men's conduct and character as presented by Yorùbá female novelists. This is the gap that this present study intends to fill.

3. Feminist Theory

Feminism, a literary theory that gave birth to womanism, has been able to ensure that women are not denied their rights. There are different submissions by women rights activists and defenders of the feminist theory. Tong (1992) posits that:

Feminist theory is not one but one of the many theories or perspectives which attempt to describe women's oppression, explain its causes and consequences and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation.

Bryce (1989:11) adds that:

'The emphasis of feminism is on women liberation from the oppression of men.

Feminism transcends the call for social equality. Feminism projects a total transformation of society and a redistribution of power which will eradicate permanently all divisions into dominated and dominant.'

This notwithstanding, Kolawole (1997:11) in Adebowale (2005:34) is of the opinion that none of the Euro-American schools of feminism is capable of expressing the yearnings of all women at all times. Hence, African women whose experiences differ from those of their counterparts in the West have found it necessary to propose womanism in place of feminism. Ogundipe (2007:7) adds that:

'Feminism in Nigeria spawned womanism, motherism and other theories as it did in the rest of Africa because African women wanted to express their own realities as they established their differences from foreign feminism. The variety of theories represented an effort by African women to theorise their own realities due to the ignorance of the external world about Africa, her cultures, her women and due to the condescending attitudes of women in the east and west that were received as another form of cultural imperialism.'

In essence, the fact is that there is no other way to talk about womanism without first referring to feminism. Womanism is opposed to cheating and oppression of women by their male counterparts, while requiring women to acknowledge and submit to the headship of men. Kolawole (1998:20) defines womanism as:

'Another concept that African women love perhaps because it situates them obviously in the etiology of being women and because it sounds softer while it differentiates their project from other feminist theories.'

Womanism takes cognizance of what women will have to say about their own lives as well as other things that affect them rather than what others have said about them. It encourages women to fight for their rights in a way that will bring progress and advancement for them. One of the ways to achieve this is to use the literary weapon at their disposal to improving their lot by exposing the challenges they face in the hands of their male counterpart and the society. It is from this background that the writer proceeds to analyze selected female novels.

4. Sociological Theory

Scholars like Caudwell (1997), Opefeyitimi (1997), Bamidele (2006) and Ogunsina (2006) have assessed and discussed the Sociological Theory. They all agree that Taine, a French scholar instituted the

theory with the goal of applying to the discussion of literature. It is clear that Sociological Theory comprises two courses: sociology and literature. Sociology explores the human society examining the relationship between individuals along with beliefs, customs and other aspects related to man. Adeyemi (2006:29) posits that sociology is about the happenings related to mankind, the relationship among them and the influence of such relationship on the society. Ogunsina (2006:6) emphasizes that the relationship between the society and literature is a viable instrument in the development of a society as pointed out by Akinseloyin (2014:40) who sees literature as a tool that plays an important part in shaping or crystallizing the views held by people about the world and the society. He added that it is in the light of views like this that social order is both maintained and changed. This theory has different approaches but this paper adopts Bonald's approach (1754-1840) who sees literature as a mirror to the society in which the relationship between humans, families and the economy is portrayed. This theory is very relevant to this work as it allows us to observe the real happenings in the society and in this context, facilitates how the Yorùbá female novelists portray the character of men in their works.

5. Portrayal of Men's Character in the Works of Yorùbá Female Novelists

Men's character have been portrayed in different ways by Yorùbá female novelists. Such portrayals are influenced by several factors which in most cases usually revolve around the men's attitude towards the female gender and their immediate family. These character portrayal include men as betrayers and adulterers, men as wicked beings and fraudsters, men as jealous beings, and men as perpetrators of violence. These portrayals are discussed below.

5.1. Men as Betrayers, Adulterers and Ingrates

Many Yorùbá female novelists portray men as betrayers and adulterers. For example, "Eniqlá Àlùkò", a female novelist in her novel *Jáléyemí* depicts men as wicked betrayers. In the novel, Yemí is Biyií's fiancée. The act of betrayer reflects in Biyií's refusal to confess to Yemí that he is impotent until they got married despite the unwavering love between them. The day after their wedding was a sad day after Biyií's friends discovered that he was impotent. This shame caused Biyií to commit suicide five days after his marriage which turns Yemí into a widow. It is surprising that despite the deep love Biyií had for Yemí, he did not disclose his sexual challenge to her. This novelist shows that men cannot be trusted as they are too secretive. The novelist also depicts the love that Biyií's parents had for Yemí which made them to force Ríbigbé, the immediate younger brother to Biyií to marry Yemí despite his lack of

affection for her. Ríbigbé pretended to be happy but was genuinely unhappy with the arrangement. This female writer asserts that Yemí ought not to have agreed to the arrangement by Biyií's parents but she did due to the shame and fear of not getting another suitor. The arrangement was a fiasco as Ríbigbé and Biyií' are not compatible. The writer captures the issue in the extract below:

Ìwà Ríbigbé yàtò pátápátá sí ti Biyií ...

Ríbigbé kì í bá iyàwó rẹ sọrọ lọ tíí, bí alábàgbé lásán ni ó fẹrẹ jẹ sí Yemí. Ọkọ tí iyàwó kò lè bá sọrọ nígbà tí ó bá wù ú ni Ríbigbé ní ẹ. Ìgbà púpọ̀ ni Yemí ní rántí àjorinpọ̀ òun àti Biyií. Ìgbà mìíràn ẹwẹ, bí ó bá wo ìwà ẹni tó fi ẹ ọkọ, a mí ìmí ẹdùn kanlẹ, a tún wọnú yàrá rẹ, á nu ojú rẹ. Ìgbà mìíràn bí ó bá ti múra ìdálẹ̀ tán, níbi tí ó tí ní ẹ ọwò, á gbé àpò rẹ kọ ẹ̀jìkà, á dúró lẹnu ònà ilé wọ, á ní "Tó ò, Yemí, mò ní lọ sí ẹsẹ odò ná ò, yòò tó ọjọ mẹta kí n tó dé o"... ó lè tó oşù mẹta tàbí mērin kí ó tó tún padà. (o.i. 60-61)

Ríbigbé's character is completely different from Biyií's...

Ríbigbé rarely talks to his wife; he is just like a co-tenant to Yemí. Ríbigbé is a husband that a wife cannot talk to anytime. Many times, Yemi remembers her relationship with Biyií'...Sometimes after getting prepared for a journey... He would take his bag and stand at their door, saying Yemí, "I am travelling to the coast and the journey would take three days before I return" ... It might also take three to four months before he returns. (p.60 - 61).

Based on Ríbigbé's uncaring attitude towards Yemí the female novelist depicts the dangerous and unsavoury habit of couples living together as co-tenants. Ríbigbé neither cared for his wife nor his children. Whenever Ríbigbé makes love to his wife when he arrives from his trips, his wife Yemí may not see him again through her pregnancy until childbirth. Had Ríbigbé's parents not helped in taking care of her children, Yemi would have suffered untold hardship. Although Ríbigbé's marriage to Yemí was arranged by his parents, he should have rejected his parents' arrangement to marry his late brother's wife instead of dealing with her mischievously. This female writer uses Ríbigbé's actions to depict the character of some men in modern Yorùbá societies. Some men will propose marriage to women only to jilt them after many years of courtship. This is why some women live as single mothers and taking care of their children alone. Some of these women like Yemi are fortunate to have in-laws that help them to cater for the children while many are not. This depicts men as heartless and irresponsible. The novelist summarizes this scenario below:

Èyí tó búrú nínú ìwà Ríbigbé ni pé, bí iyàwó àti ọmọ ẹjun o, bí wọn kò ẹjun o, kò bikítà fún èyí. Bí ó bá ti dé láti ìdálẹ́ tí ó ní lọ, bóyá ló tún lè tó oşù kan kí ótò lọ òmíràn. Kí í ẹ pé ó ẹ àlàyé fún iyàwó rẹ ibi tí òun lọ àti bí òun ti ẹ lóhùn-ún. (o.i. 61)

The worst of Ríbigbé's behavior is that he never cared whether his wife or his children ate. Even when he returned from long trips, he barely spent time in the house before embarking on another journey. He never explained to his wife about his trips and what he did during those trips. (p.61)

This behaviour affects women negatively. The novelist narrates the kind of suffering that Yemi went through after the death of her father-in-law. Yemi had to go through the stress of breaking palm kernel to raise money for feeding:

...Bí wọn bá ti délé, tí wọn ẹjun ọsán tán, ni wọn yòò gbé òkúta, èkùrọ pípa ti yá. Yẹmí pẹlú àbúrò rẹ Dọlá ló ní ẹ ẹşé wàhàlà yí torí àti ẹjun. Wọn ẹ ẹşé wàhàlà yí tó ọdún mẹta. Lẹnu ẹşé yí ni wọn wà tí Yẹmí fi bímọ kejì... Orúkọ tí ó wù ú ló sọ ọmọ rẹ kò kúkú tojú ọkọ rẹ bímọ... Nìkan tí ọkọ ní ẹ fún aya, kò sí ọkànkán tí ọkọ tirẹ ẹ fún-un. Ìyà pọ fún Yẹmí şùgbọn kò ba ara ẹ nítorí ó mọ dandan pé òun ni láti jiyà, léyìn iyà, ẹgbádùn ní bẹ fún òun. (o.i. 69)

...After taking their lunch once they get home, they would bring out stones to break palm kernel. Yemi and her sister Dola did this work to raise money for feeding. She did this stressful work for three years. Yẹmí gave birth to her second child while doing this job...She solely named her child as her husband failed to take care of her...Yẹmí suffered a lot but was courageous because she knew she had to suffer and that there was hope beyond the sufferings. (p.69)

A number of women are currently enduring similar sufferings, bearing children and losing them due to poverty. There are wicked men as husbands, women must speak up for themselves in their marriages. Adégbòwálé (1998) describes such men as useless husbands. This is why she advised women to be careful so they do not marry the wrong men. Ríbigbé did not only fail to provide for his wife and children, he also did not give his in-laws the required respect as dictated by tradition. Ríbigbé never honoured any invitation from his in-laws. For example, he did not show up at the wedding of Dọlá, his wife's younger sister. The novelist summarizes it as shown below:

Kí ó tó kúrò nílẹ ni wọn ti dájọ ẹgbéyàwó Dọlápọ, òun náà tilẹ pẹlú wọn jókódó dá ọjọ ẹgbéyàwó ni. Kí ó tó lọ, ọjọ tí wọn dá ku oşù

méjì. Ó ri wípe iyàwó òun ti ní múra fún ẹgbéyàwó àbúrò rẹ kí ó tó lọ sí ìdálẹ́ tí ó lọ. Bí ó ti lọ yí, kò padà wálétítí oşù mẹfà. (o.i. 73) Dọlápọ's wedding date was picked in his presence and with his consent. Before he left, the wedding date was two months away. His wife started the preparations before he left, however, he failed to return home until six months after. (p.73)

The bad behaviours of some men are what the writer depicts through Ríbigbé, Yẹmí's husband. After receiving support from his wife to gather some money, he would embark on journeys, squanders the money and then return home. Such a man should not be tolerated. Yẹmí failed to free herself from the suffering inflicted on her by her husband due to the society's suppression of women's voices. Even when women attempt to express their concerns, they are constrained. The wrong societal belief that a woman must endure a certain level of suffering in her marriage in order to experience and enjoy marital success may have contributed to Yẹmí's reluctance to protest her husband's maltreatment.

Ríbigbé showed neither feelings nor mercy for Yẹmí. He married another woman whom he met in one of his numerous trips using the money that he and his wife worked for. This act, as depicted by this female writer illustrates how some men are indifferent to their women showing little regard for their well-being. Ríbigbé returned home with his new wife without informing his family or Yẹmí, his wife. Yet, Yẹmí did not object to his actions. The author captures it this way:

Ìyàwó ni Ríbigbé mú ti ìdálẹ́ bọ tí ó sì kó gbogbo ẹrù rẹ wálẹ láti fi ìlú rẹ ẹ ibùjókódó. Ó ya Yẹmí pẹlú àwọn ibátan Ilésanmí lẹnu láti rí i pé iyàwó tuntun ni bàbá Àmòkẹ mú wá sílẹ. Kò sí ẹni tí ó béèrè pé báwo ni ti obìnrin yí ti jẹ... òun (Yẹmí) náà kò béèrè rárá, kò tilẹ sọrọ kankan nípa obìnrin àlẹjò yí. Ó kí wọn kú àbò sà ni, ó ẹ ẹkẹ àlẹjò tó dé. Ó ẹ oúnje fún wọn ẹ. Ó rí pé òun sa gbogbo agbára òun àti pé òun tójú àlẹjò náà bí ó ti tó àti bí o ti ẹ. Ó wọnú iyàrá rẹ lọ, ó dákẹ jẹẹ ní tirẹ ni. (o.i.86)

Ríbigbé returned from his journey with a new wife and her belongings, intending to settle with her in their town. Yẹmí was surprised by her husband's new arrival with a new wife, yet no one inquired about the woman. Yẹmí refrained from questioning her husband on the presence of the unfamiliar woman. Instead, she warmly welcomed them and extended hospitality to the newly arrived guest. Yẹmí cooked for them and ensured their comfort and silently retreated to her room afterwards. (p.86)

A lot of men in the society exhibit behaviour similar to Ribigbé's especially if their wives are not troublesome. Such men will treat their wives like house maids. They bring other women to their matrimonial home without any iota of respect for their legally married wives. These men will spend money lavishly on their concubines while their wives and children struggle to survive. This scenario played out when Ribigbe flaunted his wealth during the naming ceremony of his second wife's child. Meanwhile, his wife Yemí, and his children were living from hand to mouth.

In *Àrídunnú Ọmọ*, the novelist, "Fọlášadé Ọláníyí" depicts men as ungrateful because most times, they fail to consider the consequences of their actions. In this novel, Adédoyin the devoted wife of Ajíbólá risked her life for her husband. When Ajíbólá was critically ill, his wife Adédoyin had to carry a sacrifice to save her husband's life. Despite Adédoyin's unprecedented efforts, Ajíbólá's father insisted on him divorcing Adédoyin upon his recovery on the premise that she could no longer bear prosperous children as the consequence of the sacrifice she carried to save her husband's life. Although he was initially resistant, Ajíbólá yielded to his father's pressure by divorcing Adédoyin and also rejecting their children. Adédoyin did not reap the fruits of her labour with Ajíbólá. , "Fọlášadé Ọláníyí" uses Ajíbólá's attitude to emphasize the cruelty and the ingratitude of both the husband and the father-in-law towards Adédoyin.

Similarly, in *Ọkété*, "Moróhunmúbò Adéribigbé" depicts men as womanisers who neglect their children while having affairs with other women. In the novel, Tólá a sincere and dutiful wife endured hardships with her husband Dàpò from a young age. However, the moment Dàpò became successful upon relocating to his home town with his wife, he engaged in adultery and neglected his children. Tólá previously sought divination regarding the relocation with her husband which revealed her husband's promiscuous tendencies. She refused to perform the sacrifices prescribed by the priest to make her husband remain faithful yielding to her mother's warnings as put across to her in the extract below:

...pé obìnrin tí ó bá n fòdùn fọkọ, tí ó bá sòdùn kí ọkọ òun má wòta, àwọn ọmọ rẹ kì í dára nitorí pé ọmọ ààyò ló n ráyoràyo... (o.i. 25)
...that the child of any woman that enchants her husband will not prosper (p. 25)

In the course of his promiscuity, Dàpò married Dúníní, a wealthy woman with six children. Dúníní did not move to Dàpò's house, instead Dàpò stayed with her in her matrimonial home. This act portrays men as unfaithful, audacious and selfish

beings. Dàpò neglected his ailing child due to his relationship with Dúníní, openly admitting his affair with Dúníní to his wife Tólá as shown in the extract below;

Dàpò kan n sọrò ni, kò tilẹ wo ara ọmọ náa níbi tó sùn sí, ó kojá légbẹẹ rẹ... Dàpò bọ sí balùwẹ, ó wẹ. Ó wọ búbá àti sòkòtò gíni olówó nílá kan... ó ki ọwọ bọ àpò, ó kó owó jáde, ó ka egbẹrún kan náírà, ó sì kó sí orí àga légbẹẹ Tólá, ó ní "wò ó, èmi ò ní lẹ bá ọ lọ sí hospital". Ègbón Dúníní n ẹ ayeyẹ iwúyè lóní. Alẹ òní sì ni patí rẹ, n kò lẹ sàì lọ... Iwọ lò mò, wàhàlà lo sì kóra ẹ sí. Èmi n lọ niyẹn, èyí tó máa kù á kù nínú àwọn ọmọ náà, èyí tó máa kù á si kù". Bí ó ti sọ báyií tán, ó ki mọtò mọlẹ, ó di patí. (o.i. 34)

Dàpò casually disregards the sleeping child as he talks, passing by without caring for the child but went straight to the bathroom. He counts a thousand naira and places it on the chair next to Tólá stating, 'look I won't be able to follow you to the hospital, Dúníní's elder brother is having a chieftaincy ceremony tonight and I must attend. Some of these children will survive, some won't.' with that, he starts the car and heads to the party. (p. 34).

To worsen the situation, Dàpò adopted the child Dúníní had for her former husband, Bisiríyù. Despite Bisiríyù's objections and protests asserting that one can only take a lazy man's wife but not his children, Dàpò takes both the wife and the child. Dàpò's betrayal and heartlessness depicts men's behaviour in the society. Some adopt other men's children out of lust eventually causing problems for their legitimate wives and children due to the unholy activities such illegitimate children. This is in line the Yorùbá proverb which says, 'when a home is settled, it means the bastard there has not grown up'.

Asides Dúníní, Dàpò also had an affair with another woman called Tóyìn and made it known to his wives. The extract below captures it:

"Mo kàn fẹ fi tó yin létí pé mo ti ní iyàwó tuntun kan báyií. Kì í ẹ eni tí ẹ lẹ dún kokò mò. Lónà kìn-ín-ní, ó jù ọ lọ lójọ orí (ó nawọ sí Tólá). Lónà kejì, ó ti fẹ ọmọdé rí, ó ti fẹ arúgbó rí, èmi ni mo jẹ kò-şomọdé-kò-şàgbà nínú àwọn tí ó ní fẹ. Nípa báyií, eni bá ní òun fẹ hùyẹ lààrin yín ó mò bí yóò ẹ gé e (Dàpò fi ẹşẹ ọtún lu àtẹlẹwọ òsì, ó dún pà) force with force. Tí ẹ bá ní ẹ le, Tóyìn le jù yín lọ. Ọrò mi kò ju báyií lọ.
(o.i. 40)

"I just want to inform you that I have gotten a new wife. She is not a person that you can threaten. Firstly, she is older than you (he pointed at Tola). Secondly, she has been

married to a young man before and also to an older man. I am the youngest among her husbands. Every one of you should learn to caution yourself... if you prove to be tough, Tóyìn is tougher than you. I will stop here.” (p. 40)

Similarly, Dàpò maltreated Tólá his devoted wife who had been his benefactor. His neglect of the children led to the death of one of them. When Tólá informed Dayò that their second child was sick, his response was so callous that it led people to question his sanity. This is captured in the extract below:

“şé ó ti wá kú ni?” Èhẹn, èwo wá lò n gbòn sí? (o.i. 42)

“Is the child dead?” then, why are you shivering? (p. 42)

This kind of bad attitude from men is unfortunately prevalent in the Yorùbá society where a lot of men fail to show any gratitude to their wives who contributed to their success. Once they achieve success, they often marry other women without any regards for their marital vow.

In *Hábà! Ojúolápé* by ‘Fadékémi Adágbádá’, the female novelist portrays men as betrayers and ingrates. In the novel, Ségún and Lapé are young lovers who live in a town in the southern part of Nigeria. However, when Ségún was posted to Kano, a town in the Northern part of the country go for the compulsory one year National Youth Service Programme, he abandoned Lapé who was pregnant for him. Lapé travelled to Kano to look for him when she failed to hear from him. It was shocking that Ségún with all the love he professed for Lape, locked her out in a strange land due to infatuation from another woman (p. 90). The author observes that while enchantment was involved, Ségún’s carelessness led to his troubles. The female writer advises women to be cautious to avoid disappointment by men.

In *Ikú Jàre*, the writer, ‘Délé Adégbèmi’ depicts the prevalence of insincere affection among men, who feign love in order to have sexual intercourse with women. Such men who are usually involved with multiple women would profess false love for women particularly when their initial partner becomes pregnant. In the novel, ‘Délé Adégbèmi’ depicts the character of such men with Òjó, a promiscuous bachelor who engages in such behaviour. After getting a lady pregnant, he would abandon the lady and deny responsibility for the pregnancy in order to deceive his next victim. Such deceitful conduct is a common occurrence in the society which the author has vividly captured in this novel.

Similarly, in *Iyán Ogún Odún*, the author ‘Moréniké Fádákínní’ depicts men, both young and old as deceitful, adulterous and hypocritical beings who have made it a habit to hurt women. This was reflected in the action of Kunle who deflowered Ìbùkún the daughter of his mother’s friend who lived with them but denied any involvement in the relationship that resulted in pregnancy. Ibukun had to face the shame of being a single mother while Kunle got married to another lady. However, many years into marriage, the inability of Kunle’s wife to conceive which led to spiritual consultation unveiled the truth about Kúnlé’s action towards Ìbùkún. This portrayal is a clear reflection of the character of a lot of men in the society today.

In *Şé Dandan Ni?* Another novel by ‘Fadékémi Adágbádá’, the female novelist portrays men as wicked, cunning, ignorant and ungrateful beings. This was depicted through Adélaní a, man who blamed and punished his wife for giving birth only to female children. The man, Adélaní refused to accept medical advice regarding the role of male semen in determining a child’s gender. Adélaní neglected his female children and even divorced his wife who supported and stood by him during his trying times. The actions and conduct of Adélaní as presented by the author succinctly captures the character of some men in this regard.

Similarly, in *Orísúnmbáre*, written by ‘Folákémi Şólàjà’ the writer depicts men as adulterous and careless. In this novel, Dádi’s wife Mámì has a maid named Awọşo. Without any iota of shame and respect for his wife, Dádi attempts to rape Awọşo, his wife’s maid. To corroborate the narrative and assert that Dádi is a serial offender in this regard, Tejúmólá Mámì’s friend testifies about Dádi’s womanizing and shameless acts by revealing thus;

Ñjé o mò pé a gbọ pé Òrékeléwà ọmọ ọdọ Mómì tó lọ nígbà kan lóyún ló şe sáló. A sì tún gbọ pé Dádi yín ló fún-un lóyún pèlú.

“... Could you believe that we heard that Òrékeléwà, Mámì’s house maid fled the other time because she was pregnant ... Dádi impregnated her” (p.68).

The attitude of some men who engage in sexual relationship with their housemaids whether consensually or through coercion is unfortunately prevalent in today’s society. The female novelist’s portrayal of Dádi’s conduct and character presents a true picture of some shameless men who do not hesitate to engage in sexual activities with their wives housemaids in hopes of fathering male children. Likewise, men show no shame in having sexual relationship with their wives’ friends or younger sisters not minding the consequences especially the impending shame on their wives.

In *Omiḡ Ayò* by “Folúké Adékéyè”, despite having four wives who bore him children and acknowledging Àyòká his first wife as his confidant, Bàbá Ògúndáre still desired another woman. He did not just desire any woman but he chose his wife’s friend. This is captured in the extract below:

“Òrè tí ìyàwó rẹ̀ máa ń rán láti ilé ìtjà láti gbé ounjẹ fún-un ni ó tún kì mólè”...

“He also raped his friend’s wife who she often sent to give him food” (p.5 – 7).

The female writer utilizes bàbá Ògúndáre’s behaviour to describe that men are covetous, promiscuous and shameless, highlighting various ways in which men betray women.

In *Haa! Eniyan*, by “Adéfúnké Famójúró”, a randy guy called Gbéminiyi raped Moréniké, a friend to Bolanle, his younger sister. This incident destroyed the future of Moréniké who was a second-year secondary school student when the incident occurred. The incident forced her to drop out of school. Although, Gbéminiyi later begged Moréniké and pledged to marry her, he failed to fulfill the promise, marrying another woman instead. This resulted in the death of Moréniké and her mother because in their town, it is a taboo for a man who deflowered a lady not to marry her but there is no penalty for the man who perpetrated the act. The depiction of Gbéminiyi in this novels reveals the manner in which the society treats the male folk whenever they commit sexual crime. For example, most times, when a man rapes a woman. It is the woman that bears the burden of shame and stigma while the man most times is left unpunished with no stigma.

This position was reiterated in *Òkúnrin* a novel by “Folúké Adékéyè” where Adédìran, a man who killed his wife and also raped his sister in-law was made a king. In this context, the writer portrays some men as adulterers and criminals who are a menace to female children around them. Likewise, she asserts that men who rape female children are often times those who are close to the mothers and appear harmless to such female children.

Furthermore, in *Òkúnrin*, “Folúké Adékéyè” also depicts the use of enchantments by men to manipulate the women they intend to sexually assault. For example, despite Adédìran, the king of Irédé admitting that he raped his close friend’s daughter, the close friend still gave his daughter to the king as a wife. Although, Faderera, a teenager and the king’s close friend’s daughter who was maltreated in the case boldly protested against the kings’ action as well as her father’s decision to make her marry the king, her father still gave her away in marriage to the king, overlooking the king’s atrocity.

The author uses the king to depict such men with questionable character who hold positions of power in the society today.

5.2. Men as Cunning, wicked Beings and Fraudsters

Some female Yorùbá have portrayed men as wicked beings and fraudsters. For example, in the novel *Òdájú* by “Bósèdé Ìròkò-Òbaníyí”, Adéşínà’s character portrays men as cunning and wicked beings. Adéolá got married to Adéşínà an irresponsible husband who neglected her and their children. He failed to provide the basic necessities such as food, clothing, accommodation and education for his immediate family. This female novelist highlights the suffering endured by Adéolá in her marriage to Adéşínà, a deceitful, wicked and adulterous man who pretends to be a servant of God. Adeola’s decision to marry Adéşínà, despite knowing the challenges she would face is driven by societal pressure and the stigma associated with being a woman without a husband. “Bósèdé Ìròkò-Òbaníyí” also showcases how some married men often deceive women into marriage, as shown in the way Adéşínà lied about the death of his previous wife.

In the novel *Òdájú*, Adéşínà regularly travels from Lokoja to Oyo state which a long journey to visit Adéolá, fostering her trust in him. However, unknown to Adéolá, Adéşínà is a deceitful man who had three separate marriages while still proposing marriage to Adéolá. The female novelist in this context used the character of Adéşínà to depict men as dishonest beings, who rely on cunning ways to deceive their partners. For example, Adéşínà borrowed some money from his wife but failed to repay it. The author depicts Adéşínà in the character of men who resorts to falsehood claiming to be men of God to exploit women for financial gain.

In addition to the financial burden and debt incurred by Adéolá in her efforts to satisfy Adéşínà her husband, he still ended up deceiving her by lying to her that he got her a job in Lokoja. This explains the manipulation technique used by some men who realize that women have a strong belief in God and are highly religious. They exploit this by presenting several fake visions to subdue such women. This was explicated in the many fake visions that Adéşínà gave to Adéolá in order to exploit her financially.

Furthermore, “Foláşadé Oláníyí” in *Imú Níkà* exposes the irresponsibility prevalent among some men in the society. Even when they have no source of livelihood, they still exercise control over the finances of their female partners. Ironically, most of these men always end up disappointing their partners either by marrying other women or engaging in concubinage. In the novel, Òmótólání endured significant hardship

in the hands of her husband Oláolú. Her actions were driven by her desire to escape the societal stigma of being unmarried. Despite being from a wealthy family and her desire to have a husband, Ọmọ́tọ́lání falls for Oláolú, a man with no viable source of livelihood. After their marriage, Oláolú took control of Ọmọ́tọ́lání's possessions including her two cars and her disapproval of this was seen as pride. Despite Ọmọ́tọ́lání's reluctance to give substantial amount of money to Oláolú when he requested for it, she was eventually shocked when she got know that he had completed a house that she (Ọmọ́tọ́lání) was building had and moved in with a pregnant woman who is actually his wife.

The novelist depicts Olaolu in the character of men that are attracted to women because of the women's wealth. For example, when Ọmọ́tọ́lání mentioned the topic of marriage, Oláolú took manipulated her. The author exposes the cunning nature of men, who often collude with false prophets who fabricate visions to deceive women into believing they will marry them. Oláolú employed this tactic with the false prophet he introduced Ọmọ́tọ́lání to. The false prophet gave a vision that she must comply with Oláolú's financial demands, obey him, and remain with him. This fake prophecy influenced Ọmọ́tọ́lání when Olaolu deceitfully obtained five hundred thousand naira from her under the disguise of investment. He later absconded with one of Ọmọ́tọ́lání's cars, abandoning her for another woman in the new house. This portrayal emphasizes men's tendency for secrecy and their indifference towards the consequences of their actions on the women they manipulate. This is evident in the interaction between Olaolu and Ọmọ́tọ́lání after she discovered his infidelity and abandonment. This is shown in the extract below:

“Wò ó má pa ariwo níbí o”

“Kí n má pa ariwo ní ilé tí mo fi owó ara mi kọ?”

Ọlálólú rẹ̀rìn-ín ìyàngi. “Owó rẹ̀ àbí kí lo ti pè é? Ẹ́ o gbàgbé wípé orúkọ mi ló wà ní ibẹ̀, o ò ní any right lóri ilé náà” Ọmọ́tọ́lání, èmi ní bá ẹ̀ sáré kó o má kan àbùkù, sùgbọ̀n o ní àfi bí o bá kan àbùkù tí àbùkù náà sì kàn ọ̀, ohun ojú ní wá lojú ní rí, iwọ̀ ló jẹ́ kí ọmọ́ tí ò tó ẹ̀ máa sọ̀rọ̀ sí ẹ̀ o, oò fi ara rẹ̀ sí ipò ọ̀wọ̀ rárá, fọ̀ yọ̀ information, iyàwó tẹ̀mi lò ní wò yẹ̀n, ojú rẹ̀ ò ń sàà fọ̀, o rí oyún nínú rẹ̀, mi ò ń sẹ̀sẹ̀ tún gbọ̀dọ̀ máa pa itàn fún ẹ̀ lóri ẹ̀, torí àrùn ojú ni kí í ń sẹ̀ àrùn inú.” Ọlálólú já ọ̀wọ̀ mi lára aṣọ̀ rẹ̀, ó sì kọ̀jú sí ọ̀mọ̀bìnrin náà, ó ní Tóyìn diá, ọ̀mọ̀bìnrin tí mo ní Ọlọ̀run fi ń sẹ̀ gààrì tírà mi tí mò ní sọ̀ fún ẹ̀ nìyí, òun ló ní kó owó fún mi tí èmi sì ní náa sí iwọ̀ lára.” Tọ́lání, èmi tí ní iyàwó tẹ̀mi, mo gbà á ládúrà wípé Ọlọ̀run Ọba tí ó ní ojọ̀ ònì yòò pèsè ọ̀kọ̀ tí ẹ̀ fún ẹ̀ (o.i. 86-87)

“See, don't shout here

I should not shout in the house which I built with my money?”

Your money or what did you say? Hope you did not forget that the house was built in my name, you do not have any right to this house. Ọmọ́tọ́lání, I am working so that you will not be put to shame but you want to put yourself to shame, it is what you want that you'll see, you can see how a child is talking to you. Olaolu giggled...For your information, that is my wife, you are not blind, can't you see that she is pregnant, I must not tell you stories on this because it is evident”. Dear Tóyìn, this is the woman I said that God used to bless me, she gave me all the money I spent on you Tolani, I have gotten my wife already, I pray that God will give you your husband” (p.86 – 87).

The deceitful and malicious behaviour exhibited by Olaolu depicts the action of some men in today's society who become reckless and insensitive to the women who stood by them.

Délé Adegbemi, in *Ikú Jàre*, portrays men as unfaithful and ungrateful beings who do not appreciate the love and kindness expressed by their wives. In this novel, Eyinadé is a hard working woman married to Moşé. In an effort to empower Moşé, Eyinadé's father gave Moşé three plots of land which he sold and made a lot of money. Immediately Moşé got the money from the land, he became unnecessarily extravagant. He neglected his family, eventually ousting Eyinadé and their children to accommodate a new wife. Eventually, Moşé died. Moşé's sudden demise a consequence of his discontentment and refusal to heed his wife's counsel against adultery turned his wife Eyinadé into a widowed. The author also highlights the presence of wicked associates in many men's lives, exemplified by Ọláòtán's influence on Moşé. Such influences include, adultery, drunkenness, theft, and even murder, which leads to societal confusion. On his own part, Ọláòtán represents a group of men who squander their family finances on stuff such as cigarettes and alcohol which do not serve any purpose in their lives. Such men also have the tendency to lavish resources on extramarital affairs, neglecting their own well-being and that of their families.

“Fọ́lášadé Ọláníyì” exposes the hypocrisy of promiscuous men who sleeps with young girls at will but protect their own daughters from similar treatment. This is evident in Olóyè Akinlabi's rejection of a Minister's advances towards his daughter, and Ọmọ̀lọ́lá's disregard for her father when they crossed paths at a public bar. Akinlabi's shock upon encountering his daughter, Ọmọ̀lọ́lá, an undergraduate, emphasizes the severe contrast

between family expectation and societal realities as shown in the extract below:

“Ọmọlọlá, kí lo wá ẹ̀ se níbí?”

“Un-un, bàbá Ọmọlọlá kí ni ẹ̀yin náà wá ẹ̀ se ní bí o?...”

“Ọ̀rò ò ma dùn lẹ̀nu yin, ọ̀mọ tí ẹ̀kùn bá bí, ẹ̀kùn náà ni yóò jọ, ẹ̀bí òwú tí ẹ̀ ní gbòn ni mo ní rán, ohun tó gbé e yin wá náà ló gbé mi wá...”

Èyín ti gbàgbé ni? Ní ọ̀jọ kìn-ní ànà tí mo mú ọ̀rẹ̀ẹ̀ mi Abísólá wá sí ilé láti ilé-ẹ̀kọ́, mo wọ̀lé láti lọ mú ọ̀tí ẹ̀lẹ̀rì dọ̀dò tí máa fi ẹ̀ é lálẹ̀jò, ẹ̀ ti gbàgbé ipò tí mo padà bá ẹ̀yin méjèjè. Lẹ̀yin ọ̀rẹ̀yìn ni ẹ̀yin méjèjèjì jọ máa ní padé ní ilé itura, ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ igbà ni ẹ̀ sì máa ní wá gbé e ní inú ọ̀gbà ... àwọn ọ̀mọ ilé ẹ̀kọ́ tí ẹ̀ ní fẹ̀ ní kọ́? Bólá, Fúnké, Dámilólá ... ẹ̀ se ti ọ̀mọ̀ iyálọ̀jà la fẹ̀ sọ ni? Àwọn ọ̀mọ̀ tí mo jùlọ̀ lójọ̀ orí ...

(o.i. 99-101)

Ọmọlọlá, what are you doing here?

“Hmmm, Ọmọlọlá, your father, why are you here too? What an audacity!

I took after my parent because it is the same thing that brought you here that I am also here for. Have you forgotten? The position I met you the other time I brought my friend, Abísólá to the house from school. Subsequently, you met up with her several times in the hotel, many a times, you dropped her on campus... What of your student girlfriends? Bola, Funke, Damilola ... or is it about Iyaloja's daughter? These are girls that I am older than... (p.99 - 101).

The Yorùbá female novelists in this context depicts numerous husbands and fathers as lacking in shame and responsibility as prevalent in the society today. They chase and sleep with ladies who are of the same age with their children while doing everything to protect their own female children from engaging in such acts.

5.3. Men as Jealous Beings

Yorùbá society acknowledges that women are often characterized by jealousy, but “Délé Adegbelemi” In her novel *Ikú Jàre*, suggests that men are more prone to jealousy than women. She argues that men's jealousy can lead to betrayal and even murder. She illustrates this through the character of Kéyẹ, a friend of Moşé who becomes envious of Moşé for securing a job at a paint production company, resulting in a salary increase for Moşé while Kéyẹ's salary remained stagnant. Kéyẹ's envy drove him to seek the help of an herbalist in Ewedeyi village to cast a charm, but his betrayal and dissatisfaction ultimately led to his untimely death on his way home. Although the author intentionally crafts the story to have Kéyẹ's charm backfires, in real-life situations, the outcome might not be as straightforward, as

perpetrators often cause significant damage before facing justice. The level of jealousy displayed by Kéyẹ's which pushed to the point of trying to kill Moşé was shocking.

5.4. Men as Perpetrators of Violence

There are several cases in the society today where men have either directly or indirectly caused the death of their wives through physical assault and battery. In *Ọ̀kùnrin*, written by “Folúkẹ̀ Adékẹ̀yẹ̀”, the author depicts such men with Kabiyesi a cruel man who constantly inflict serious injuries on his wife Dúrótọ̀lá whom he beats at the slightest provocation. The irony is that the wife Dúrótọ̀lá refuses to disclose the source of her injuries which eventually took her life.

Besides the reality of domestic violence, there are other sources through which men perpetrate violence in the society. For example, in *Ikú Jàre*, “Délé Adegbelemi” portrays male quack doctors who perform abortions for women as criminals. The female author vividly illustrates how men, like Láòtán, a quack doctor, are responsible for the deaths of women. This is presented in the extract below:

...Bí ó bá ẹ̀ se òmíràn tí ó bu ú lẹ̀wọ́ tí onítòún sì kú, lóru ọ̀gànjọ́ ni yóò gbé onítòún sínú mọ̀tò rẹ̀ tí yóò silọ̀ sọ ọ̀ sódò kí ilẹ̀ tó mọ̀. Bí ó bá di ọ̀jọ́ kẹ́ta ni onítòún yóò léfòò lójú omi gelete tí àwọn ẹ̀bí rẹ̀ yóò sì lọ gbé e pẹ̀lú ibànújẹ̀, ní irẹ̀tí pé àwọn tí ó ní fi ẹ̀yà ara ènìyàn sòdògùn owó ni ó jí i gbé tí wọn sì sọ àbò ara rẹ̀ sódò lẹ̀yìn tí wọn ti yọ̀ ibi tí wọn nílò tán. Ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ àwọn tí kò bá sì kú ikú oró bá yí láti ọ̀wọ́ rẹ̀ ni ó máa ní ba ilé ọ̀mọ́ wọn jẹ́ tí wọn kò sì lẹ̀ gbọ́ pa mọ́ tí tí wọn yóò fi sájú wọ̀lé (o.i 62)

...In instances where his procedures fail and result in death, he would secretly dispose of the victim's body before dawn in a river where the victim's family will pick up after the third day thinking that ritualists dropped them in the river after they must have removed vital body parts for money ritual. For those who survive, their reproductive organs are often irreparably damaged, leaving them unable to conceive again in life. (p. 62)

As portrayed in *Ikú Jàre*, the author asserts that in the society today, some men such as Láòtán, a quack doctor engage in various forms of illegal activities and business, yet they are often praised and regarded as powerful individuals who have achieved success. However, many people fail to recognize the wickedness behind their actions and the questionable sources of their wealth.

“Olúfúnmilólá Akínṣódé’s” novel *Iyán Ogún Odún* depicts another way by which men perpetrate violence in the society especially towards women. For instance, Olóyè a very wealthy man normally uses a lady annually as sacrifice to a life snake that brings him money. Similarly, in *Ọtafàsókè* by “Şèyí Akínbóyè”, men are portrayed as murderers. The writer reveals that these mischievous men often hold prominent positions in the society. She depicts this with six prominent men at Mosáfúnṣetó Hotel who committed a crime and attempted to frame an innocent man Ìbíyemí who was meeting a lady Ẹniafẹ at the hotel. This illustrates how a lot of influential men in the society commit crimes but are allowed to go scot free while innocent individuals like man Ìbíyemí are framed for such crimes.

6. CONCLUSION

The portrayal of men in the novels examined in this research revealed a lot of facts about how of Yorùbá female novelists perceive and portray the conduct and character of men in the society. It should be clarified that the Yorùbá female novelists whose works were examined in this research neither hate nor condemn men; rather they portray men’s behaviour and characters realistically shedding light on those aspects that male novelists never attempted to show. This is as a result of the patriarchal system in the Yorùbá society and in Africa at large. Yorùbá female novelists offer deep insights to the conduct and characters of men revealing them as rivals, criminals, liars, wicked individuals, shameless beings, adulterers and perpetrators of violence. Yorùbá female novelists are deeply saddened by the atrocities committed by men in the society which Yorùbá male novelists never discussed in their works. They attempt to condemn the myth, legends and rituals of women not being heard especially when it comes to matters that concern men simply because of tradition which bestow the power to do and undo in matters that will have direct impact on women. They skillfully utilize their knowledge and personal experiences to expose and address these unholy acts of men in the society. Their objective is to enlighten women and society as a whole, urging them to be cautious and take proactive measures to liberate themselves from any trap set for them by men.

In *Odaju*, Ìrókò-Ọbaníyì educates women about the wickedness and dishonesty of men in the society, particularly those who pose as ministers of God like Adéşínà. She warns women to be extremely cautious and not to attribute their suffering to their children as their children will survive. The female novelist emphasizes that women must exercise caution as it is better for a woman to live alone than to subject herself to the bondages and troubles caused by men after the failure of their marriages. Through a feminist lens, the Yorùbá female novelists

advise that women should not follow all commands from their partners blindly, especially when those directives could jeopardize their well-being. This is because men often exploit their societal authority. In contemporary society, some men wield absolute financial control over their households, despite not being the rightful owners of these resources. This is why Adejumo (2003) encourages women to speak out against male deception and injustice.

They also caution women facing situations similar to those of Ọmótólání’s, in *Imú Níkà*. They advise them to remain vigilant and not fall prey to such deception. The women should apply wisdom in all aspects of their lives. It is evident that if societal stigma regarding unmarried women such as labeling them as barren, arrogant, or afflicted by spiritual affliction doesn't exist, a lot of women would not be subjected to ill treatments and bullying by men.

In conclusion, despite the fact that the works of the female novelists examined in this study do not portray men in a good light, the view is that men are what they are because of societal and cultural experiences. Female novelists are womanists, they believe that if men can change their bad attitudes, the home and the society will be a better place.

observed the belief of the society that men are powerful, vicious and provide protection for their family. Also, the novelists expressed their experiences about the various behaviors of men in the Yoruba society. These female novelists revealed that although there are some impressive characters in men, many have failed in their responsibilities as husbands and fathers thereby disappointing their wives and children.

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