

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Traits of Womanist in Unigwe's Night Dancer: Complementarity versus Culture

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Abstract:

Presentations of couples as supportive are a foregrounding motif in Chika Unigwe's Night Dancer. This traditional notion is still very topical especially in ensuring that the union lasts as long as they are alive. However, the female still believe that the paramount duty of the male is family provision while the female is a care provider. Nevertheless, there is a paradigm shift, such that, resources are harnessed together to sustain the family due to economic pressure. This paper examines some negative strains of culture in marriages and how the role complementarity plays in marriage, especially in a culture where tradition emphasizes male dominance. The outcome is the ensuing interrogation of the universalizing qualities of the womanist ideology with its tenet of complementarity. This equally questions the concept of equality at the long run. Therefore, when the partners contribute financially, will the issue of dominance and superiority in marriage not be questioned? This paper concludes with the notion that despite the politics of difference that endeavours to weaken women's liberation, womanist theory is still a panacea to understanding the mindset of the women via their experiences. This will equally distinct reality from stereotypes.

Keywords: Womanism, African novel, complementarity, man – woman relations

1. Introduction

Night Dancer (2013) explores the tradition of female writings by portraying a reverse of the norm in this dispensation that, a woman who separates from her husband is usually described as an achiever, builds great career void of glass ceilings, self-sufficient and usually very strong. In *Night Dancer*, Unigwe presents a reverse in the main character of the novel, Ezi, who leaves Mike, her husband due to unfaithfulness in their marital vows. Her husband, quite wealthy and has the financial strength to take good care of his family independently but Ezi, feels unfulfilled because she has little or nothing to contribute financially to the family. Hence, her husband's family sees her as a parasite, only feeding on their son without producing any offspring for him. Ezi's decision to separate from her husband, Mike is wrapped in doubt and she loses at the end of the novel. She loses her marriage to her Rapu, (their house help) her family ostracizes her and her daughter, Nma. Nma dislikes her mother for estranging her from her father, she becomes a prostitute for survival and loses the respect of other women. Finally, Ezi dies and receives a low-key burial. Looking at Unigwe's style of narrative, she blends the Western and African modes of fiction. This, Kehinde (2008:19) applauds as: 'an unproblematic blend ... which enables critical waves of thinking' It shows the viable quality of the tool of womanism which defines the family as a centre of life to evolve in a healthy positive male and female relationship which is a tool to all round development.

Traditionally, the union between the man and the woman is such that it is expected to be a situation where both of them ensure that their marriage works out. The society looks up to them to evolve with a promising union, using all within their capacity. With this notion in mind, collaboration should be ensured. However, if some strains of negative tradition are allowed to strive in their union, it will result in a wreck.

2. Negative Effects of Tradition on Women in Night Dancer

In *Night Dancer*, Unigwe portrays the fact that a woman's happiness in life is not linked to marriage only. She questions the traditional belief which states that a woman's status is only linked to marriage. According to womanists, unlike the feminists, men are welcome; they also show that happiness really resides in a family but women need to be happy. Unigwe, through Ezi, presents skepticism towards feminist 'grand narrative' and presents women who break away from their marriages trying to live fulfilling lives. However, Ezi's choice to leave her husband emanates from betrayal on the part of her husband, Mike, who has a sexual relation with their teenage maid, Rapu, who gets pregnant and subsequently gives birth to a male child. This same son grows up to become a medical doctor. Unigwe proves the fact that as a womanist, when the family stays in unity that is when there is development and progress. Rapu's three children attain heights academically in the university. Ezi who decides to remain a single mother also raises Nma (daughter) academically through her profession as a night dancer. She has no family love and no lasting relationship, except for her friend, Madam Gold.

Traditionally, Ezi is not expected to frown at infidelity because, for adult males, it is a societal expectation. The choice of the adult male in question does not matter. The wife is supposed to remain in marriage and accept her husband's choice if he desires to bring another home. In *Night Dancer*, Ezi challenges tradition by getting out of an unfaithful relationship despite all the pleas from the representatives of traditional voices: her mother, Mike and her friend, Madam Gold, as she states that:

Your mother was stubborn, very stubborn. Every man deserves a son... not even a man carved out of stone would turn away a son when his wife had only been able to give him a daughter. I'm not saying what he did was right Mba nu I'm only saying that he did what any man in his position would have done... It's only natural. They would have planted their seeds in many places. Anyone who tells you otherwise is lying (11-12).

In order to portray that tradition has a great hold on people, Unigwe downplays the grievous crime Mike commits under the covering of tradition which approves it when a man does not have a male child. It becomes necessary for a man to have a male child at all cost. To play safe, Mike does not look at the repercussions of his sexual infidelity. Mike blames adultery and promiscuity on destiny. At Rapu's birth, a prophecy that she is going to lead her family out of poverty is gradually coming into limelight. This can only be the explanation for Rapu's promotion from the position of a maid to a wife. She further says that destiny leads Mike to see Rapu's nakedness and leads him to her room when his wife was attending a friend's wedding. Destiny makes Rapu who is a young teenage virgin not to resist the sex advances of her mistress' husband towards her at the first and subsequent times. Destiny takes the blame thus:

...he found himself quite against his will going to Rapu's room... it seemed like destiny when she did not fight him but opened up warmly to welcome him as if she had waited her entire life for this. (185)

Womanism appreciates culture and gives credence to what tradition says but it does not support discrimination against women. Unigwe deploys her narrative to undermine the fixed tenets of marriage by celebrating female independence. Ezi wants to be who she really is without any restraints from any man, not even her husband who betrays her. Her mother further tries to convince her against her choice of leaving her husband but Ezi does not regret any move to change her mind saying: 'I will take that risk... we will be fine; I have a degree after all. I can get a job. Easy' (200).

Unigwe thematises lesbianism which is one of the issues emphasized by womanists. According to Walker (1983), womanism implores women to love one another sexually and asexually. Walker's strand of womanism encourages lesbianism but in the other strands of womanism, lesbianism is not encouraged in Africa as well as in African novels. lesbianism is one of the traditionally repressed topics which find an outlet in Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. Mama Chikezie, one of the minor characters depicts this theme. This woman is one of Ezi's neighbours. She has a bad marriage but endures it because she wants to earn her respect from the society. She keeps an affair with a young female whom she claims is her relative. She reveals that she is neither too shy nor too conservative to present true forms of reality in our contemporary Nigeria:

...always had a young female visitor every time her husband was away on a business trip. She said the young woman was a relative but everyone knew that she was more than that... touching each other like man and woman. (60)

The first part of *Night Dancer* is set in Enugu. Ezi leaves behind a box of letters which she titles 'My Memoirs; The truth about my life'. In this box, one gets to know Ezi's story. The challenges she passes through when she leaves her marriage, the sacrifices that accompany each challenge, her neighbour's assessment of her, her perspectives on marriage and many other societal issues are shown in these letters. Nma goes through these letters to really know and understand her mother. This is an instance of womanist consciousness that states that women need to be happy. Ezi tells of her frustrations in marriage and the challenges she encounters out of marriage. Through the protagonist, Ezi, suggests that with determination, one can live a fulfilled life without marriage, but it is not a womanist standpoint because complementarity is the hallmark in womanism. However, Unigwe portrays that Ezi did not live a fulfilled life but enjoys prosperity through prostitution. This is one of the standpoints that Walker (1983) expresses in *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden*. It is all about 'getting to be happy'. If Ezi did not get out of the marriage with Mike, she would not have been as prosperous as she becomes before her death. She responds: 'I want to dwell on happy-happy things' (60). Also, Nma declares: 'Her mother is dominated by a wide, wide smile as if that was all her face was; a smile which swallowed everything else' (74). '... come sweetie, come dance-dance with your mummy-mummy; her mother said, the smile never diminishing' (74). Ezi further enunciates that she understands she owes herself happiness, and this she enjoys to a great extent. Womanism consciously admonishes women to work towards their happiness against all odds.

In *Night Dancer*, Unigwe utilizes the flashback technique. This is the only way of meeting Ezi in the narrative. Through her letters the reader gets to meet Ezi, most of whose stories are unfinished. The reader solely relies on her friend, Madam Gold, to have a complete picture of what she says. Through Ezi's letters, Unigwe creates a balance because there is every tendency to blame Ezi for most of her actions; however, Unigwe gives her an opportunity to express herself. Womanist's consciousness demands that women should express themselves in their own way. Madam Gold throws more light on the dark part of the narrative. Hudson-Weems (2007:66) submits that 'womanism gives women a good vantage point and platform to discuss issues about their lives in their own way and explore the positive qualities of women who she describes as the very foundation of life whether they know it or not.'. From the diverse major and minor female characters in *Night Dancer*, Unigwe presents different voices in relation to different challenges African women experience.

Night Dancer reiterates the fact that the family is central. Kolawole (1997:97) brings this point to limelight: '... but womanism sees the cohesion of the family as the stability of life and society.' It is equally seen that the breakdown of the family unit is responsible for the high rate of crime, drug use, alcoholism, suicide and many moral pervasions in contemporary human society. The centrality of the family is the primary source of life as the tenet of womanism

enunciates. Ezi leaves her family because she thinks she cannot help feeling betrayed by her husband, and a supposedly young naïve village girl takes over her home and keeps it. She gives birth to three children, including a medical doctor, but Ezi continues to struggle on her own, and her daughter studies Theatre Arts which is a lucrative profession and leads to stardom in contemporary Nigeria as Medicine and Surgery and they are regarded as graduates:

Rapu answered, grinning from ear to ear, 'Prince is a doctor, he's doing his internship'. A smile lit up her eyes. My son, the doctor, her father said, and pride in his choice hit Nma with the sharpness of a blade. (221)

Motherhood is pertinent to womanist consciousness. This is well portrayed in each family Unigwe showcases in *Night Dancer*. Positive qualities that come with being a woman and mothers aver strongly to pursuing the general wellbeing of their families. Womanism does not see motherhood as a burden to be disposed of at any slightest opportunity. This is shown when Ezi leaves her betraying husband; she does not abandon her daughter, Nma because she is not working. On the contrary, she takes her daughter and goes into the shameful business of prostituting just to feed herself and her daughter. Kolawole (1997) reiterates that womanism uses motherhood to enhance women's strength in a positive and wholesome way by highlighting and not effacing femaleness. Unigwe uses motherhood to enhance and promote Rapu (a young naïve maid). If she does not get pregnant and have a male child, Mike will not decide to pay her bride price. Motherhood, in this case, is what Unigwe employs to elevate Rapu's status. The narrative captures it in this manner:

...afterall, what power did this woman have that she did not have? They were both sleeping with the man, with the boss of the house, and so whatever line there was before them which placed one higher than the other had been erased. (190)

... so that Aunt Ezi knew that they were now equals. Both carrying babies for the same man. (191)

As a result of securing and continuing the family name, Ezi's mother-in-law mounts pressure on him to marry a second wife when Ezi does not get pregnant after four years of marriage. Mike's brother, Silas, too constantly pressurizes Mike: 'He turns to Ezi, our wife, are you inviting us soon?' (144). Mike reminisces on what his mother tells him about marrying another wife so as to have children for him:

Had he not resisted his mother's attempts to get him to take a second wife 'you don't even have to love her. Just get her to give you a baby. People are starting to talk. They are starting to say that you're not a man. (184)

Mike sees God as the only one who can help a person increase the family size and at His own time. When his mother insists that he must marry another wife and moves back to the south, he refuses to listen to her. Mike's mother gets angry and says 'he was a stubborn son, an obstinate son who deserved nothing good' (174). He replies that he already has everything good, that nothing could add to the joy, to the fulfilment of being with a woman he loves in a city he loves. As far as Mike is concerned, his immediate family's interest must be protected and preserved.

Unigwe uses Mike to portray the interest of the family as very important. Silas also tries to disintegrate Mike's family by telling him that he thinks Ezi has slipped something in his water, some powerful love 'juju' because nobody but a possessed man would talk like this: 'You don't care that nothing will be left of your immediate family when you go?' (174). He appreciates his family and tries to protect and preserve it. Mike states that 'I cannot separate sex and love. And I'll not get a wife just so she can give me a baby. Besides, God will give us a baby in His good time' (174). In other words, he endeavours to protect his family from external intrusion.

Most feminists envision a world where women will have everything the way they want them. There is no more consideration given to compromise, ground shifting and tolerance as keys to healthy development of a people and a society. This is contrary to the standpoint of womanism. Ezi, due to her exposure to education, decides to quit her marriage for Rapu because she does not believe in polygamy and cannot tolerate sharing her husband with a housemaid. In this case, Unigwe challenges the tradition of polygamy which insists that women should suffer in silence. Ezi's mentality changes due to her contact with western education. She is more of a hybrid personality that kicks against the oppressive tool of tradition. Her mother tells her to endure. Madam Gold asks her to remain for the sake of her baby, but she declines. Rapu decides to endure whatever attitude Mike puts up because she knows that it will not last for too long before he warms up towards her, but 'he spent his nights away and his days in the shop ... he would shout for Rapu to bring him the baby' (203). Anwuli, Rapu's friend, counsels her not to worry because 'hot water will eventually cool down. It will not be like this forever' (203). In response to the above good counsel, Rapu remains patient and, after sometime, Mike calls her thus:

Leave the baby! he said, and come and sleep in my bed. She had hoped then that she would not be sent back to the guest room... and she was willing to wait for it to cool. (204)

If Ezi does not move out of her marriage and decides to endure the crisis, Rapu will not remain in that house. Mike's son will be taken from her probably after he grows and stops breastfeeding. Mike even promises Ezi this, but Unigwe uses her protagonist to reflect everyday realities and changes that are coming up to challenge the existing norms and traditions.

Moreover, there is a constant questioning of the tenet of tradition which is also seen as one of the major weapons of women's domination. For instance, in tradition, virginity is a crowning glory of a woman, but in *Night Dancer*, it is not to be celebrated in the contemporary times, virginity is rarely appreciated and celebrated in cognizance of the fact that times are changing.

Unigwe reveals that things are changing, and there are many things and concepts that are changing. When Rapu starts to see that Mike does not show any interest in her anymore, she becomes devastated because she believes that: 'it (virginity) was the most precious gift you could give a man' (189). The general belief before now was that 'a man who took your virginity was supposed to desire you so much that he thought of nothing else' (189). This is Unigwe's way of

reflecting on the fact that times are changing. What seemed to be normal and sane are no longer so, as tradition and societal norms are gradually fading away.

The notion of instability in *Night Dancer* is so rampant that everything seems different. Unigwe tells a particular story from different characters. Truth is shown from the different voices. This helps the reader to have a balanced insight into the different character's actions and inactions. Hence, a better judgment or conclusion is achieved. For instance, Mike tells Silas that 'he cannot separate love and sex' (194). Yet his action of sleeping with Rapu contradicts his expression. The novel is divided in an unconventional way into parts one, two and three. Each part opens with an Igbo proverb. Through letters, many revelations come to limelight about Unigwe's protagonist, Ezi. This is one of the womanist tenets whereby women want to express themselves in their own ways because their experiences are unique. In this vein, the uniqueness of writing is seen.

Changes are the main reflections in *Night Dancer*. Women's mentality equally undergoes a process of change whereby nothing seems to be the appropriate or inappropriate thing. The most important thing is its suitability to the person. Although the relationship between Ezi and Mike disintegrates, both of them still live their separate lives with their hurts. In this case, tradition and culture cannot force a party to endure while the husband enjoys the pains of the wife who shares her husband with another woman. As a means of survival, Ezi turns to prostitution. Culture and tradition frown against it, but they provide no better alternative for her. For this reason, Ezi remains in prostitution unperturbed.

Invariably, the culture that preaches that no two wives' co-habit peacefully in a man's house, preaches polygamy. Ezi revolts and shows no pretense about her dislike of sharing her husband and suffering in silence. Apparently, Unigwe in *Night Dancer* avers that women must live their lives in the way that pleases them. After all, they are responsible for their wellbeing. Anything is possible in this postmodern age.

3. Complementarity in Unigwe's *Night Dancer*

Complementarity in marriage is one of the tenets of womanism. This negates the natural role division of the husband/father who is the provider and the mother/wife to be the care giver. The picture was never so, because the mother and the father in Yoruba milieu, always complement each other. The mother and father are actively in business, farming, trade etc. women were not domesticated before colonialism. Olajubu (2003).

Colonialism emerged and robbed Africans of their unique ways of peaceful co-existence in the family. Women were to be idolized at home and not to be seen outside. In fact, before colonialism in Africa, women were actively in politics. That is why we have portfolios such as 'Iyalode', 'Iyaloja' and 'IyaEgbe' etc. These are female leaders who oversee the market, these positions are reserved for women because Africans believe in complementarity of both the male and female roles towards the development of the family, society and nation at large; taking a cue from Hudson-Weems (2004) who posits that womanists also welcome male presence and participation in her struggle. Moreover, African womanist desires positive male companionship unlike radical feminism which believes that males are the main problems of women therefore, they do not want to have anything to do with them. Walker and the propounders of the other variants of womanism believe African and African American nations cannot achieve greatly without their male counterparts. Collectively, they can rescue their community from the common oppressor. This proves that without the support of the male in any struggle, it will be a futile attempt that is set for failure. For these reasons, an agreement of the gender in fighting the common enemy is vehemently reiterated in the tenets of womanism.

Jacques Garvey in Taylor (2000) succinctly admonishes that women have been endowed with God given gifts which will repay them for their weakness. This is the gift of motherhood. Despite this, they should be actively involved in politics and civic affairs but they must not stray away from the gender specified roles. This connotes that the image of women tends to change due to role flexibility.

In Unigwe's *Night Dancer* (2013), Ezi singlehandedly raises and educates her daughter. She builds houses which enriches her and secures an inheritance for her daughter Nma. These are roles performed by men. Nma declares to her father 'I don't need your money! My mother was rich.' (293). This shows that Ezi single handedly achieved success and Unigwe succinctly makes her wealth uncelebrated. She didn't enjoy the fruit of her labour as she dies unexpectedly. In spite of all odds, Ezi works assiduously, summons all her might into the business, (night dancer) and becomes wealthy. This is a new image of role reversal. Culturally, the father works hard to give an inheritance to his children but in this scenario, Nma's mother (caregiver) is also the father (provider) which is the male traditional role. The protagonist in *Night Dancer* combines these roles. Contrary to what obtained during and after colonialism, gender roles are no longer rigidly fixed. Due to the fact that Ezi was a single mother, she perfectly combines the traditionally spelt out roles of Nma's mother as well as father. Unigwe explains further:

Ezi could rent out the two flats under their flat and she did, with the money that she saved, she bought other properties in the city in New Haven and two duplexes in Trans Ekulu. (88)

For Ezi, culturally assigned roles changes and she cope with the challenges by adopting coping strategies. Africans are therefore urged to embrace complementing each other in the family because the development of the family is not solely the responsibility of the male (father figure) in the family but a complementary style whereby the father contributes and the mother augments where necessary. This will help the family, society and nation at large. This can also be seen in the development of Africans in the pre-colonial era. As a result, womanism preaches the cooperation of genders in order to achieve sustainable development which will be reflected in the pedigree of their children which will impact the society and nation at large.

Womanism preaches that women must not be slothful but be able to contribute to the development of their families and community. In the definition of womanism by Alice Walker (1983), She opines thus; 'A black feminist or feminist of colour...wanting to know more and in greater depth' (11)

Another cogent point of womanism is that, a womanist is a woman who is willing to learn, understand and discover newness in all areas of life. It is a clarion call to women of this era to be forthcoming by breaking grounds in diverse aspects of life. Walker, through her essay, *In Search of our Mothers' Garden* (1983) foretells the future. Due to colonialism, neo-colonialism, globalization and immigration, there is a plethora quest for knowledge among women in order to compete with their counterparts globally, women need to seek knowledge. This is a salient point in womanism. This tenet of womanism will bring a new image of women. To achieve this point, women must be actively involved in anything going on around them, to be actively and not passively involved.

The issue of complimentary from the stand point of Walker (1983:11) is further reinforced by OkonjoOgunyemi ((1998:665) who posits that; 'womanism is black centered, ... It wants meaningful union between black woman, men and children.' The above assertion differentiates womanism from feminism. African and African America women love their men as well as their children, nevertheless, Walker's strand of womanism tilts towards sexual and asexual relationship. They are not men haters neither are they against motherhood. The common enemy can only be overpowered when the genders are in agreement. Bestman (2012:115) corroborates the above by looking at OkonjoOgunyemi's view on this issue. She buttresses four significant points; collaboration, consensus, conciliation and complimentary relationship between men and women. These four points aim at achieving agreement between both genders. Anything void of these points is a deterrent to womanism because to attain cohesion in the family, community and nation, anything outside these points is like putting a round peg in a square hole. Ezi, in *Night Dancer* did not recognize these points hence, Ezi fails to regain her marriage from Rapu. It therefore becomes an intentional reversal of issues, Rapu, an illiterate from a village, understands and embraces these ideologies but Ezi, a university graduate is void of these native intelligences. Ezi lost her marriage to her housemaid, Rapu.

In fact, in the present era, it is surprising that some men still insist on the fact that they want their women to remain as complete housewives. They do this based on the traditions and customs which they are deeply enshrined in, such as, the traditional role of the man is to provide for his family. To further have a masculine control over his wife, he restrains her to the domain of the home. One should have thought that with the influx of the internet, globalization and a fluidity in culture, such impression should have been eroded but to assert their power of masculinity over the women, they are reduced to housewives. In *Night Dancer*, Mike equally excuses Ezi from his business and relegates her to the background as she becomes a housewife. The place of collaboration, consensus, conciliation and complementarity is void, hence, a complete disintegration of their relationship.

In Unigwe's *Night Dancer*, Ezi decides to separate from Mike due to an illicit relationship with her housemaid (Rapu) which produces a male child, that is preferred in African society as against her own legitimate child who happens to be a female. At the time she refuses this patriarchy dominance, her mother and father frown against her action. Instead of them to support their daughter who is experiencing trauma in her marriage, Ezi's family rejects and abandons her to fate. The father says he will disown her and she must not return to his house. Ezi's mother is of the opinion that Mike cannot allow his son to grow outside his home. However, he can abandon his daughter from a legitimate relationship with his wife, to be raised outside his home with proceeds from prostitution. Mike allows his masculinity expectation to overwhelm his judgement. Nma is a female child but Rapu's child is a male child who will carry on the family name. Unigwe shows the oddities of life from this situation.

Ezi's friend, Mama Gold equally agrees with an oppressive culture and tradition by calling her friend a stubborn woman who expects too much from her husband and refuses to bear his excesses as Mama Gold avers: 'Not even a man called out of stone would turn away a son... not even when his wife had only been able to give him a daughter.' (11) Erroneously, it is a known fact that the men determined the sex of a child and not the woman.

Looking at tradition and culture, it can completely become a stronghold on the female gender using patriarchy as a weapon of oppression. Nma decides to visit her father despite his non-challant attitude towards Ezi and herself. Traditionally, Nma is aware that if her father and his relatives are absent at her wedding ceremony, then she will be looked down upon by her future in-laws. What an unfair judgment on a female child? She visits her father at Kaduna and it reveals to her the reason why her mother abandons her marriage. Nma's visit to her father's house at Kaduna becomes an eye opener for her. She appreciates her mother's efforts over her. Rapu remains a housewife. When her father's business experiences a setback due to the religious crisis, where his shop was damaged, she did not have anything to augment her family with, when the family had financial crisis. This is where the issue of complementarity comes in, she could have supported her husband to feed the family but, her husband sees himself as a failure because of his inability to fulfill his role as the breadwinner and absolute sole provider. Therefore, he reinforces traditional values which inhibit women. This, according to Walker, is what womanism kicks against as woman must be responsible, in charge and serious.' (1983:11). Nitri 2004:174 is of the opinion 'that men and women must work together to make the world a better place' this statement preaches complementarity between the gender. Nma angrily responded to Rapu who believes she visited to request for her inheritance that: 'I don't need your money! My mother was rich' (239).

4. Changes in Female Image Due to Experiences and Needs

These are the evidences of changes in the image of women due to their experiences. Gender roles for Ezi are seen as not rigid. Due to the fact that societal expectations for both genders are often culturally embedded, it becomes binding on them. However, societies are electric and have the potentials to change. White (2011) avers similarly thus; 'culture is

both evolutionary and revolutionary; it is an adaptive mechanism that constantly adjusts to satisfy human's biological and social needs' (205). This portrays that culture goes through a process of change and adaptation as a result of contact with other cultures.' (206) Ezi in *Night Dancer* tells her mother that she should not remain with her age long traditions and culture as Ezi expresses thus: 'things must have changed since her mother's time, when women were terrified of living alone.... Mother, times have changed.' (201) Culture and tradition will never remain static, therefore, changes in the image of women should be expected due to their experiences and the way they view their current world.

Gill (2006) observes a shift from objectification of women to their position of subjectification. Herein, we see a reversal of roles. The women become subject, while the men become the object. Ezi is a prototype of the above expression. She engages in prostitution and becomes very rich. She acquires assets which her daughter inherits. From the above, image of the female is never static but can change at any time, due to different reasons.

5. Conclusion

The stern and depressing social economic milieu in Nigeria have made life unbearable for individuals and the family at large. The rural dwellers can hold on to subsistence farming for their survival but those living in the urban areas are not spared from economic, social, psychological and emotional pangs from which all spheres of life throw at them. The devastating impact is equally reflective on the family which is expected to be the bedrock of the society. As a result of government's stringent measures and overbearing policies, it is becoming extremely difficult to enforce disciplines among family members. Due to unemployment, poor payment with low satisfaction, loss of job which is becoming rampant in the society and such related issues are tearing down the family integration that is in existence before now. The resultant effect is family members resorting to criminal acts, prostitution as well as other nefarious acts just for sustainability. Culturally, genders have specified roles which are acceptable and are normative, however, due to the dwindling economical traits, it has become imperative that all hands must be on deck if the family will co-exist in this highly challenging milieu. Gender specified roles are gradually collapsing.

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