

# Defying the Odds: Women's Journeys of Survival in the Novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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## Abstract

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, renowned for her compelling literary works, intricately weaves a narrative tapestry that explores the multifaceted dimensions of feminism, gender complexities, and the profound psychological landscapes of her female protagonists. Across the historical spectrum from the era of colonization to the contemporary zeitgeist, Adichie's narratives serve as poignant reflections of the intricate challenges women face navigating patriarchal societies. Central to Adichie's thematic exploration is the pervasive presence of violence against women, which she vividly depicts across various epistemic periods. This violence manifests in a spectrum of forms, ranging from overt physical aggression to insidious systemic injustices that erode the social fabric. Through her characters, Adichie lays bare the harsh realities of a world where women are routinely subjected to oppression and exploitation, their voices stifled, and their autonomy curtailed. Furthermore, Adichie delves deep into the labyrinthine realms of the female psyche, illuminating the profound impact of societal expectations and gender norms on her characters' inner lives. The relentless pressure to conform to rigid gender roles, compounded by the trauma of sexual violence and other forms of abuse, leaves an indelible mark on their sense of self and shapes their perceptions of reality. Yet, amidst the shadows of adversity, Adichie's narratives offer glimpses of resilience and strength, showcasing the unwavering spirit of women who defy the constraints imposed upon them. Adichie dismantles entrenched narratives through their stories and challenges the power structures perpetuating inequality and marginalization. Adichie's literary oeuvre is a powerful testament to the enduring struggle for gender equality and the complex intricacies of the female experience. Through her masterful storytelling and empathetic characterizations, she invites readers to confront uncomfortable truths and engage in critical discourse on the pervasive systems of oppression that continue to shape our collective reality.

**Keywords:** Gender Discrimination, Domestic Violence, Freedom, Education, Oppression, Self Confidence

## 1. Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a poignant addition to the literary landscape surrounding the Nigerian Civil War, offering a unique perspective that centers on women's experiences amid the turmoil. Adichie's novel is a powerful example of how fiction can illuminate marginalized voices and challenge traditional narratives dominated by male perspectives. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie adeptly explores the multifaceted roles of women during times of conflict, highlighting their resilience, strength, and agency in the face of adversity. Through characters like Olanna, Kainene, and Ugwu, she portrays women who navigate the complexities of war with courage and dignity, subverting stereotypes and reclaiming their narratives. One of the novel's key strengths lies in its portrayal of the "fictive feminization" of the war. This narrative strategy foregrounds the experiences and perspectives of women, traditionally relegated to the margins of historical accounts. By placing women at the center of the story, Adichie challenges the dichotomy of man versus woman, presenting a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics during wartime. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the valorization of women emerges as a central theme, highlighting their contributions to both the home front and the broader struggle for independence. Whether through acts of resistance, nurturing, or solidarity, Adichie celebrates the diverse ways in which women assert their agency and shape the course of history. Moreover, Adichie's portrayal of women as the "marginal 'Other'" within the context of the war underscores the intersecting dynamics of gender, class, and ethnicity.

Through characters like Ugwu's sister, who experiences the brutality of sexual violence, or Olanna's struggle to reconcile her privileged upbringing with her commitment to social justice, Adichie confronts the intersecting forms of oppression faced by women during times of conflict. In essence, *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents a significant contribution to the corpus of literature on war, offering a rich and textured exploration of the Nigerian Civil War through the lens of women's experiences. Through her vivid storytelling and empathetic

characterizations, Adichie invites readers to reconsider the role of women in history and to recognize their agency in shaping the world around them.

*Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie delves deep into the complexities of family dynamics, religious oppression, and political unrest in Nigeria. At its heart, the novel follows the Achike family, whose lives are tightly controlled by the domineering figure of Eugene, the father. As an orthodox Catholic, Eugene imposes strict rules and harsh discipline upon his family, creating an environment of fear and repression. Kambili, the protagonist, and her brother Jaja endure physical and emotional abuse under their father's rule, while their mother Beatrice suffers silently, unable to challenge his authority. The introduction of Aunt Ifeoma and her family acts as a catalyst for change within the Achike household. Ifeoma, a university lecturer, represents a stark contrast to Eugene's authoritarianism. She encourages independence of thought and expression, nurturing her children with love and freedom. Through Ifeoma's influence, Kambili and Jaja begin to question their father's beliefs and find the courage to challenge his control. Religion plays a significant role in the novel, serving as both a source of comfort and oppression.

Eugene's rigid adherence to Catholicism is portrayed as suffocating, while characters like Father Amadi offer a more progressive interpretation of faith, emphasizing compassion and liberation. The clash between these two ideologies reflects broader tensions within Nigerian society, where traditional values often conflict with modern ideas of freedom and individuality. Against the backdrop of political turmoil in Nigeria, the Achike family's struggles mirror the larger societal upheaval. Culture plays a major role in the novel. According to Henslin culture is "the language, belief, values, norms, behaviours, and even material objects that are passed from one generation to the next" (Henslin 1995, pp. 35). Eugene's fanaticism represents the oppressive regime that stifles dissent and perpetuates corruption, while Aunt Ifeoma symbolizes hope for change and progress. The novel explores how political and religious forces intersect to shape the lives of ordinary people, highlighting the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Ultimately, *Purple Hibiscus* is a powerful exploration of the complexity of human relationships, the search for identity, and the liberation struggle. Through the lens of one family's journey, Adichie paints a vivid portrait of Nigeria's turbulent history and the enduring quest for freedom and dignity.

#### **Female writers of the contemporary period:**

The early African female writers, through works like Nwapa's *Efuru*, Buchi Emechita's *Second Class Citizen*, Zainab Alkali's *Still Born*, and more recently, Chimamanda Adichie's "Purple Hibiscus," embarked on a bold journey to reshape the portrayal of women, aiming for a more equitable and balanced representation. Their narratives often involve a subversion of traditional gender roles, wherein the male image is deconstructed and usually portrayed as a failure or even demonized, contrasting with the empowered female characters. This trend is not unique to Africa; globally, the endeavour to redefine the societal image of women has sparked the rise of diverse feminist movements, each with its ideological underpinnings and objectives.

Western feminism encompasses a spectrum of perspectives, including liberal, radical, Marxist, and Black/Womanist feminism. Liberal feminists advocate for legal and social reforms to ensure gender equality within existing societal structures. They focus on issues like equal pay, reproductive rights, and access to education and employment opportunities. Radical feminists challenge the fundamental aspects of patriarchy and seek to dismantle oppressive systems entirely. They often view gender inequality as deeply rooted in power dynamics and advocate for revolutionary changes to achieve liberation. Marxist feminists analyze gender oppression within the broader context of class struggle, highlighting how capitalism perpetuates inequality and exploitation, particularly affecting women who are marginalized economically and socially.

Black/Womanist feminists, drawing from both feminist and black liberation movements, emphasize the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in shaping women's experiences. They strive for the empowerment of black women, recognizing and addressing the unique challenges they face within both racial and gendered contexts. Overall, these diverse feminist perspectives converge in their shared goal of challenging and overcoming the patriarchal norms perpetuated by tradition, religion, and culture. By amplifying the voices and experiences of women and advocating for systemic change, feminists worldwide continue to push for a more just and equitable society for all genders.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's literary focus on the educated middle-class milieu reflects not only her background but also serves as a strategic narrative choice to address broader social issues within Nigerian and African societies. Adichie's upbringing in a university environment, with both parents belonging to the educated middle class, undoubtedly shapes her perspective and informs her portrayal of characters and settings in her novels. The attention to the middle-class experience in Adichie's works allows her to explore multifaceted themes such as education, privilege, identity, and cultural conflicts. By centering her narratives around characters from educated middle-class families, Adichie provides a lens through which readers can examine the complexities of contemporary African societies. These societies are often marked by rapid social change, economic disparities, and the clash between tradition and modernity. Moreover, Adichie's portrayal of the middle class allows her to interrogate power dynamics within Nigerian society.

While the middle class may enjoy certain privileges compared to lower socioeconomic groups, they are still subjected to societal norms, expectations, and patriarchal structures. Adichie's characters grapple with these issues as they navigate personal and professional aspirations, familial obligations, and societal pressures. Furthermore, by focusing on the educated middle class, Adichie challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about Africa often perpetuated in Western literature and media. She presents a more nuanced and diverse portrayal of African societies, highlighting the complexities and contradictions that exist within them. Through her characters' experiences, Adichie emphasizes the agency and resilience of African women and challenges the monolithic narratives that often dominate discussions

about the continent. In essence, Adichie's spotlight on the educated middle class in her novels serves as a platform for exploring broader themes of gender, class, and identity within African societies. It reflects her commitment to portraying the complexities of lived experiences and challenging conventional narratives about Africa and its people.

The pursuit of women's emancipation stems from the dominance of patriarchy, subservience, hegemony, and oppression. Women advocate for acknowledgment and affirmation of their humanity, recognizing that above all, they are human beings irrespective of gender or class distinctions. While power dynamics remain contentious, women do not seek the complete disempowerment of men; rather, they aspire for peaceful coexistence and mutual complementarity between genders. African feminism emphasizes the inclusion of all genders rather than their exclusion. According to Chukwuma in his book *Feminism in African Literature (1994)*

Feminism means ... a rejection of inferiority and a shining for recognition. It seeks to give the woman a sense of self as a worthy, effectual, and contributing human being. Feminism is a reaction to such stereotypes of women which deny them a positive identity.

A patriarchal society is one where men hold dominant positions and privileges, while women are expected to submit to their authority. This system is often viewed negatively by various feminist movements, as it perpetuates the oppression of women through male control. At the heart of patriarchy lies the struggle for power and status, where certain voices are prioritized over others. Men maintain their dominance by silencing women, a dynamic that many women unfortunately accept as the norm. Traditional African societies are prime examples of patriarchal systems, characterized by historical and ongoing inequalities between genders. Women are systematically disadvantaged, oppressed, and relegated to subordinate roles. Concepts such as hegemony, subjugation, and subservience underscore the power dynamics inherent in patriarchy, where one group seeks to assert influence and control over another, often at the expense of their autonomy and importance. Frank's ideas about feminism in his book *Feminist Criticism and the African Novel (1984)*

Feminism is a profoundly individualistic philosophy: It values personal growth and individual fulfillment over any larger communal needs or good. African society, of course, even in its most westernized modern forms, places the values of the group over those of the individual with the result that the notion of an African feminist almost seems a contradiction in terms.

The following section includes a review of the literature, theoretical framework, methodology, and conclusion. A literature review that discusses liberal feminism, patriarchal oppression, and racism indicates a lack of research on these aspects in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work. The theoretical framework outlines various feminist theories and their applications. The discussion compares Adichie's work with other literary works. The conclusion summarizes the study and suggests areas for further research.

## 2. Review of Literature

Akin Olaniyi and A.A. Akinwale in their paper "Rethinking feminist episteme in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*: An Agenda for Social Re-engineering," the title of the book *Half of a Yellow Sun* is taken from the image of the Nigerian flag. She encompasses the novel with my literary techniques. The major ideas of the novel are love, war, betrayal, and politics. Women characters in the novel can face their problems on their own. And follow some strategies to overcome their obstacles.

Dr. Ratna Rao in the paper "Contradictory Representations: Gender Stereotypes in Chitra Banerjee and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie" made a comparative study on physical and mental sufferings faced by women in the countries of Africa and India. Themes such as alienation, gender discrimination, and double marginalization. Even in the African culture, crops are divided according to gender. Apart from that, some characters break the silence maintained by the women characters and shine in society.

Adaobi Olivia Ihueze in this paper "Women and Violent Conflicts in Destination Biafra, *Half of a Yellow Sun and Roses and Bullets*". From the ancient period to the modern era, males are considered a superior being and females are inferior beings in the field of literature. Women writers are not allowed to produce their work on their own. Most of the African writers' work is based on the Biafran War and the issues faced during that period.

### The studies refract Wollstonecraft's idea.

In her work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft contends that equality should be provided in every aspect of life. This concept highlights the significance of women in all spheres and inspires them to pursue equality. She portrays capitalism as the root cause of women's subjugation. Desmawati in her article expresses the women's sufferings in the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. Through the novel, female characters are presented as working hard and earning money. The protagonist of this work plans to purchase a Christmas present for her mother. It also highlights the capacity of women to meet their demands by putting in a lot of effort and seizing the chance to achieve their goals. (Desmawati, 2020).

### The studies refract Betty Friedan's idea.

Betty Friedan's seminal work *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) has profoundly influenced liberal feminist thought, sparking discussions and inspiring research across various contexts. Friedan's exploration of the dissatisfaction and unfulfilled potential experienced by many suburban housewives in mid-20th century America laid the groundwork for liberal feminist arguments advocating for gender equality, particularly in education and employment opportunities. In the study *Improving EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency through Instagram Vlog* by Wulandari, Friedan's ideas on liberal feminism are employed to analyze the reflections of these concepts in the novel, *A Woman is No Man* (2019) by Etaf Rum. Rum's book provides a poignant exploration of Arab women's lives, capturing the struggles they face

due to deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. The narrative underscores how women are often relegated to a secondary status, expected to obey men, and are frequently denied educational opportunities.

Wulandari's research likely examines how Rum's characters represent the transition from a position of inferiority to one of empowerment and resistance, which is in line with the fundamental principles of feminism. For instance, women are socially conditioned to value obedience and household responsibilities over individual goals and education in numerous Arab cultures through the book. This is like Friedan's experience in 1960s America, when many women were restricted to household duties despite their potential and goals.

### **The studies refract Patriarchal Oppression.**

Patriarchal society refers to a social system where men hold primary power and predominate in political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and property control. This system often results in women being disadvantaged in various spheres of life. The roots of patriarchy can be traced back to historical, cultural, and religious traditions that have perpetuated male dominance and female subordination. Kate Millett, in her seminal work *Sexual Politics*, contends that patriarchy permeates all aspects of society, exerting male dominance and oppression over women. Millett argues that patriarchy subordinates women to men, employing force and direct pressure to constrain women both in civil and domestic spheres. This systemic subjugation manifests in various social institutions and cultural norms, reinforcing male authority and limiting women's autonomy and opportunities. Through her analysis, Millett highlights the pervasive nature of patriarchal control and calls for a reevaluation of gender relations to achieve genuine equality.

In her novel *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie reworks the images of women projected by patriarchal oppressions, which marginalized women and caused them to suffer both physically and mentally. Adichie depicts the identity of women as wives and highlights different forms of patriarchal oppression and how those oppressions lead to women's empowerment. Therefore, it will be interesting to discuss *Purple Hibiscus* since Adichie is implicitly involved in creating discourse meant to push women from the margins to the center as she confronts patriarchy. Thus, she notes the various forms of patriarchal oppression of women in her work and how she successfully empowered her female characters.

### **3. Methodology**

The methodology in literary studies is crucial for analysing and interpreting texts. It is a systematic approach to uncovering the underlying ideas and content within research works, providing a structured framework for understanding and examining the narratives.

#### **Patriarchy in *Purple Hibiscus***

In analyzing Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, a liberal feminist perspective can be employed to explore the dynamics of patriarchy and gender roles. Liberal feminism, championed by figures such as Betty Friedan and Mary Wollstonecraft, advocates for equal rights and opportunities for women, emphasizing the importance of individual freedoms and equality within the legal and social systems. Using this framework, one can examine how the characters in *Purple Hibiscus* navigate oppressive patriarchal structures and strive for personal autonomy. The novel's depiction of family life, religious influences, and societal expectations can be critically assessed to highlight the struggles and resilience of female characters within a patriarchal context.

#### **Patriarchy and Education in *Half of a Yellow Sun***

In essence, Olanna's defiance represents Chimamanda Adichie's rebellious effort to challenge the patriarchal tendency to objectify women and to subjugate them economically, often through the means of education. It is important to recognize that feminists view education as a potent tool for freeing women from the oppressive chains of patriarchy. Through Olanna's acts of self-liberation, Adichie, following in the footsteps of earlier African feminists like Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta, overturns the traditional hierarchy embodied by Chief Ozoibia and his wife (the parents of the twins), as well as other characters who lack formal education. These characters symbolize the outdated customs that persist into the post-colonial era. This revision provides a clear and structured explanation of how methodology functions in literary research, specifying the theoretical frameworks applied to the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

### **4. Discussion**

Mary Wollstonecraft is a famous advocate for women's autonomy. She emphasizes that through education, women can achieve freedom and improve their roles within the family. In her seminal work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft argues, "If women are educated and have more opportunities, they can achieve in their family life both as a mother and wife (67)". This underscores her belief that education is crucial for women to fully realize their potential and contribute meaningfully to society and their families. Wollstonecraft explains the importance of education, "To face the struggle towards the women, the society should give the political rights and economic rights to the women, and also education like men get (89)". In the novel *Americanah*, "his mannered English bothered her as she got older because it was a costume, his shield against insecurity (15)". Ifemelu's description of her father and thirst for education. In the novel *Things to Leave Behind*, Tilottama's rigorous effect on her education is also explained in these quotes, "Do not look back, Tillie, look forward, to things yet to come. Never return to what has been left behind (Gokhale 2016)". These women's characters represent their right of liberty to educate. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* serves as a poignant examination of patriarchal structures and their impact on women's lives within African societies. Through the character of Eugene Achike, Adichie delves into the complexities of power dynamics within families, shedding light on the oppressive nature of patriarchal authority.

In the novel, Eugene Achike embodies the archetype of the authoritarian patriarch, imposing strict rules and expectations on his family while suppressing any dissent or individuality. His tyrannical behaviour not only stifles the agency of his wife, Beatrice, but also profoundly affects his children, particularly his daughter, Kambili, whose voice is silenced under his overbearing presence.

Adichie's portrayal of Eugene Achike underscores how patriarchal structures perpetuate oppression and hinder women's ability to attain self-fulfillment. Adichie emphasizes the importance of challenging and dismantling these oppressive systems by illustrating the consequences of such domination on individual lives. Through her literary work, Adichie not only exposes the realities of patriarchal domination but also advocates for the empowerment of women and the dismantling of oppressive gender norms. *Purple Hibiscus* thus serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of women in the face of adversity and the necessity of feminist discourse in addressing social injustices. Orie in his work *Who is a Woman Being?* (2011) buttresses this point and says that,

Eugene (papa) is the symbol of patriarchy whose mere presence sparks off the fire of danger that keeps the females under fear, and tension: so, they are silenced. Kambili early on, sounds lachrymal: "I felt suffocated" (p. 7), and at another time bursts out, bemused: "fear, I was familiar with fear, yet each time I felt I felt it, it was never the same as the other times, as though it came in different flavours and colours (10)".

According to her, oppression gains its power from the compliance of its victims who internalize their oppression and feel powerless to resist. Even when her life was at risk, to the point of jeopardizing her pregnancy, Beatrice (Mama) endured her husband's abuse. Adichie portrays Mama as initially quiet and obedient in the novel, but she becomes more assertive towards the end, demonstrating her capacity to respond when faced with adversity. Adichie's novel thus highlights the stark inequalities to catalyze the necessary change toward achieving equality between spouses.

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work, exemplified perhaps in *Half of a Yellow Sun* or *Purple Hibiscus*, the character Beatrice embodies the plight of many wives in patriarchal societies, where their agency is subjugated to their husbands. Beatrice is emblematic of the "good" wife stereotype prevalent in some African cultures, epitomizing obedience, and submission to her husband's will. She exists in a world where her husband, Eugene, dictates her actions and suppresses any individual desires or opinions she might have. A poignant scene reveals the extent of Beatrice's subjugation. After feeling unwell during a family visit to Father Benedict following Sunday Mass, Beatrice initially asserts herself by expressing a desire to wait in the car rather than join her family. However, upon witnessing Eugene's disapproving expression, she quickly retracts her request, fearing the repercussions of challenging his authority. This moment encapsulates the power dynamics within their marriage, where Beatrice's autonomy is overshadowed by Eugene's dominance.

The consequences of Beatrice's compliance are severe. Despite silently enduring her discomfort and following Eugene's wishes, she later faces brutal punishment at home, resulting in a miscarriage. This tragic outcome highlights the destructive nature of gender-based power imbalances and the toll they take on women's physical and emotional well-being. Adichie's portrayal of Beatrice's experiences serves as a stark reminder of the pervasive effects of gender inequality and domestic violence in society. Through Beatrice's story, readers are compelled to confront the damaging consequences of traditional gender roles and the urgent need for change in patriarchal structures that perpetuate oppression and suffering among women. Eugene's abusive behavior extends beyond his wife, Beatrice, to his children, Kambili and Jaja, who also suffer under his tyrannical rule. Despite providing for their material needs and professing love, Eugene's actions betray a cruel streak that overshadows any semblance of affection he claims to have for them. An example of Eugene's brutality occurs when he hurls a missal at Jaja in a fit of rage because Jaja refuses to participate in Sunday mass. This incident illustrates Eugene's quickness to resort to violence to enforce his rigid religious beliefs on his children.

Furthermore, Eugene's intolerance for anything diverging from his own beliefs is starkly evident when he discovers that Kambili and Jaja have been in the company of his father, Pa Nnuwku, during a visit to their Aunt Ifeoma's house. In a horrifying display of control and dominance, Eugene scalds their feet with boiling water as punishment for associating with Pa Nnuwku, whose traditional beliefs are opposed to Eugene's devout Catholicism. Another instance of Eugene's violent outbursts occurs when Kambili attempts to protect a picture of Pa Nnuwku from destruction. Eugene's reaction is swift and merciless, demonstrating his inability to tolerate any connection to his father's "sinful" practices within his own home.

These incidents paint a disturbing picture of Eugene's character, revealing a man whose love is overshadowed by his propensity for cruelty and control. Despite his outward appearance of piety and devotion, Eugene's actions towards his family members are nothing short of abusive and oppressive.

### **Empowerment of women in *Purple Hibiscus***

Ifeoma, Eugene's sister, possesses qualities that defy societal norms, particularly in traditional African culture. Unlike Beatrice, she fearlessly confronts injustice, embodying a sense of true womanhood that challenges conventional views. Ifeoma's character shines through her boldness, diligence, strength, assertiveness, and financial independence. Despite facing pressure and intimidation from her late husband's family, she refuses to yield to male dominance or threats from her in-laws. Notably, Ifeoma fearlessly speaks truth to power, including confronting Eugene about his unjust treatment of their father. Despite her limited resources, she assumes the responsibility of caring for their father, stepping into Eugene's role. She bravely opposes oppression, even when others remain silent. Through Ifeoma's character, Adichie illustrates the importance of the oppressed continually challenging their oppressors.

*Priya in: In Incredible India*," Namita Gokhale intricately depicts the character of Priya, a woman hailing from a modest middle-class background who finds herself thrust into the world of high society upon marrying a prominent minister. The dynamics of their relationship quickly reveal a stark contrast between Priya's humble origins and her husband's lofty expectations. Post-nuptials, Priya is confronted with a barrage of demands from her husband, who insists that she transforms every aspect of her life. From her speech patterns to her gait, from her table manners to her deepest desires, Priya is pressured to conform to the rigid standards of an upper-class lifestyle dictated by her husband's position in society. It is a journey fraught with tension as Priya grapples with the daunting task of shedding her middle-class identity to assume the role of the quintessential minister's wife. As she navigates this unfamiliar terrain, Priya is forced to confront questions of authenticity, identity, and the true meaning of belonging in a world where societal expectations threaten to eclipse her individuality. In the novel, Priya explains "I didn't want to change the course of my life, I want to stand on my power (58)". This passage represents the liberal feminist trait and replicates it in their own life. Similarly, in the research work of Andrew Foley's research delves into the portrayal of liberal feminism in the film "Praxis," focusing on the journey of the protagonist, Praxis. Throughout the movie, Praxis grapples with subjugation from her children and husband. She struggles within her family unit as she endeavors to pursue her aspirations, believing that her familial responsibilities clash with her dreams.

Numerous researchers have examined liberal feminist theory, and patriarchy, each presenting varying interpretations. By analysing the studies conducted by different authors, it becomes evident that the ideas proposed by prominent liberal thinkers and the theme of patriarchy are reflected in the depiction of female characters in the novel *Purple Hibiscus*.

### **Portrayal of Education and War in *Half of a Yellow Sun***

Adichie portrays education as a powerful catalyst for societal transformation, yet she acknowledges that educated individuals, regardless of gender, are not without flaws. In her narrative, the educated elite exhibit admirable and problematic characteristics. Odenigbo, a character distinguished by his intellect and progressive ideals in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, exemplifies this duality through his sexual indiscretions, both before and after his marriage to Olanna. Before their official union, he succumbs to his uneducated mother's influence and impregnates Amala, a young girl from the village who intends to replace Olanna. While this initial act might be seen as an error of judgment, his later affair with Alice, their single neighbour during the tumultuous war period, underscores a persistent weakness that diminishes the respect commanded by his education.

Furthermore, the narrative reveals that education does not necessarily endow individuals with moral integrity. This is particularly evident in the behavior of highly educated individuals during the Civil War. Despite their advanced knowledge and intellectual capabilities, these individuals often fail to act ethically or uphold moral standards, suggesting that education alone is insufficient to cultivate virtuous character. Adichie's work thus critiques the notion that education is a panacea for moral shortcomings, illustrating that even the educated can succumb to moral failings and societal pressures. This nuanced depiction challenges readers to consider the complex interplay between education, morality, and human behaviour in shaping society. This is exemplified by Professor Ezeka, a radical academic who frequently met at Odenigbo's house and was appointed Director for Mobilization during the war "he had put on some weight and his thin neck had filled out [...] There was something sleek and new about him, about the fine suit, but his supercilious expression was the same, as was his voice (360)".

Professor Ezeka's depiction starkly contrasts his pre-war image and the wartime expectation that everyone—rich or poor, educated or illiterate—should live humbly. This is exemplified by Odenigbo and Olanna, who are forced by the war to live in squalor alongside the poor and illiterate in a rural setting. Adichie highlights the contradictory nature of Professor Ezeka's portrayal to underscore the treachery of certain highly educated individuals who profit from the war. At the same time, the majority suffer from hunger and death. This depiction is reminiscent of Achebe's short story, *Girls at War*, in which evil people exploit the general suffering to seize relief materials for everyone selfishly. The deceit of individuals like Ezeka is further exposed when considering their pre-war ideological declarations and the need for sacrifices from all social classes during a war ostensibly fought for the common good.

Regrettably, some individuals contribute to the war effort in less constructive ways. Okeoma, a poet, opts to steer clear of the front lines, ensuring his survival. Meanwhile, Adichie's feminist viewpoint casts a critical eye on the roles of educated women, particularly Olanna and Kainene. Throughout the narrative, their actions during the war are analyzed through the lens of their education. This examination is underscored by comparing their activities with those of uneducated women they encounter, especially amidst the turmoil of war. Such comparisons emphasize perceived equality and shared experiences, as people often find common ground regardless of their level of education. In the interactions between the educated Olanna and Kainene and the uneducated women they encounter, the latter are depicted as remarkably resilient. Adichie strategically uses these encounters to challenge the perceived value of formal education for women. Feminist thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft have long argued that education alone cannot fully measure a woman's potential and humanity, as cited in Weedon (111). Adichie's narrative supports this argument by illustrating the resilience of uneducated women, particularly during times of conflict such as the Civil War. The text vividly portrays the debilitating effects of illiteracy on women, as demonstrated when Olanna encounters elderly, illiterate woman at the airport awaiting her son before the onset of war. Despite her privileged upbringing, the compassionate Olanna approaches the older woman to offer comfort. Due to her illiteracy, the woman expresses unfounded fears about her son's impending arrival. Through this interaction, a sisterhood between the educated and the illiterate is forged, initiated by the well-educated Olanna.

Kainene, the twin sister of Olanna, demonstrates a stark contrast in her response to the challenges of war when compared to characters like

Eberechi. Unlike Eberechi, who resorts to exploiting her femininity for survival by dating a soldier, Kainene leverages her education and social connections not only to sustain herself but also to aid the most vulnerable victims of the conflict. Before the outbreak of war, Kainene had assumed control of her father's business operations in Port Harcourt. As conflict loomed, she displayed foresight akin to her sister Olanna, taking proactive measures to mitigate its impact. Anticipating the fall of Port Harcourt to the Federal army, she made strategic arrangements by purchasing a property in Orlu and relocating there. This decision enabled her to prepare rations in advance, laying the groundwork for humanitarian efforts to come. Subsequently, Kainene transformed her Orlu residence into a refuge for those most in need, particularly women and children. Despite lacking support from her affluent father, who had fled abroad, she managed the operations of the makeshift refugee camp singlehandedly. Her endeavors encompassed providing shelter and addressing the displaced populace's health and nutritional needs. In essence, Kainene's actions during the war epitomize her compassionate and visionary nature, aligning her with her sister Olanna in their dedication to alleviating suffering and upholding humanity in the face of adversity.

In the novel *Americanah*, protagonist Ifemelu experiences profound disillusionment due to the discrimination she faces based on her skin colour in America. Rejected in various social spheres, she channels her frustration by launching her blog, where she articulates poignant reflections on race and identity. One of her powerful assertions centers on the uniform treatment of immigrants as "Black" upon arrival in America, regardless of their diverse backgrounds. This blanket categorization, she laments, disregards individual histories and identities, reducing newcomers to a singular, homogenized label. Ifemelu further critiques the criticism directed at her native complexion, emphasizing her lack of culpability in inheriting it.

The immigrants who arrived in America, with dreams as diverse as the landscapes from which they hailed, often found themselves grappling with the harsh realities of a society deeply entrenched in racial hierarchies and systemic discrimination. Among the myriad pieces of advice exchanged within immigrant communities, a recurring theme emerged: the notion that forging romantic relationships with white individuals could serve as a pathway to social acceptance and the alleviation of racial prejudice, particularly for those belonging to marginalized groups, such as black individuals.

In the intricate tapestry of American life, Ifemelu's story stands as a poignant testament to the complexities inherent in navigating the intersections of race, identity, and love. Her relationship with Curt, a white man whose affections she reciprocates with genuine warmth and admiration, serves as both a refuge from the harsh realities of racial injustice and a stark reminder of its omnipresence. Their bond, characterized by mutual respect, shared aspirations, and moments of profound intimacy, offers a glimpse into the possibility of transcending the constraints imposed by societal expectations and prejudices.

Yet, woven into the fabric of their love story are threads of discord and disillusionment, as Ifemelu finds herself navigating a world that often fails to recognize the depth and authenticity of her connection with Curt. Despite the genuine nature of their relationship, the gaze of society remains unyielding, casting Ifemelu through a lens coloured by preconceived notions and entrenched biases. In the eyes of many, her identity as a black woman eclipses the nuances of her individuality, rendering her invisible or, worse yet, subject to scrutiny and judgment.

Throughout the narrative, Ifemelu's experiences serve as a mirror reflecting the broader societal dynamics at play, wherein the promise of interracial relationships as a panacea for racial tensions is juxtaposed against the harsh realities of systemic inequities. From microaggressions in everyday interactions to macro-level disparities in access to opportunities and resources, the intricacies of race and privilege shape Ifemelu's journey, challenging her to reconcile the complexities of her identity with the expectations imposed upon her by a society grappling with its history of racial injustice.

Indeed, the story of Ifemelu and Curt serves as a poignant reminder of the limitations of love to dismantle the structures of oppression that continue to shape the lived experiences of black individuals in America. While their relationship may offer moments of solace and connection, it cannot single-handedly dismantle the deeply ingrained systems of power and privilege that perpetuate racial inequalities. Instead, it beckons us to confront the uncomfortable truths that lie at the heart of America's fraught relationship with race and to strive towards a future where love is not merely a refuge from injustice but a catalyst for its transformation.

Identity crisis presents a formidable obstacle in the context of third-world nations, where indigenous communities grapple with the aftermath of colonization. The historical imposition of foreign rule has left these native populations adrift, uncertain of their cultural moorings. In the wake of colonial intrusion, a profound dilemma ensues, wherein indigenous peoples must grapple with the daunting task of determining which aspects of their heritage to preserve and which to discard. Language, one of the most fundamental elements of cultural identity, becomes a battleground in this struggle for authenticity. The imposition of colonial languages often marginalizes native tongues, leaving speakers torn between the necessity of assimilation and the desire to safeguard their linguistic heritage. Similarly, traditional customs and practices are subjected to scrutiny, with indigenous communities forced to confront the tension between ancestral traditions and the pressures of modernity. The repercussions of this identity crisis reverberate deeply within these societies, manifesting as a complex web of conflicts. Cultural clashes arise as competing ideologies vie for dominance, while linguistic divisions exacerbate social fragmentation. Moreover, the psychological toll of this internal strife cannot be overstated, as individuals grapple with feelings of alienation and displacement.

Migration, often undertaken in search of better opportunities, only serves to compound these challenges. Natives find themselves caught between worlds, unable to fully integrate into the societies of their adopted homelands yet estranged from the cultural landscape of their birthplaces. This perpetual state of liminality leaves them feeling like strangers in their land, forever torn between conflicting allegiances. In the face of such adversity, finding a path forward can seem like an insurmountable task. However, these communities need to reclaim

agency over their identities, embracing the richness of their cultural heritage while navigating the complexities of the modern world. Through resilience, solidarity, and a steadfast commitment to self-determination, Indigenous peoples can begin to forge a new narrative—one that honours their past while embracing the promise of a more inclusive future. Adichie's message reverberates with urgency: women must not allow themselves to be diminished by the supremacy of the White. She passionately advocates for women to shatter the shackles of societal constraints, to boldly defy the barriers that obstruct their path to success. When Ifemelu made the bold decision to walk away from her job, she embarked on a transformative journey, channelling her experiences and insights into her blog. Through her writing, she not only shared her struggles but also ignited a flame of empowerment in the hearts of countless women, urging them to rise above adversity and claim their rightful place in the world.

In a similar vein, the literary legacy of women writers such as Adichie and Maya Angelou is imbued with a resolute commitment to uplifting their fellow women. Angelou's iconic poem, "Still I Rise," serves as a rallying cry for women everywhere, a testament to their resilience and unwavering spirit in the face of oppression. With each stanza, Angelou paints a vivid portrait of defiance, celebrating the indomitable strength of women who refuse to be silenced or subdued.

Indeed, the poetry of these formidable women writers serves as a testament to their boldness and courage. They are not merely survivors of life's trials; they are warriors, who have learned to thrive amidst adversity, growing tall and sturdy like mighty oaks, their roots firmly planted in the soil of resilience and determination. Through their words, they inspire women to embrace their inner strength, confront challenges head-on, and emerge victorious, time and time again. As their voices echo across generations, their message rings clear: no obstacle is insurmountable, and no dream is beyond reach when women unite in solidarity and determination.

## 5. Conclusion

This research article focuses on the impact of liberal feminism, patriarchy, women's education, and racism theories in the works *Purple Hibiscus*, *Americanah*, and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Liberal feminism focuses on the ideology of Mary Wollstonecraft and Betty Friedan, the major themes covered can be discrete in the works of Adichie. The study also identifies limitations, offering insights for future researchers. Throughout the analysis, certain aspects of liberal feminism supportive of men have been noted, providing avenues for further exploration in subsequent studies. Additionally, future research could delve into themes such as alienation, psychoanalysis, feminism, and social identity.

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