

**GENDER SECURITY AND THE CRISIS OF BEING: THE
FICTIVE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE HELPLESSNESS
AND EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIAN AND TAIWANESE
PROSE FICTIONS**

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FOREWORD

This study interrogates the complication of women's self-apprehension by their cognition of the (in)adequate societal provisions for female security, whether these provisions are actual or merely perceptual. Essentially, the study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How does society ensure the security of its female citizens? (2) What deleterious or salubrious effects has gender security (or insecurity, as the case may be) on female helplessness or empowerment in the age of globalisation and concomitant reductionism of the individual?; and (3) What is the role of feminism and gender activities in the fictional and actual emancipation and empowerment of Nigerian and Taiwanese girls and women in the twenty-first century?

The study argues that society's security measures which, ideally, should go beyond the establishment of a police force and allied agencies, proportionately implicate women's empowerment and their invaluable contribution to society's advancement and well-being. Using a broad-spectrum feminist approach, the study compares data from governmental and non-governmental agencies in Nigeria and Taiwan with the fictive representations of such gender issues as education, politics, marriage, and inheritance to underscore the impact of gender security on women in the Nigerian and Taiwanese societies. The novels chosen for this study are: Li Ang's *The Butcher's Wife*; Hsiao Li-Hung's *A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers*; Li Qiao's *Wintry Night*; Zhuoliu Wu's *Orphan of Asia*; Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*; Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*; and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. References will also be made to other literary works from both countries where necessary with the ultimate aim of demonstrating how (in)security impacts the lives of girls and women in Nigeria and Taiwan at the fictive level and in reality.

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DEDICATION

To the unfortunate school girls that were abducted by the terrorist organisation, Boko Haram (Western Education is Evil), on 14 April 2014 in Chibok, Nigeria.

Gender Security and the Crisis of Being: The Fictive Representation of Female Helplessness and Empowerment in Nigerian and Taiwanese Prose Fictions

Introduction

This study explores the impact of security on the productivity of women in society, most especially the attendant crisis that (in)security brews in their sense of worth and selfhood in general. “Gender security” in this study specifically refers to female security as the focus of the study is on women. Nevertheless, female security also problematizes male security given its affective capacity: men are usually emotionally charged anytime the security of their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters is breached or threatened. However, our specific aim in this study is to examine how security implicates the perceptivity and productivity of women in Nigeria and Taiwan, and the way the prose fictions of the two countries reflect or refract this concept. The “crisis of being” in the title refers to the assaultive impact of gender (in) security on women’s selfhood, perception of self-worth and identity. The phrase also foregrounds how adequate security measures, especially their pursuit and active implementation, serve to buoy female confidence and engender unhindered creativity and full actualisation of women’s potential in all sectors of society. In other words, a woman’s sense of security directly affects her valuation of her identity and self-worth which in turn has implications on her productivity to the society. Thus, a woman without any crisis of identity, self-worth or being is likely to be more productive than her counterpart with a crisis of identity, uncertain of her self-worth in her society. This postulation will be given greater clarification in the ensuing analysis.

The common notion of security is encapsulated in the word “protection” provided by the police and other “security” agencies of government. This common notion is adequately captured in the definition of “security” as: “the state of being free from danger or threat...the safety of a state or organisation against criminal activities such as terrorism, theft or espionage....” However, the notion of “security” in this study is not restricted to the narrow parallax lines of “security agencies” with their paraphernalia of uniforms, guns and bombs. Instead, the operative standpoint to security in this study is best couched in the averment that anything that “arms” the female against real and potential attacks in society constitutes a vital part of gender security for girls and women.

Consequently, this study argues that aside from the “protection” offered by the conventional law enforcement agencies, the security of the female is further

enhanced through education, economic empowerment, freedom of speech and choice, and the active participation of women in politics and policy formulation, all of which crystallise into women empowerment. This holistic perception of women security is in consonance with the position of the United Nations Commissions on Human Security which defines security as

protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment.’ This means protecting vital freedoms – fundamental to human existence and development. Human security means protecting people from severe and pervasive threats, both natural and societal, and empowering individuals and communities to develop the capabilities for making informed choices and acting on their own behalf (Ogata & Cels quoted in Hoogensen and Rottem 157)

The 1994 United Nations Development Programme’s *Human Development Report* clarifies the concept when it describes human security as “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”, indicating the seven primary domains where human (in)security manifests: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security (Axworthy 24–5). This study contends that empowering women to “develop the capabilities for making informed choices and acting on their own behalf” indirectly enhances women security. In short, women empowerment is women security just as women security is also women empowerment. By matching the cerebral creations in selected Nigerian and Taiwanese novels with accessible data from governmental and non-governmental organisations in both countries, this study interrogates the contentious issue of female security (and productivity) in Nigeria and Taiwan evident in the fictionalised predicaments of female characters in the selected novels.

The objectives of this study are three-fold: (1) To examine the ways the Nigerian and Taiwanese societies ensure the security of their female citizens at the fictive or reality levels; (2) To assess the impact of gender (in)security on the empowerment or helplessness of the female, in reality and as reflected in the fictive lives of female characters of the selected Nigerian and Taiwanese novels; and (3) To explore the role of feminism and gender activities in the fictional and actual emancipation and empowerment of Nigerian and Taiwanese girls and women in the twenty-first century. In pursuing these objectives, this study seeks to validate the thesis that female emancipation and empowerment are contingent on an all-encompassing gender security, and that this is impossible to achieve without the active cooperation of men regardless of strident feminist rhetoric and campaigns.

In the last eight decades, feminism has been the vehicle used by women to invade the “phallogocentric” bastion of patriarchy and secure some rights and concessions in politics, education and the law, enabling them to bridge the inequality foisted on them by the traditional privileging of male over female. Feminist criticism, therefore,

...is an attempt to describe and interpret (and reinterpret) women’s experiences as depicted in various kinds of literature – especially the novel; and to a lesser extent, poetry and drama. It questions the long-standing dominant male, phallogocentric ideologies (which add up to a kind of male conspiracy), patriarchal attitudes and male interpretations in literature (and critical evaluation of literature). It attacks male notions of value in literature – by offering critiques of male authors and representations of men in literature and also by privileging women writers. In addition, it challenges traditional and accepted male ideas about the nature of women and about how women feel, act and think, or are supposed to feel, act or think, and how in general they respond to life and living. It thus questions numerous prejudices and assumptions about women made by male writers, not least any tendency to cast women in stock character ...roles.”

(A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory 315)

The long quote above accentuates the major issues addressed by feminism in general: feminist repudiation of the valorising representation of males in works of art as born leaders, powerful, brave, rational and insightful, while women are represented as weak, emotional, dependent on men, etc; the counter-representation of women by women writers rejecting the stock roles given to them by male writers as the subordinate “other”, fictionalising instances validating the leadership qualities and inner strength of women; thematising experiences unique to women unknown or ignored by male authors; and deconstructing the ideological base, socio-economic, political and legal superstructure of patriarchy which proclaim the male as God-ordained superior to female.

In spite of its avowed rejection of patriarchal notions and structures in society, the house of feminism is neither unified nor homogenising. The essentialists, mostly French feminists led by Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Helen Cixous are concerned about the “phallogocentric” nature of most Western languages, and contend that women’s writing depicts women’s language, *écriture féminine*. The relativists, mostly Anglo-American feminists led by Virginia Woolf, Simone de

Beauvoire, Mary Ellman and Elaine Showalter, in contrast, seek to unravel how male authors and critics undervalue or devalue female representations relative to male representations in their works. Aside from these broad “schools” of feminism, there are many other sub-groups within the feminist catchment: radical feminism, liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, Ecofeminism, Womanism, Nego-feminism, psychoanalytical feminism, standpoint feminism, post-feminism, Snail-Sense feminism, etc. Each branch or type of feminism has its own theoretical assumption and exegetical procedure in regard to literary texts by male and female writers. No matter their intra-mural quarrels, however, all feminists decry the marginalisation of women in male-dominated societies; they also contend with the reification and reflection of female marginalisation in society’s cultural productions such as literature as if it were a natural given. To accommodate the major tenets of feminist concerns irrespective of type or school, this study adopts a broad-spectrum feminist approach in the analysis of the selected literary texts, using feminist concepts such as patriarchy, invisibilisation of women, marginalisation (subordination/ subjugation) and privileging, othering, empowerment and victimhood, gender mainstreaming, emancipation, sisterhood bonding, physical violence against women and structural violence. The texts for the study were selected on the basis of equal gender representations: two male authors and two female authors have been selected from the two countries, and efforts were made to include both old and young authors. However, the unavailability of many Taiwanese literary texts translated from Chinese to English and the inability of the researcher to understand the Chinese script seriously restrict the ambit of choice of the Taiwanese novels to the few translated works.

Condensed Political Histories of Nigeria and Taiwan

Nigeria and Taiwan are similar in that both are societies where entrenched traditional patriarchy has been reinforced by colonial and postcolonial experiences. Nigeria was colonised by the British who ruled the nation from 1914 when Lord Lugard amalgamated the then Northern and Southern protectorates and gave the resultant amalgam the name “Nigeria” (formed from “Niger Area”). Nigeria eventually gained her independence from Britain in 1960, but her drive towards democracy and nationhood had been truncated severally by military interventions and a civil war which devastated the country between 1967 and 1970. Between 1966 and 1979, Generals General Aguiyi Ironsi, Yakubu Gowon, Muritala Mohammed, and Olusegun Obasanjo ruled the country. In 1979, General Olusegun Obasanjo handed over to the civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. In 1983, Shagari was overthrown in another coup led by General Muhamadu Buhari who ruled till 1986. Between 1986 and 1993, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida was in power followed by the Interim National Regime of Chief Ernest Shonekan. Shonekan’s hotchpotch civil cum military

administration was overthrown the same year by General Sani Abacha's military junta whose reign of terror lasted till 1998. Following Abacha's death in 1998, General Abdusalam Abubakar stepped in as head of state. He handed over to the civilian administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo (retired) who was in power for two terms of four years each. Obasanjo handed over to late President Umar Yar'adua in 2007. The current administration of President Goodluck Jonathan has been in place since the death of Yar'adua in 2010. From this brief political history of Nigeria, it is evident that there had been more military regimes than civilian administrations in Nigeria. And all through the colonial period, the military regimes, and the democratic experiments in Nigeria, patriarchy reigned and still reigns supreme as women participation in governance has been inversely proportional to their numerical strength which available statistics puts at 69, 086, 302 (Nigeria Population Commission n.p.) as at 2014 (*A Brief History of Nigeria*).

Taiwan's political experience is not radically different from that of Nigeria although it does not follow the exact pattern above. Taiwan was first conquered by the Qing Dynasty of China in 1683. Successive waves of migration of Chinese peoples from the Mainland and the extermination of the Taiwanese Aborigines meant that the population till today is largely dominated by peoples of Chinese descent: the Hakkas, the Hokklos, and the Hans. In 1895, China was defeated in the First Sino-Japanese War and as part of the settlement afterwards, China ceded Taiwan to Japan. The Japanese colonised and ruled Taiwan for fifty years, operating the policy of assimilation known as Kominka which sought to make Japanese citizens out of the Taiwanese. Consequently, there was the vigorous promotion of Japanese language, education and culture and an attempt to suppress and wipe out the Chinese culture and language practised and spoken before Taiwan was ceded to Japan. Kominka reached its highest expression when Taiwanese were "encouraged" to drop their Chinese names and adopt Japanese equivalents. Those who did so were rewarded with several privileges by the Japanese overlords. Japan was defeated in the Second Sino-Japanese war that coincided with their defeat in the Second World War. Thereafter, Taiwan was ceded back to China because she fought alongside the winning Allies in the war.

Between 1945 and 1947, Taiwan was under the military rule of Chinese General Cheng Yi whose administration was repressive and intolerant of native Taiwanese sentiments. The ill feeling between the rulers and the ruled catalysed by economic hardship and the perceived oppression of Taiwanese by the Chinese administration reached its critical mass and sparked off a protest culminating in the massacre of several Taiwanese by the military on 28 February 1947, henceforth called the 228 Incident. After World War II, the civil war in China resumed. All along, the ruling Nationalist Party in China, regarded Taiwan as a

colony of China. But in 1949, the defeat of the Chiang Kai-Shek led Nationalist Party by the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong in the China Civil War forced the Nationalist government to relocate to Taiwan, a move then regarded as a tactical and temporary withdrawal pending the time when the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT)) would regain Mainland China from the Communist Party. In October 1949, the victorious Communist Party renamed China the People's Republic of China (PROC). Taiwan was renamed the Republic of China by the Chiang Kai-Shek administration and up until 1971 represented the whole of China in the United Nations. But the growing influence of the PROC and her acceptance into the United Nations engineered the subsequent withdrawal/suspension of recognition of the Republic of China, Taiwan, as a nation-state by the UN from 1971 onward.

In May 1949, Chang Kai-Shek declared martial law in Taiwan and ruled with military fiat until he died in 1975. Although his rule ushered in the rapid industrialisation of Taiwan, making it one of the four Asian Tigers (Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan), his regime was noted for its repression of opposition, detention and execution of opponents of the one-party government (KMT) or anyone who supported communism. Over one hundred and forty thousand citizens (mostly political and human rights activists and intellectuals) were allegedly imprisoned or executed during his and his son's "White Terror" reign which lasted till 1987 when martial law was officially abrogated in Taiwan. The most notable of these repressive acts was the Kaoshiung Incident of 1979 in which various groups opposed to military dictatorship demonstrated against the undemocratic style of governance of the Chiangs on Human Rights Day. The Chiang Chin-Kuo's government descended with a heavy hand on the opposition, hounding many of them into prison from which they were not released until 1986. Those intellectuals in the opposition who escaped capture after the Kaoshiung Incident ran out of the country and remained in self-exile until the democratisation of the country in the 1990s. It is apparent from this brief historical excursion that in terms of human rights violations, the difference between the Chiangs' one-party rule and the military regimes in Nigeria, especially Abacha's terror junta, is that between six and half-a-dozen.

Chiang Chin-Kuo succeeded his father in 1975, and after the Kaoshiung Incident began a process of gradual democratisation of the country. In 1984, he selected Lee Teng-Hui a Taiwanese-born America-trained technocrat as his vice-president. He allowed the formation of an opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986, and also lifted martial law in 1987. Upon Chiang Chin-Kuo's death in 1988, Lee Teng-Hui took over and was re-elected in 1996 in the ROC's first direct presidential election. He was succeeded in 2000 by the DPP's Chen Shui-bian, the first non-KMT president of Taiwan whose

administration lasted till 2008, when the current administration of Ma Ying-Jeou of the KMT took over. Like their Nigerian counterparts, not many Taiwanese women participated at the highest level of government during the martial law era in Taiwan, but unlike Nigerian women, the political fortunes of Taiwanese women took a marked upwards swing after the Kaoshiung Incident and has not dipped till now (Taiwan Historical Timelines/*History of Taiwan*). The growing stature of women in Nigeria and Taiwan is reflected in the prose fiction of the two countries where exposure of females to education has ensured that women issues are put at the fore of national discourse by women themselves thus breaking the stranglehold of patriarchal marginalisation of females in the two locales.

Review of Relevant Literature

The numinous creations of fiction and the unsublimated reality of contemporary society have always excited man's constant cerebrations. The relationship between these two realms, reality and fiction, has been more symbiotic than mutually exclusive, one being inspirational and the other reflective or refractive. In the main, literary narratives, Nigerian or Taiwanese are mimetic of each nation's patriarchal cultural constructs which often privilege the male while pushing the female to the margins of the power nexus. Various narratives, prose, poetry or drama, depict the gap between men and women in terms of access to power, socio-economic opportunities, and the concrete expressions of personal liberties presumably guaranteed all citizens, female or male, by the Nigerian and Taiwanese constitutions. In other words, even though these constitutions proclaim equality to all citizens, the entrenched patriarchy in the Nigerian and Taiwanese cultures erects social huddles that prevent the female from enjoying some of these freedoms thus exacerbating the insecurity complex in female citizens. The contention of this study is that a positive remediation of gender security in all ramifications will empower women to contest the spaces that men have hitherto claimed as their "God-given" locus thereby ensuring gender equality.

Over the years, gender security has engaged the attention of people in the academia, governmental and non-governmental organisations, most especially among intellectuals working in security related disciplines. One such discipline is International Relations (IR) where security plays a major role. Even though IR usually examines security from the perspective of inter-states conflicts and their impact on the security of individuals, recent applications of feminism to IR have accentuated the need for gender mainstreaming in the formulation of policies concerning the protection of non-combatant people, especially women and children who are usually left unprotected against physical assaults and other ravages of war. In *Gender, International Relations, and the Development of*

Feminist Security Theory Eric M. Blanchard broached the need to give feminism more latitude in International Relations if the peculiar security needs of women were to be addressed fully in the national and international spheres. Following up on Ann Tickner's ground-breaking work on feminist security theory, Blanchard decries the marginalisation of women in security matters due to realism's reification of the notion that men are the "protectors" of women, thereby denying women agency and voice in the most vital area of their lives:

Feminists in IR argue that realism, dominated by elite, white, male practitioners, is a patriarchal discourse that renders women invisible from the high politics of IR even as it depends on women's subjugation as a "'domesticated' figure whose 'feminine' sensibilities are both at odds with and inconsequential to the harsh 'realities' of the public world of men and states".... Feminists in IR explain the exclusion of women from foreign policy decision making by pointing to the "extent to which international politics is such a thoroughly masculinised sphere of activity that women's voices are considered inauthentic".... Women's traditional exclusion from the military and continuing lack of access to political power at times presents women with a "catch-22" situation. For example, the importance of a candidate's military service as a qualification for government office in U.S. political campaigns puts women, who cannot appeal to this experience, at a disadvantage in obtaining the elite status of national office and thus the ability to affect defense and security policies. (Blanchard 1292)

In "Engaging Gender (In)Security", Scott Nicholas Romaniuk continues Blanchard's assault on the masculinised/phallogocentric nature of the dominant realist theory in IR because it continues to view matters of security from the male perspective. He notes:

Feminists have observed that men have long been ascribed certain characteristics such as "[s]trength, power, autonomy, independence and rationality." For these reasons, men have been seen as rightfully operating in the public domain while women have been relegated to the private, because they are seen as weak, peaceful, cooperative and reliant on others for protection. The feminine, in these socially constructed gendered binaries, becomes the devalued other, needing protection.... Feminists argue that from these social constructions, the hegemonic masculinity outlined above is

“projected [by realists] onto the behaviour of states whose success as international actors is measured in terms of their power capabilities and capacity for self-help and autonomy...” The state is viewed as aggressive, as males are viewed as aggressive. Indeed, for realists, this masculine trait is necessary in an anarchic international system where states are struggling for power. If a state were not aggressive, if it was unable to rely on its own capabilities, it could be seen as weak and dominated by other states. Thus, for realists, while aggressiveness is frowned upon in the private sphere where the state maintains order and which it protects, this trait is encouraged in the public sphere. ... As feminists note, the equation of males/masculinity with aggressiveness precludes any role for females in decision-making processes pertaining to national security... It also proscribes certain activities for women such as war-fighting that are viewed as masculine. Soldiering is the preserve of males who must protect their female compatriots. The state must be prepared for war to guarantee the security of its own. For realists, “survival in a violence-prone international system ‘requires’ war-capable states peopled by heroic masculine... warriors”.... By bringing in gender, feminists have exposed realist conceptions of security as based on a hegemonic masculinity and are not reflective of the full reality of human experience.... (Romaniuk 145)

Romaniuk above highlights how national security dovetails into individual security and ends up debilitating women security because of patriarchal marginalisation of women in security matters. He, however, observes that while feminism’s panacea of equal representation of men and women at the highest levels of policy formulation and decision making in “all” sectors may appear an attractive palliative to assuage women’s agitation it is unlikely to be effective unless more men are supportive of gender mainstreaming. What Romaniuk means is that tokenism may come to play in this arrangement of bringing women into the highest echelon of governance just to increase their physical presence but not their ability in ensuring any meaningful change in the societal superstructure because it is still firmly anchored in a patriarchal base. Romaniuk adds:

Even though a push for increased participation in the relevant decision-making spheres is accompanied by attempts to alter the present discourse by emphasising various “devalued feminine principles,” if these are being pushed solely by women, it will have little effect.... While it is not disputed that

these “could play an important role in building alternative modalities of behaviour” it is argued here that the entrenched structures will continue to devalue these principles even if espoused by women in positions of power. (Romaniuk 145)

This paper agrees with Romaniuk’s assertion that women in power, like individual men, can be overawed by political party structures and ideologies which have proved rigid and antagonistic to any attempt to change the status quo. For instance, in Nigeria, the former governor of Anambra State between 2003 and 2006, Chris Ngige, was kidnapped while in office by thugs from his political godfather, Chris Uba with whom he had had a political disagreement over how the state’s funds should be spent. He was physically mistreated and forced to sign a letter of resignation. The police in collusion with the godfather later invaded the state house, informed the governor that he had resigned and more or less supervised the swearing in of his deputy as governor. However, the godfather’s attempt to remove him from office on 10 July 2003 by means of the fabricated letter of resignation which the state assembly, under the control of the godfather, readily accepted eventually failed. All through the show of shame, the party structure at the state and federal levels, stood solidly behind the godfather. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Ngige) Another governor, Rasheed Ladoja of Oyo State (2003-2007) also rowed with his godfather, Lamidi Adedibu, over funds and the latter used his influence in the state legislature to impeach him in 2006. He was later reinstated by the Supreme Court in December 2006. Again his political party supported the godfather, with the national chairman of the party advising the governor to take instructions from his godfather (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashidi_Adewolu_Ladoja). If men could be so overawed by the party structure manipulated by powerful men, it is predictable that a woman in the same predicament will suffer the same fate or worse.

In “Gender Identity and the Subject of Security” Gunhild Hoogensen and Svein Vigeland Rottem argue forcefully that security issues also implicate identity in ways that are subtle and easily overlooked unless gender is factored into discussions on security. The “crisis of being” in the title of this work echoes a similar sentiment, implying that a woman’s sense of security is important to her personal and social identity and the contributions she makes to society. Hoogensen and Vigeland add:

Recognizing gender as a significant dimension of identity and security opens the door to non-state-based views of security and aptly illustrates how identity shapes individual and collective security needs. Gender analyses reveal the structures that neutralize identity through assumptions of the Universal

Man. Removing these structural distortions allows us to hear and respond to the identities within. (156)

“Security experts” are, of course, not comfortable with the idea of taking individual security needs into consideration because it appears neater and more comfortable (for men) to work with the traditional assumption that the safety of the “state” automatically implies the security of the individual citizens that make up the state. But the authors hereby argue that such an assumption has for long unjustifiably subsumed the individual identity of peculiar groups, for example, women, under state identity such that their peculiar security needs are overlooked. Taking cognizance of gender in the security discourse may complicate security because it has added another “legitimate” voice to the dynamics of security, “but one which is determined on the basis of diverse identities and can therefore reflect diverse security needs” (161). The question often asked at this juncture is: does gender have anything to do with identity? Hoogensen and Rottem answer:

Gender pertains to the construction of relationships between male and female, and the attendant power dynamics found within these relationships. Gender speaks to the divisions we have constructed regarding our sexuality: ‘gender is the ways that sex and sexuality become power relations in society’ Recognition of the power structures we have created within and around these divisions enables us to understand not only the identities we choose for ourselves, but also the identities that are imposed upon us, not unlike the assumed security needs that are imposed from the ‘top down’. Gender analyses have shown us how these power structures function and in what ways they need to be broken down to allow for the articulation of identities stemming from the individual. As Carver points out, ‘Gender is not a synonym for women!’.... However women’s experiences have played a central role in gender analyses, as women have been marginalized, disadvantaged and made insecure within existing gendered power structures. (163-4)

The logical corollary is that gender has a lot to do in identity creation and perception. Gender is a factor in security; identity is likewise implicated wherever gender is discounted or discountenanced in security discourse. Furthermore, the involvement of women soldiers in paramilitary organisations, for example, in Northern Ireland, in the Russian-Chechen war where female soldiers are labelled Black Widows by the Russian media, and the growing number of female suicide bombers in the Middle East crisis break down patriarchal shibboleths about male

aggressiveness and militarisation (Sandra McEvoy, “Loyalist Women Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland” in Laura Sjoberg edited. *Gender and International Security: Feminist Perspectives*). An example of such an international female terrorist is British national Samantha Lewthwaite also known as the White Widow who is being hunted in many countries of the world for her terrorist activities linked to al Shabaab and the Nigerian Boko Haram. The 14th April 2014 bombing of a bus station in Nyanya, Abuja, Nigeria’s capital, which killed scores of people was linked to Samantha Lewthwaite (*Vanguard* 16 April 2014 n.p.).

Susan McKay says the primary interest of feminist analysis of security issues is simply to make visible the way (in)security affects women in war and peace times so that policy makers will take cognisance of the need to protect women’s rights in this area (155). She adds that gender justice is another dimension of female security that is often overlooked even in feminist analysis:

Gender justice is another key aspect of improving women’s human security that is only occasionally discussed within feminist human security discourses. Gender justice refers to legal processes that are equitable, not privileged by and for men, and which distinguish gender-specific injustices that women experience. Girls and women are usually rendered invisible or are marginalized within judicial processes, including war tribunals, when they seek justice in response to gender-specific violence. Within the context of armed conflicts and their aftermath, “gender injustice perpetuates inequality, violates fundamental human rights, hinders healing and psychological restoration, and prevents societies from developing their full potential.” (157-8)

McKay’s conclusion, which this study agrees with is that there is the need to involve women in matters of security either at the national or international level because the subsisting patriarchy in many cultures makes it impossible for men to adequately represent the interest of girls and women or understand the areas where they feel most insecure and, therefore, need the intervention of the state. Accordingly, she recommends the need for policy makers, not only to involve women but also to:

Recognize that both direct and structural (indirect) violence against girls and women is key to girls’ and women’s insecurity in all societies. Therefore, programs and policies that promote human security must address this central feminist concern at micro, meso-, and meta-levels. (170)

In literature, critical works bordering on female security in different novels abound. Although these critics have not avowedly set out to confront the notion of female gender security, a scrutiny of their criticisms from the security perspective reveals their involvement, even if tangentially, in matters relating to the protection or exposure to danger of girls and women in society. A survey of critical works on some of our selected texts confirms this notion. In “The Dark Persephone Myth in Li Ang’s *The Butcher’s Wife*” Ying-chiao Lin investigates the relationship between mother and daughter in literature, anchoring his work on the Greek myth of Persephone who is abducted, imprisoned in the underground world and sexually abused by Hades. In the end Persephone kills her abductor to emancipate herself. Lin employs psychoanalytical hermeneutics to draw a parallel between the action of Persephone and “how the marginalised woman could reclaim her own identity in a patriarchal society where the males are the rulers...” (97). In essence, Lin sees *The Butcher’s Wife* as a covert critique of female insecurity in the Taiwanese society where the “abused and vulnerable female” is a victim of “the intrusive and destructive force of the male” (95).

Ying-chiao Lin’s conclusion that man-slaughtering, the act of a woman killing her husband, is the final gesture of a desperate woman seeking emancipation from her male oppressor finds resonance in Ying-Ying Chien’s “Deconstructing Patriarchy/Reconstructing Womanhood: Feminist Readings of Multicultural Women’s Murder Fiction.” Working from the critical standpoint that “man-killing has become a symbolic gesture of the victimised women’s resistance toward patriarchal domination in cultures which legally sanction exploitation of women” (265), the critic explores the motif of man-slaughtering in Li Ang’s *The Butcher’s Wife*, Nawaal El Sadaawi’s *Woman at Point Zero* and Bessie Head’s “The Collector of Treasures” and concludes that killing their husbands is for the heroines of these literary works an act of rebellion against male oppression. With specific reference to *The Butcher’s Wife*, Chien says:

Though pessimistic on the surface, Li Ang’s *Butcher’s Wife* is a political work which protests sexual violence by depicting the realities of it. Through killing patriarchy metaphorically in the novel the status of women in Taiwan is moved a step forward symbolically. Contrary to widely held views of *Butcher’s Wife*, Li Ang’s novella, I believe, is a subversive work of art that actually deconstructs rather than reinforces the destructive forces of aggression, domination and thereby opens up various possibilities for feminine principles of mutual communication and compassion. (268-9)

Chien’s critique brings to the fore the insecurities which commodify women and womanhood in a patriarchal society. Although murder is not being valorised in

all these stories, its possibility as a last-ditch revolutionary act instancing women's quest for emancipation from the trammels of diverse patriarchal subjugation and suffocation is essentially an index of the insecurities of women within male-dominated societies. Chien's conclusion which this study agrees with is that, "The hope of Li Ang lies ultimately in the reader's understanding of the ugly 'reality' and their awakening to the urgent need to change such a dehumanizing and sexist society" (281). Other critical works on Li Ang's *The Butcher's Wife* include: Liang-ya Liou's "Gender Crossing and Decadence in Taiwanese Fiction at the Fin de Siecle: The Instances of Li Ang, Chu Tien-Wen, Chiu Miao-Jin, and Cheng Ying-Shu"; Howard Goldblatt's "Sex and Society: The Fiction of Li Ang"; Daisy S.Y. Ng's "The Labyrinth of Meaning: A Reading of Li Ang's Fiction"; and Darryl Sterk's "Li Ang's Uncanny Literary Home". These and many other critical appraisals of Li Ang's novella indirectly address the issue of female security insofar as their focus is riveted on women emancipation and empowerment.

There is a paucity of critical works in English on Hsiao's *A thousand Moons on A Thousand Rivers*. Shu-ning Sciban's review of the novel does not specifically address the notion of female security. Nevertheless, the critic observes that "the novel promotes some Confucian female 'virtues' that do not reflect the development of women's consciousness or the progress in women's social status in the contemporary world" (183). Since "women's consciousness" is closely associated with women's identity which is itself implicated in security matters, we can infer that Sciban's review is an indirect critic of female insecurity in the Taiwanese society. To Chia-rong Wu, however, the novel is a nativist protest against the Chinese re-colonisation of Taiwan and the subsequent imposition of martial law by the Nationalist Party, a.k.a. Kuomintang, which he claims has imposed a "collective aphasia" (212) on the Taiwanese people in the 1950's. The collective aphasia occurred because Taiwanese were forced to make a sudden switch from the Japanese language and customs which they had been compelled by their erstwhile colonial master to learn and live by in the preceding fifty years to the Chinese which they stopped using freely and actively before Japanese rule was imposed upon them. But of greater relevance to this study is Wu's reading of *A Thousand Moons on A Thousand Rivers* as "feminine Taiwan with sensitive perceptions of cultural China, and in this way creates a new folk style from a female angle" (214). What kind of feminine Taiwan is created in the novel and how it implicates the ability of Taiwanese women to fully actualise their potential in today's global village does not seem important in Wu's criticism. Our contention in this study is that structural violence is at work in making an intelligent and hardworking lady like the heroine, Zhenguan, to "willingly" discontinue her educational pursuit while anchoring her decision on some recondite Confucian belief that a woman should not be "overly" educated. This

patriarchal view is espoused by her highly revered grandfather who tells Zhenguan's mother:

...you can't expect the same of daughters and sons. Girls are not cut out for studying as hard as boys. Any learned person knows that girls are the future mothers of the world; it's good that they learn to read and write, and to know right from wrong. The way I see it, however, those [girls] who excel in school are too often ignorant of virtues. It would be a big mistake to push Zhenguan to pursue good grades at the expense of her womanly morality. (*A Thousand Moons* 5)

Zhenguan's decision and action betray her interpellation by the institutional state apparatus of religion whose ideology (couched in the beautiful but patriarchal logic of her grandfather) makes her unaware of the subtle indoctrination of the females in the traditional Taiwanese society that higher education is "improper" for girls and women so that they would not be able to assert their independence from men. There is virtually no statistical/empirical evidence ratifying the notion that highly educated women are less virtuous than their less educated peers, but it is certain that the latter are more docile while the former are more assertive of their rights. What grandfather is alluding to is the Confucian concept of "three obediences" and "four virtues" which stipulates that a girl or woman must obey her father as a daughter, obey her husband as a wife and obey her sons in widowhood. At the same time, the woman is expected to possess the virtues of morality, proper speech, modest manners and diligence at work. The patriarchal underpinning of the concept is exposed by the absence in Chinese lore of a comparable set of "obediences" for Chinese boys and men!

Wu Zhuoliu's *Orphan of Asia* is regarded by critics such as David Der-Wei Wang, Ping-hui Liao, Bradley Wintertorn, Leo Ching, etc as the most important novel about the Japanese colonial period in Taiwanese history (1895-1945). Most reviews of this epochal novel revolve around the identity crisis of its major character, Hu Taiming and the metaphoric ambivalent status of Taiwan as a former Japanese colony, a former Chinese colony, if we agree with Fangming Chen's classification of the Nationalist Party's martial law period as "a recolonized era" (*Writing Taiwan* 32), a former nation-state recognised by the United Nations up till 1971, and a current Asian Tiger without statehood and consequently without a clearly articulated national identity. Invariably, many reviews of *Orphan of Asia* only touch tangentially on female security. Ping-hui Liao's conclusion in "Travel in Early-Twentieth-Century Asia: On Wu Zhuoliu's 'Nanking Journal' and His Notion of Taiwan's Alternative Modernity" is in this mould, a comment on the identity angst in Hu Taiming and Taiwan which is silent on the female crisis of being in Taiwan:

...Wu Zhuoliu's narrative seems to suggest that he travelled in the time frame of an alternative modernity. The more he looked closely at China and Japan, the more alienated he became from both. That was the starting point of his journey into Asian orphan. (*Writing Taiwan* 298)

The Complete Review (2006-2010), is likewise amnesiac on the female predicament in *Orphan of Asia*, assessing Zhuoliu's novel as a depiction of the triangulated clash of cultures in the Taiwanese society symbolised by the in-betweenness of Hu Taiming, the central character who is Chinese by birth but Japanese educated, and who is forever a suspect in Japan and in China because of his Taiwanese roots. Because Taiming is neither accepted as a Chinese nor Japanese, he is the quintessential orphan of Asia, like his country, and suffers from perennial identity crisis. *The Complete Review* is silent about women in the novel, a silence which in itself is a loud testifier of the marginalisation of women in the society.

Bradley Wintertorn's, "Becoming Japanese" regards *Orphan of Asia* as psychological examination of the effects of Japanese colonisation on the psyche of the average Taiwanese:

Neither in Japan nor in China, in other words, is he [Hu Taiming] seen as a true believer. Who is he? Which culture does he belong to? At the end of the book he goes mad, unable to resolve the conflicts. He is an orphan, and by implication so are all the inhabitants of Taiwan, never knowing for sure who they truly are, or where they belong. (*Taipei Times*, February 3, 2002, 18)

Wintertorn adds that "*The Orphan of Asia* is obsessively concerned with geographical movement, and as a result with feelings of displacement, dislocation, alienation and, finally, despair. China and Japan, he points out, are both real and imagined places, and the book's protagonist finds it impossible to locate himself in the images of himself that either of them offers" (18). Fascinating as Wintertorn's short review is, it is also silent about female security question in ancient and modern Taiwan.

Leo T.S. Ching's *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation*, Steven E. Phillips'. *Between Assimilation and Independence: The Taiwanese Encounter Nationalist China 1945-1950* (2003), Angelina C Yee's "Constructing a Native Consciousness: Taiwan Literature in the 20th Century" (*The China Quarterly*, 2001), Kuo-ch'ing Tu's "Lai Ho, Wu Cho-liu, and Taiwan Literature" (Foreword, *Taiwan Literature*) etc. all anchor their

comments on *Orphan of Asia* on identity crisis at the micro- and the macro-levels. Even though Jennifer Junwa Lau's "Re-reading Translation in Wu Zhuoliu's *Orphan of Asia*" (2010) has a whole chapter devoted to three female characters in the novel, A-Cha, Suchu and Mrs. A-Shin, her focus is on the misperception which the omissions in the Chinese, Japanese and English translations of the novel foist on the English readers.

In contrast to Lau's work, Shia Meei-Yuh Jodie's "*Women Oppression and the Taiwanese and Korean Oppression Originated by Patriarchy and Imperialism through the Study and Analysis of The Asia Orphan and Dictée*" analyses the way patriarchy and imperialism affect the major female characters in *Orphan of Asia*, showing how Japanese imperialism in Taiwan compounds the low status which patriarchy has made the lot of Taiwanese women. According to Jodie, Taiwanese women under Japanese colonialism suffered a double yoke, being regarded as second-class citizens to the men, then third-class citizens to the Japanese conquerors. In essence, even though Japanese imperialism brought about the oppression of men and women in Taiwan, the women suffered more than the men because of the destructive combination of patriarchy in the traditional Taiwanese society and the heightened insecurities imposed by the Sino-Japanese war and consequent imperialism (Jodie 66). Her insightful analysis covers the subjugating influence of patriarchy and imperialism at the home front where women are traditionally regarded as chattels; at the work place where women are paid lower wages than men; and the use of violence, for example, rape and prostitution, and structural violence. She also discusses how the destruction of the environment by the invading Japanese army, composed largely of men, had a counterbalancing effect on women and men. Even though she does not label her thesis "female security" it is obvious that everything she discusses will enhance female empowerment if the oppressions are banished thereby making women feel more secure and able to participate in the public sphere, construct a worthy identity for themselves and make meaningful contributions to modern society.

In 'No More Penis Envy of the "*Orphan of Asia*": the Hakka Female "Orphan of Asia" in Li Chiao's "*Wintry Night*"' Ya-chen Chen argues that:

Ye Dongmei is a female Hakka orphan of Asia who better represents the marginalization, feminization and victimisation of Taiwan than does Hu Taiming, a male and non-minority orphan of Asia. Ye Dongmei symbolizes how Taiwan was orphaned and oppressed from the late Qing Dynasty to the era of Japanese colonization. She fully represents Taiwan by serving as a spiritual lighthouse, Buddhist lamp, and Taiwanese Mother Earth. (85-6)

Chen argues that Dengmei, unlike Hu Taiming, serves as the spiritual beacon to encourage and guide her people at a time when World War II had depopulated Taiwan of virile young men (and some women), leaving only the disabled, the very young and the seniors. Her typical Hakka fighting spirit, her resilience and unrelenting hope as a born survivor are symbolic of the eventual survival of the national orphan, Taiwan, in spite of the abandonment of mainland China and the abuses of the Japanese colonisers. There are three orphans in *Wintry Night*, Liu Ahan, Dengmei's husband, Peng Aqiang, her foster father, and Ye Dengmei herself. It is, however, instructive that the only one who survives to the end and offers physical assistance and spiritual guidance to two generations after her is the female orphan Dengmei. The writer and Chen seem to agree that women are as important, if not more, than men in the preservation of the human race. Indirectly, the critic is advocating more avenues for girls and women to participate in the public sphere and bring "deng" (light, enlightenment), doggedness and hope to future generations of Taiwanese (94):

In the latter part of her live, she is a highly respected head of the extended family as well as the honorable leader of the whole village. She plays the role that male-centred patriarchy usually assigns to heroic men and often prohibits women from playing. Ye Dongmei breaks the bottleneck of male-centred patriarchy, and puts feminism into practice. In addition to the well-known Hakka feminist practice of seldom binding their feet, Ye Dongmei adds an impressive page to the story of practical Hakka feminism in Taiwan. (95)

Chen's critique of *Wintry Night* though not about female security, impliedly prioritises the need to empower women in today's polity which is a core concern of this study.

The subject matter of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is similar to the main concern in Li Ang's novella in that both deal with abused wives who, like Persephone, end up killing their cruel and oppressive husbands to emancipate themselves. In "Sex and Sexuality in the Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie", Ehijele Femi Eromosele focuses on the repression of the teenage narrator's sexuality by her father's brutality which is undergirded by his suffocating brand of Catholicism:

Adichie... juxtaposes the Catholicism of Father Benedict and Papa Eugene with that of Father Amadi, and amongst several other things, demonstrates a major difference in their willingness to acknowledge the role that sex and sexuality play in the life of humankind. Father Benedict and Papa Eugene's religion taught Kambili never to admire herself, to

cover up anything that made her attractive as a woman, thus causing her to suffer low self-esteem. Father Amadi's Catholicism on the other hand, recognises the woman in Kambili and acknowledges the need for her to utilise her potentials to the fullest. It is this kind of religion that Adichie preaches: a religion that does not stifle that major part of an individual's personality. (Eromosele 102)

In other words, Papa Eugene inadvertently imbues in his daughter an insecurity complex and a low self-esteem by repressing her sexuality through brutality (he once poured boiling water on her feet for a minor offence) and his misuse of the Catholic credo. The resultant effect is that Kambili stutters into her teenage years, and lacks confidence among her peers.

In "A Reformist-Feminist Approach to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" Fwangyil, Gloria Ada foregrounds the (in)security implications of women and children abuse as demonstrated in the novel. According to Ada, "This novel is, in effect, a dramatic indictment of the oppressive attitudes of men towards women and children that they are supposed to love and care for. It therefore has direct relevance to our contemporary society" (262-3). She notes that, "The various forms of abuse women and children undergo include physical assault, child abuse, unwholesome widowhood practices, social beliefs and customs that make women vulnerable and insecure in patriarchal society" (264).

Ayo Kehinde in "Rulers against Writers, Writers against Rulers: The Failed Promise of the Public Sphere in Postcolonial Nigerian Fiction" interprets *Purple Hibiscus* as a treatise against tyranny and oppression in general and a subjection and subjugation of women in Nigeria's postcolonial and patriarchal society. He analyses the novel as a microcosm of the nation, with Papa Eugene as the tyrant, his wife and children as the oppressed, Papa Nnuku and Auntie Ifeoma as human rights activists confronting and exposing the excesses of the military behemoth. Concerning Mama, he observes:

Mama's way of eradicating Papa Eugene, because of his overbearing attitude is in consonance with the principle of Radical Feminism – that is the adoption of violence in putting an end to masculine dominance, hence enhancing the liberation of women from the alleged bondage in which men have put them. Through the dissenting relation of Mama to the dominant patriarchal tradition of Africa, Chimamanda Adichie implies that the direction that the feminist campaign is taking currently is a bitter one, and that a violent alternative is not out

of the question. This idea is reflected in the later radical temper of Mama, and also revealed in Mama's confession about killing her husband: 'I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor' (2003:290). Mama now believes with other radical feminists that violence is the most effective strategy for achieving her freedom. The violent dimension to the whole situation can be seen as the author's statement that in every woman, no matter how patient, may lie hidden aggression. (49)

It is obvious that Kehinde regards the security of women as an important factor in the novel even though his paper is not overtly about gender security. The same observation holds for: Daria Tunca's "An Ambiguous 'Freedom Song': Mind-Style in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*"; Ogaga Okuyade's "Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*"; "Beyond the Odds of the Red Hibiscus: A Critical Reading of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" by Anthony C. Oha; and Sophia O. Ogwude's "History and ideology in Chimamanda Adichie's Fiction".

Adichi does not call herself a radical feminist even if some of the female characters in *Purple Hibiscus* certainly violate the code of behaviour which patriarchy has laid down for women in the Nigerian locale. (For example, Mama poisoned her husband and Ifeoma chooses single motherhood rather than marry her late husband's brother as tradition dictates.) In this she (Adichie) is close to Flora Nwapa, the first Nigerian female novelist whose eponymous Efurū breaks all the "taboos" which the Igbo patriarchal society uses to imprison women and deny them emancipation and self-actualisation. In her tribute to Nwapa, Rose Ure Mezu describes the publication of *Efurū* in 1966 as signalling

.... a long-awaited departure from the stereotypical female portraiture in male-authored African literature. The eponymous Efurū chooses her own husband and marries without his paying a dowry. She decisively deals with conflicts, radically departing from the script of the traditional African woman "in the peripheral, tangential role of a passive victim of a masculine-based cultural universe".... But Efurū is plagued by infertility, polygyny, infidelity, and abandonment by two undistinguished husbands. She finally abjures marriage, opting for meaningful singlehood as priestess of the goddess of the river, Uhamiri, vindicator of victimized womanhood. (n.p.)

From Mezu's succinct comment on *Efuru*, it is obvious that even without Western education, she has been able to emancipate herself from patriarchal chains that had hitherto attempted to make her insecure, insignificant and powerless within the traditional Igbo society. She is able to do this because of her economic power coupled with a strong will to assert her independence. Other reviews of *Efuru* salute these qualities with which Flora Nwapa emancipates and empowers her female characters, not only *Efuru*, but also the eponymous *Idu* (1970) in which "Nwapa again embarked on a revisionist course, now making a man responsible for infertility" (Mezu n.p.).

While Mary D. Myers sees Nwapa empowering her women protagonists, *Efuru* inclusive, to discover true selfhood and choose either to accept tradition or embrace change with its attendant consequences and sacrifices, Chinyere Grace Okafor asserts that Nwapa in *Efuru* initiated the process of "digging the mountain of myths and misrepresentations covering the African woman":

Through *Efuru*, Nwapa dislodges the marginalization of women by creating a central character that is a woman and using her to explore women's life from a woman's perspective. Her literary contribution is a subversive literature that attacks malecentric views of women as inferior beings. It is not an overt attack but a protest embedded in the act of contradiction, that is, the balanced representation of the positive and negative, the submissive and powerful. The heroine, *Efuru* in *Efuru*, goes through gender oppressions that delineate her marginalized space in *uwa umu-nwanyi* [women's world or women's lot]. She goes through marriage and infertility. She gossips, suffers and hurts but she does not allow the stress of *uwa umu-nwanyi* to crush her will. From her location in the marginal space, she launches to the center by using her ability as a person to struggle and empower herself. (10)

Helen Chukwuma also notes that Nwapa "Bared the soul of the woman, she showed her as flesh and blood nursing her own dreams and aspirations" (Chukwuma 115, quoted in Okafor 9). Both critics not only emphasise the marginalisation or "otherness" of the female by patriarchy, they also stress the importance of empowerment as a vital tool towards the emancipation and, by implication, the securitisation of women in modern society. Okafor notes that before the incursion of the various colonialists (Arabian and European) into the African societies, men and women complemented one another, and that the rigorous marginalisation of women came with colonialism which silenced women voices, ejected women from the priesthood whereas traditional African

religion recognised women priestesses, for example, Chielo in *Things Fall Apart*, and empowered men through early exposure to Western education thereby strengthening their economic and political holds on the emerging polity (Okafor 7-9). More germane to this study is Okafor's observation that the marginalisation of women cannot be eradicated and their empowerment impossible to actualise without the cooperation of men, and that this can only take place through education and re-education.

Mindful of the reluctance of the empowered to relinquish power, mobilization of African men for feminist struggle requires long- term education in a broad sense. The women who have been socialized to see patriarchy as the norm also need re-education. (Okafor 7)

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is the first Nigerian "novel" (not a prose narrative) and has received worldwide acclaim as a novel of social realism, culture contact and conflict. The novel has received much critical attention which time and space would not admit in this study. However, a few reviews bordering on the issue of women security or empowerment will suffice. In "Women in Achebe's Novels", Mezu laments that in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe portrays women as voiceless and inconsequential:

The world in *Things Fall Apart* is one in which patriarchy intrudes oppressively into every sphere of existence. It is an androcentric world where the man is everything and the woman nothing. In domestic terms, women are quantified as part of men's acquisitions. As wives, women come in multiple numbers, sandwiched between yam barns and titles. These three -- wives, yam barns, social titles -- are the highest accolades for the successful farmer, warrior, and man of worth. These determine a man's social status, as illustrated by Nwakibie who has three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children, and the highest but one title which a man can take in the clan... Achebe's cultural universe is one in which women [are] to be seen not heard... They were not invited to stay when men were engaged in any discussion; they were not included in councils of war; they did not form part of the masquerades representing the judiciary and ancestral spirits. (21-2)

In Mezu's view, therefore, women in *Things Fall Apart* are insecure, invisible, voiceless and powerless. She notes, however, that in his later fiction, Achebe revises his portrayal of women in line with the socio-cultural reality of the setting

of the novels to include women who are educated, economically independent and outspoken, the most vivid being Beatrice in *Anthills of the Savannah*:

...who has an honors degree from Queen Mary College, University of London, [and] projects Achebe's new vision of women's roles... She is articulate, independent, and self-realized, and she re-evaluates women's position, asserting, "[I]t is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is a damn sight too far and too late!" (91-92). In Beatrice, Achebe now strives to affirm the moral strength and intellectual integrity of African women, especially since the social conditions which have kept women down in the past are now largely absent. Urbanization and education have combined to broaden women's horizons... Achebe's newly envisioned female roles are to be expounded, articulated, and secured by woman herself; and the modern African woman is doing just that. (n.p.)

Mezu's position is in consonance with the thesis of this study which is that enhancing women's security will guarantee their emancipation and ability to contribute meaningfully to the overall productivity and progress of their societies. Mezu states this clearly when she asserts that the absence of a "female principle" in the Nigerian society has resulted in unnecessary conflicts plaguing the nation today, and concludes that with education, economic empowerment, and freedom from all forms of violence, "African women can outstrip their fictive counterparts to be partners with men in national progress and development, and to gain individual self-realization and fulfilment". One of the objectives of this study is to find out if the lived reality of Nigerian and Taiwanese women has now outstripped that of their "fictive counterparts" and they can claim equality with their men in "individual self-realization and fulfillment" as well as in contribution to "national progress and development".

Biodun Jeyifo's "Okonkwo and His Mother: *Things Fall Apart* and Issues of Gender in the Constitution of African Postcolonial Discourse" highlights the patriarchal invisibilisation and social insignificance of women in the fictive world of the novel by focussing on the supposedly most important person in the life of any normal human being, the mother, who was mentioned only once in the whole of *Things Fall Apart*. This "undertextualisation of Okonkwo's mother" (848) Jeyifo says, inscribes "the effects of sexual difference and gender politics within the very 'over-textualization' of 'men's affairs' in the novel, this being the social totality of the precolonial order as it comes into contact with the invading colonial capitalism" (848). The political lesson the critic wants learnt is that liberation of Africa from its colonial and neo-colonial appendage to capitalism will be

incomplete unless the past is reconfigured such that it does not appear as “irredeemably marked by an inevitable, natural sexism” (848). This “reconfiguring” or rewriting of the past will involve a penetrating insight into the motive force behind patriarchal subjugation of women as “a fundamental male anxiety and insecurity about femaleness and its putative primal connection to creativity” (853) giving rise to the need to “colonise” the women. The new liberation of Africa, therefore, demands the rejection of a negritudist romanticised image of the woman as emblematic of the nation, to a re-conception of the female as a participant and co-combatant in today’s struggle for the liberation of Africa from the stultifying grip of neo-colonialism and global capitalism.

Other gender-based criticisms of *Things Fall Apart* include Florence Stratton’s *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* in which she contends that “Achebe gives men cultural roles that were actually occupied by women in traditional Igbo culture” and Rhonda Cobham’s “Problems of Gender and History in the Teaching of *Things Fall Apart*” which argues that “*Things Fall Apart* reinforces dominant male Christian views of traditional Igbo society” (quoted in Amy Sickels). One of the most interesting gender critiques of Achebe’s works is Herbert G. Klein’s “A Question of Honour: De/constructing Male Identities in Chinua Achebe’s Tetralogy” which is a masculinities reading of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People*. In this work, Klein attempts to debunk feminists’ claims that Achebe is a male chauvinist by demonstrating that his works actually critique and expose the innate insecurity in his male characters anchored on their fear of being thought womanly in a society which views success in physical and material terms. Rather than valorise the oppression of women through subjugation and violence, Klein sees the machismo displayed by Achebe’s male protagonists as a cover for their insecurity which, paradoxically, can only be overcome by their acceptance of the female principle, the ineluctable fact that men cannot succeed and be fulfilled without the contribution of women. Klein’s conclusion is, however, more profound than the preceding sentiments. He states:

It [the protagonists’ quest to achieve manliness which leads to the subjugation of women] may thus be seen as Achebe’s attempt to explain what lies behind the failure of Nigeria to find a united nationhood and to develop a sense of civil responsibility. As Achebe tells the story, the old society not only respected women, but also - in the guise of the earth goddess - saw them as the ultimate authority. Men could therefore safely accept that they also had a feminine side. It is when they deny this that dire consequences ensue. The view that emerges from Achebe’s tetralogy then is that the increasing suppression of the female in this culture is at least

in part the reason for the present malaise of Nigerian society. The re-establishment of a more balanced relationship between the sexes would therefore be bound up with overcoming the inhibiting (post-)colonial situation... (EESE 5/2007)

The view that progress in modern societies requires the active collaboration of both men and women is also in consonance with the thesis of this study.

The works of Wole Soyinka, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986 have received lots of scholarly attention, but few critics have beamed their critical searchlight on his handling of women in *The Interpreters*, his first novel. Nevertheless, he, along with other first generation African writers, has been criticised for their “malecentric” narrative postures which succeeds only in peripherising the African woman. As Carole Boyce Davies (1986) observes, Soyinka’s works project an ambivalent view of women as neither victor nor victim, but as helpmeet to their male counterparts. In a similar vein, Charles Fongchingong notes that:

Soyinka’s fictive world is one in which women are portrayed in their diversities. They are shown as objects of admiration, indispensable to the male dominated world. Old women are revered as the ‘dome’ of religious mysticism, as seen in the symbols of Iya Agba and Iya Mate in *Madmen and Specialists*. In his *Season of Anomy* (1973), Ofeyi falls short of the positive radical motivator of social change that she appears to be. It is paradoxical that although Soyinka believes women to represent the body of religion and its roots, he presents a collection of debunked, under-rated, over-idealized non achievers. (137)

Dehinwa in *The Interpreters*, a graduate and a liberated woman able to make her own marital choice in spite of the emotional blackmail and manipulations of her mother cannot be labelled as a “non-achiever” in the Fongchingong sense. However, she is still presented as a “helpmeet” to Biodun Sagoe, one of the male characters. She is not regarded as an “interpreter” although she studied abroad like her five male counterparts in the novel. The other women in the novel, Simi, Mrs. Ogwuazor, Monica Faseyi all fall into the stereotype of “helpmeet” or social pariahs, except the unnamed female undergraduate that Egbo impregnates.

Fongchingong avers that the obvious marginalisation of women in the works of Soyinka, Achebe and Elechi Amadi arose out of a historical necessity “because their epoch was marked by a fight to restore the tenets of the African tradition that had witnessed a backlash and denigration from imperialist influxes” and “the

male who had been on the offensive had to be acknowledged, thereby effacing the complementarity of roles and traditional mechanisms of gender relations” (146). Even though this study does not agree with the critic’s assertion that marginalisation of women was one of the ways Soyinka et al could fight to “restore the tenets of the African tradition”, Fongchigong’s recommendation that complementarity between the sexes is the solution to the phenomenon (Fongchigong 146) resonates with the thesis of this study.

While noting the use of gender-based metaphors which tend to devalue women in Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horsemen*, Omotayo Oloruntoba-Oju and Taiwo Oloruntoba-Oju also conclude their insightful analysis of female identity in the postcolonial era in Nigeria by recommending complementarity between the sexes, the negotiation/survivalist model of representing African womanhood in African literary works:

Against such a background of obdurate cultures, positive change in gender perspectives on the continent would depend on complementary transformative efforts on the part of all fair-minded members of the society irrespective of sex or gender. (n.p.).

To Biodun Jeyifo, *The Interpreters* is a dystopia through which Soyinka depicts the “slow and inexorable entrenchment of mediocrity at the highest levels of commercial, bureaucratic and political decision-making institutions of the new nation-state” (175). Although his critique does not pay special attention to the security of female characters in the novel, he observes, quite rightly, that “it is the mixture of moral hypocrisy and casual callousness in the Oguazors and Lumoyes of the national pseudo-bourgeoisie – especially toward the plight of the young and the female of this ‘new’ nation – which seems ranked by the narrator as the worst or deadliest of the social evils depicted so graphically in the novel...” (175).

A careful reading of the preceding literature reveals that none of the critical works on the selected Nigerian and Taiwanese novels deals with the issue of gender security directly. This is not to say that critical works on individual Nigerian and Taiwanese novels are non-existent and the literature above attests to this. Furthermore, critical works analysing authors across national boundaries exist, for example, a master of art’s thesis by Mazvita Mollin Nyanhongo focusing on women empowerment in the novels of Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Ba and Tsitsi Dangarembga was submitted to the University of Fort Hare in 2011. However, none of them examines the notion of gender security in Nigerian and Taiwanese texts. This lacuna in critical praxis is what this study addresses.

The ensuing analysis of the selected texts will be pursued in two broad sections. Section one deals with the issue of Structural or Indirect Violence and its debilitating impact on gender security. In this section, the focus will be on such issues as political participation, education, economic empowerment, marriage and inheritance practices infringing on the freedom and upward mobility of female characters in the selected novels. Section two of the study focuses on Direct or Physical Violence and examines the impact of women battering and rape on the self-apprehension and productivity of female characters in the selected works compared with the plight of flesh-and-blood Nigerian and Taiwanese girls and women.

Section One: Structural Violence and Gender Security

As explained above, structural violence refers to institutional or indirect violence done to girls and women. These are acts which inflict mental or psychological trauma on the victims without leaving any physical mark on their bodies. When a woman is precluded from aspiring to certain political offices and denied the same kind of education given to her male counterpart; when a glass ceiling is placed above her economic advancement and she is regarded as a part of the inheritance instead of being able to inherit her deceased husband, structural violence is at work.

Political Participation and Gender Security

The vital question asked in this section of the study is: Has the involvement of women in political organisations and parties enhanced gender security in Nigeria and Taiwan? Put differently, how far is it true that the more Nigerian and Taiwanese women exercise or have direct access to power, through appointment or election, the safer their societies have been for female citizens of both countries? The issue of female participation in politics has been at the fore of feminist agitations from its inception in the suffragette protests demanding that women be given the right to vote. The Nigerian and Taiwanese constitutions confer this right on all of their citizens, but the right to vote has not automatically enhanced women's electoral fortunes as a survey of the fictional representations of political participations in the selected texts and data from governmental and non-governmental sources indicate.

The setting of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is pre-colonial, though colonialism has taken firm roots by the end of the novel. The political organisation during this period in Igbo land was based on republicanism, kings and all paraphernalia of royalty being something largely abhorred by the people. Each community was governed by a council of elders/titled men and any man who struggled hard could attain to these titles and position no matter his family background. This is affirmed in the novel by the hero Okonkwo who became a member of the ruling

elite despite the fact that his father Unoka is regarded as a failure by his society, a lazy man who dies without any title or property. As a matter of fact, Okonkwo inherited only debts from his father (*Things Fall Apart* 6). The ruling ideology in the Umuofian society is manifestly patriarchal in that no woman is allowed in the council of elders, the *ndichie*. The council is empowered by a larger body made up of all men in the nine villages comprising Umuofia. Consequently, men decide what is to be done and women are excluded from any form of decision-making or policy formulation.

For example, when the nine villages making up Umuofia decide to avenge the accidental killing of one of the daughters of the land by a man from Mbaino, the town-crier had the night before “asked every *man* to be present tomorrow morning” (7, emphasis added) at a meeting of the villages to be held in the market-place. The narrator later informs the reader that: “In the morning the market-place was full. There must have been about ten thousand *men*, all talking in low tones” (8, emphasis added). Even though this is not a meeting of the *ndichie*, the council of elders, but that of all able-bodied men in the community, it is notable that no woman is allowed to participate. Ten thousand men and not one woman is present! One could speculate that had women been a part of decision-making in the novel, it is possible that their moderating voice may have averted many of the tragedies that befell Okonkwo and his community. But neither at the community nor at the familial level is a woman allowed to participate in governance or policy formulation in the novel.

The patriarchal subjugation of women and their undervaluation in the society depicted in *Things Fall Apart* is fully expressed by the contemptuous response of Okonkwo to his eldest wife’s reasonable question on the probable duration of stay in the household of Ikemefuna, the little boy given by Mbaino in exchange for the lady accidentally killed: “Do what you are told, woman,” Okonkwo thundered, and stammered. ‘When did you become one of the *ndichie* of Umuofia?’” At the familial level, the subjugation and marginalisation of women in political participation is also vivified by the way Okonkwo takes decision without consultation with his wives, and the way he beats them for the slightest offence, and even shoots his second wife for daring to cast aspersion on his shooting skill (28). It is only in the religious realm that we find women exercising authority over men, for example, Chielo, the priestess of Agbala (71). It is, therefore, logical to conclude that the exclusion of women from political participation in *Things Fall Apart* exacerbates their insecurity and their feeling of little worth.

Political participation in Nwapa’s *Efuru* is not much different from what obtains in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* in the sense that patriarchy still rules the roost.

The society depicted in the work is still largely traditional but it is obvious that by this time colonialism has displaced traditional power and authority in the governance of the Igbo society. Schools have been established, Christianity was gaining ground and Western education was available to those who could afford it. For instance, Gilbert, Efurū's second husband, had some elementary education but could not continue due to his impecuniousness. However, a member of the community trained and qualified as a medical doctor. No doubt, the colonial administration was built on a patriarchal base; hence the exclusion of many women in the political administration at the time. Although colonialism oppresses both men and women, it is incontrovertible that women are further subjugated by their male counterparts in the colonial setting.

At the familial level, husbands ruled over their wives. But in Efurū's case, her diligence, business acumen and streak of independence frees her to a large extent from the patriarchal encumbrances that hampered other women in her society from actualising their dreams. Fathers usually determine who their daughters would marry, but Efurū breaks tradition by moving in with Adizua, an indigent suitor "who had no money for the dowry" (2). When her father sends some young men to bring her back by force, she manages to dissuade them. She later helps to pay her own bride price through her trading activities with Adizua. Efurū's case, however, is an exception rather than the rule as her rebellion does not invalidate the authority of fathers to choose husbands for their daughters without any consultation with their wives or the daughters involved.

The marginalisation of wives by their husbands in decision-making at the familial level in *Efurū* is demonstrated by two incidents in the novel. The first is the contemptuous abandonment of Efurū by her first husband, Adizua, who goes away with another woman even though patriarchal indoctrination has made women in the society, including Efurū, to be favourably disposed to polygamy. He informs neither his wife nor his mother of his intention, and after searching and waiting in vain for him, Efurū returns to her father's house. The second incident that depicts the marginalisation of women in familial decision-taking is the way Nwosu, a debtor and indigent farmer, decides to take a title after selling his yam in spite of the protest of his wife Nwabata who had suggested that he should pay their debt to Efurū instead of seeking a title (166). In both instances, females are excluded from decision-making even in their homes. The realisation that marriage could not guarantee her security and self-worth partially informs Efurū's decision to abjure marriage altogether after the failure of her second marital experiment with Gilbert. It is instructive that she takes refuge in traditional religion, the only institution where women could still wield some influence in the traditional power configuration of her society. Like Chielo the priestess of Agbala in *Things Fall Apart*, she becomes a devotee of Uhamiri, the

goddess of the lake who gives women beauty and wealth, but not children because she has none herself (221).

Soyinka's *The Interpreters* is set in the postcolonial period of Nigerian history, presumably in the period known as the First Republic, 1960 to 1966. Nigeria had secured her political independence from Britain in 1960 and the democratic regime of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was in office. Despite the change of guard and democratisation, however, patriarchy remains the ideology propelling political participation at the national, traditional or familial levels. Political jobbers like Chief Winsala ruled at the national level. In the Judiciary, corrupt judges like Sir Derinola presided. Derinola later became chairman of Sagoe's newspaper but the leopard could not change its spots. In the civil service, the canker of corruption is exhibited by the bosses of Sekoni, the engineer/artist and Egbo of the Foreign Service, whose *raison d'être* seems to be to amass wealth through any means. The same patriarchal structure is observed in the traditional setting whereby Egbo's grandfather rules the kingdom of Osa and controls all the smuggling activities on the waterways. All of these different levels of political organisation where policy formulation takes place in the novel are presided over by men. Few women are allowed into the elite circle. Even in the academia where it is expected that exposure to diverse knowledge would make a positive change in favour of women, it is observable that patriarchy still reigns supreme as the Ogwuazors and Lumoyes that are in power in the so-called citadel of knowledge also exclude women from their "inner caucus." This is aptly demonstrated at the Ogwuazor party when the women withdraw to another section of the house so that men could discuss more freely. Needless to say, their major discussion centres on their female conquests. They regard the female students as booty of sorts; hence, Dr. Lumoye demands sex from the girl Egbo impregnates before he would perform an abortion for her. Her refusal leads to the withdrawal of his services. The jest he later makes of her at the party draws the ire of Bamdele who curses the whole group: "I hope you all live to bury your daughters" (253).

The success of patriarchal indoctrination is demonstrated by the participation of two female characters Caroline and Mrs. Ogwuazor in the castigation of female students. Sisterhood bonding, a concept in feminism, should have induced these ladies to come to the defence of the girl seeing that she did not impregnate herself; a man like Dr. Lumoye must have been responsible. However, the two ladies join the men in casting aspersion on their kind. Even when a male lecturer, Faseyi, expresses pity for the plight of the lady in question, Caroline only comments that "the standard of morals has really gone down" (251). The religious establishment in *The Interpreters* is also dominated by men, for example, Lazarus. And at the familial level, men still rule in spite

of the increasing level of education of women at this period in time in Nigeria. For instance, Dehinwa's father decides to send only his sons abroad for higher education but none of his daughters. Dehinwa's mother had to produce the required amount to educate her abroad. She also offers a bribe to get her daughter a position in the senior civil service (36). The mistreatment of Monica Faseyi, a white lady, also bears testament to the subjugation of women from the familial power structure. Faseyi's constant criticism of his wife contributes in part to her adulterous liaison with Kola later in the narrative. In all, women in Soyinka's *The Interpreters* are marginalised, subjugated and completely excluded from the power structure in the novel at all levels. The knowledge that their destiny is in the hands of the men-folk can but breed insecurity in the females, engender low self-esteem in them and serve as a throttle on their creativity and productivity. Thus desperate women in Nigeria are forced to use what in Nigerian parlance is called "bottom power" to climb to the top. Simi the beautiful courtesan is the epitome of this unfortunate development. Soyinka's message seems to be that mediocrity and stagnation awaits any country where merit is jettisoned and women are forced by the subsisting patriarchal system to rely only on their "bottom power" to actualise their dreams.

The same marginalisation of women within the power structure is also observable in *Purple Hibiscus*. The setting in the novel is Nigeria, gasping for breath under a military junta that is accountable to no one. The way security operatives force their way into Auntie Ifeoma's flat and ransack it without any warrant of search (*Purple Hibiscus* 235), the assassination via a letter bomb of Ade Coker, the vitriolic editor of *The Standard* (212-3, reflective of the assassination of Dele Giwa, founding editor of *Newswatch* during the Babangida regime), the murder of Nwakiti Ogechi by soldiers in Minna (207, mimetic of the judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa the vocal social and environmental activist by the Abacha regime) are all reminiscent of the repressive military regimes of Generals Ibrahim Babangida (1986-1993) and late Sani Abacha (1993-1998). As noted above, women are usually marginalised in the military. Thus in *Purple Hibiscus*, the participation of women in the military regime in power in the novel is virtually zero.

Even in Eugene's home, the patriarchal structure turns the wife, Mama, and Kambili, the daughter into second-class citizens. The wife, especially, has no say in decisions affecting her family. Outside his house, Eugene fights against the human rights violations of the military junta, takes care of victims of the regime and donates generously to human rights and civil organisations and his church. But at home, the patriarch rules like a military despot and brooks no opposition to his "orders." Any violation of his order results in brutal punishments whose

magnitude surpasses the gravity of the offence. A few instances of Eugene's utter disregard for women or the female principle will suffice. On their way to early morning mass on Christmas day, Kambili, the daughter, has her period and is experiencing stomach cramps that sometimes accompany her menstrual cycle. The solution is for Kambili to ingest some Panadol tablets to ease her pain; unfortunately, "[t]he Eucharist fast mandated that the faithful not eat solid food an hour before Mass" (*Purple Hibiscus* 109). Seeing her daughter writhing in pain, Mama instructs her to take some food before swallowing the tablets. But Eugene goes berserk when he sees his daughter eating, insisting that Mama should have allowed her daughter, their daughter, to bear the pain rather than break the fast. In punishment, he removes his heavy-buckled belt and lashes his son, Jaja, for being an accessory to the crime, his daughter, for breaking the Eucharist fast, and finally, "Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by the puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse" (*Purple Hibiscus* 110).

The picture of Mama raising her hands to be whipped like an underage school girl shows the total subjugation of females in Eugene's household. It could thus be inferred that the patriarch Eugene reckons women as no more than children, therefore incapable of making rational decisions like men and should not be treated like men. His whipping of his wife in the presence of his children is also indicative of the patriarchal notion that a woman is like a dog that must be trained to obey its master through regular whipping. In Alice Walker's, *The Colour Purple*, Mr. _____ espouses this belief when he tells his son, Harpo, that the only way to "control" his wife Sophia is to beat her regularly: "Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. *Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating*" (42 Italics added). Eugene's father, as open-minded as he is in matters of religion, unwittingly betrays his patriarchal devaluation of women when he tells his daughter, Ifeoma in another context that: "But you are a woman. You do not count" (91). The fact that this statement is directed at a woman who is a doctorate degree holder and a university lecturer speaks volumes about the ingrained patriarchal devaluation of women in the Igbo traditional society of Nigeria. Even though he recants this view a few minutes later when Ifeoma reminds him that his beloved millionaire son neglects him while she plays the role society expects of the son out of her lecturer's modest salary and with two children to raise unassisted, his prayer for her is another betrayal of patriarchal othering of females. He says, "My spirit will intercede for you, so that *Chukwu* [God] will send you a good man to take care of you and the children" (91). The implication of Papa-Nnukwu's prayer is that to him and, symbolically, the patriarchal society, a woman is incomplete or incapable of standing alone in life without the support of a man, no matter how highly educated!

Such sexist notions account for some of the marginalisation of women in *Purple Hibiscus*. To Eugene, for example, a woman is to be seen, not to be heard; she is to be commanded and not consulted; and the slightest misdemeanour is to be visited with a heavy punishment to let her know who is in charge. With this in mind, he beats his wife even when she is pregnant resulting in two miscarriages. Ifeoma, Eugene's sister, advises Mama to file for divorce but the fear of societal odium of divorced women and her financial dependence on Eugene dissuades Mama from taking that step. In the end, she takes the irrational decision of killing him. Mama is not the only subjugated female in the household. Her daughter is often beaten as violently as Jaja, her brother, regardless of her age and femininity. One particularly horrible scene occurs when Eugene accuses Kambili of not calling him to report that his "heathen" father came to stay with them in Auntie Ifeoma's flat in Nsukka where Kambili and Jaja had gone visiting. For this oversight, Eugene boils water, commands his teenage daughter to step into the tub and pours the hot water on her feet, "slowly, as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen" (*Purple Hibiscus* 201). On another occasion, he pummels her with kicks and punches for keeping a picture of her grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu, until she loses consciousness (*Purple Hibiscus* 217). On both occasions, Kambili lands in hospital and nearly loses her life. In short, Eugene's subjugated wife and daughter are excluded from the familial power configuration in their own home to the extent that simple decisions about the children, when to wake up, when to eat, when to study, when to play are "decreed" by Eugene without consultation with his wife. Any protest from Mama would fetch her a slap or a punch from Eugene.

The only setting where a woman exercises familial authority/power in *Purple Hibiscus* is in the home of Auntie Ifeoma, and that is because she is a widow. Even then, the contempt of men for single mothers filters through the way a low-level policeman responds to Ifeoma's demand for a warrant of search: "Look at this *yeye* woman oh!" (*Purple Hibiscus* 235). The Yoruba word "*yeye*" implies somebody "worthless" or mere "rubbish." Coming from a man who is probably no more than a secondary school certificate holder, this is a great insult to the don. The fact that Ifeoma is a single parent obviously fuels the contempt of this low-cadre policeman who believes he is superior to her because she is a woman, her high academic achievement notwithstanding. In effect, all the important females in *Purple Hibiscus*, Mama, Kambili and Ifeoma have been "othered" by the Nigerian patriarchal society depicted in the novel. More germane to the main concern in this study is that none of them plays any role in the governance of the fictive Nigerian society in the novel. Even men rule in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka where Ifeoma teaches.

Wintry Night and *Orphan of Asia* are both set against the background of Japanese Occupation of Taiwan. *Wintry Night* is the story of survival of the Hakka Chinese people in their fight against the aboriginal tribesmen and, later, against the Japanese army of occupation. Thus at the national level, political authority remains largely in the hands of the Japanese, supported by some locals, mostly wealthy individuals who became malleable in the hands of the conquerors in order to protect their wealth. A good example in *Wintry Night* is the wealthy Ye Atian, who cooperates with the Japanese overlords to protect his property and also uses his influence with the Japanese to dispossess the largely illiterate Hakka frontiersmen of their land. Peng Aqiang later kills him to save the rest of his people although he too dies shortly after (*Wintry Night* 164-8). Besides wealthy individuals, a few Taiwanese also collaborated with the Japanese overlords for power and pecuniary benefits. Zhida, Opium Tong's son, is an example in *Orphan of Asia*. With his limited Japanese education, Zhida accepts the post of police deputy, and uses this post to oppress the villagers. Consequently, "His own family treated him like a stranger, and the rest of the villagers paid him only the falsest respect...in fact the moment he turned around – they denigrated him, and not just because he was part of the establishment" (11-2).

Political participation at the national level in both novels thus shows the involvement of some Taiwanese in the Japanese colonial administration to some extent. Those who have Japanese education are especially favoured by the colonists and are usually appointed to some low- and middle-level posts. For example, Taiming and some other Taiwanese with some Japanese education are appointed teachers in the colonial schools although they are paid less than their Japanese mates and treated like second-class citizens. During the war with China, Taiming is conscripted by the administration to as serve in various capacities. Many other young men are also conscripted into the army as technicians or infantry. For example, Mingji, in *Wintry Night*, a graduate of a technical school, serves as a technician in the Japanese Air force, while Zhinan, Taiming's kid-brother serves in the infantry and later dies of wounds sustained in the war (*Orphan of Asia* 242). The activities of these Taiwanese characters could not be labelled political participation in the real sense of the word because they are all subjects of Imperial Japan and are treated with unveiled contempt by the Japanese. The best label to give to their activities is administrative "involvement", not "participation," owing to the fact that all, rich or poor, are excluded from decision-making or policy formulation of the Japanese conquerors. It is noteworthy that they are mostly men.

At the community and familial levels, women are also marginalised. In *Wintry Night*, the decision to appoint Lui Ahan as security man in charge of Fanzai

Wood, the decision to protest ye Atian's legal chicanery against the people of Fanzai Wood, the type of punishment to be meted out to Renxing for impregnating Azhi, Xu Shihui's daughter and so many other community decisions are taken only by the men. Even though Dengmei later becomes a source of inspiration and a spiritual leader of sorts, she never really wields any tangible political power. At the familial level, women are still marginalised in decision-making. They may be consulted, but the final decision rests with the men. For instance, Lui Ahan's first child, a girl, is born partially lame on one foot. The patriarch, Peng Aqiang, considering the dire straits they are in already and the cost of bringing up a crippled child who would not be able to contribute her quota to family well-being immediately decides that the baby should be killed at once. The parents of the baby naturally protest, and the narrator informs the reader that:

Among poor mountain families, weak or crippled infants, *especially girls*, did not have their umbilical cords tied or were abandoned in some corner or placed in a nightsoil bucket until they expired. Then they were buried so that the child might seek another incarnation. In that sense, Peng Aqiang's suggestion was not at all unreasonable; it was the common sense way out. (*Wintry Night* 116 emphasis added)

The important thing to note here is that the decision or "suggestion" to euthanize the baby comes from the patriarch, without any consultation with anybody, not even the parents of the baby. Ahan and Dengmei are able to keep their baby on one condition: the father has to leave Fanzai Wood so that he could earn some money to cater for the upkeep of his family. More importantly, since he adds a new mouth to be fed by the larger family, he must take his own mouth out of the equation because the times are hard. This treatment is meted out to Ahan and Dengmei because they are both orphans. Worse still, Ahan contributes little to the farming project; he is more of a soldier than a farmer. Dengmei later becomes a spiritual leader in the community and family because she survives the war while most of the men, including her husband, do not. If the men had been around, it is doubtful if she could have risen to such prominence in the family and community.

In *Orphan of Asia*, familial decision-making also excludes women. For example, the decision on the type of education Taiming is to have is taken by his father and grandfather without any consultation with his mother, A-Cha. The decision to break up the Hu family and divide its property is also taken by the men in the family. In fact, the only family where a woman has a say in the novel is in Taiming's short-lived family on Mainland China. His radical feminist wife, Shuchum, overawes Taiming with her radicalism which does not

exclude adultery. She does whatever she likes, goes to parties and encourages men to hold parties and court her in her marital home. When Taiming is arrested by the secret police for being a Japanese citizen, a former student of his helped him to escape from detention and he flees to Taiwan. But his Chinese wife chooses to stay back in China with their only daughter. They never meet again. In all, political participation in *Orphan of Asia* and *Wintry Night* at the national, community or familial levels largely excludes women. *A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers* depicts the same scenario; men are in charge at the national and familial levels and decision-making is largely a male affair.

The Butcher's Wife was based on an actual account of a woman who killed her husband in the 1930s in Shanghai. The author, transported the setting of her own story to her hometown, Lugang, "a small seacoast town in central Taiwan" (author's note), but she retained the temporal element, 1930s. The setting indicates that Taiwan, which was then under Japanese colonial subjugation, is a nation at war. The opening chapter shows the sexual exploitation of Lin Shin's mother by a young Japanese soldier who offers the starving woman some food in exchange for sex. She and her daughter, Lin Shin the heroine, had been dispossessed of her late husband's house by her brother-in-law. They are forced to sleep in the family's "Ancestral hall" without any provision or protection all through the lean winter months. In a desperate bid for survival, Lin's mother succumbs to the soldier's food-for-sex exchange. Lin, herself, later suffers the same fate in the hand of her sadomasochist butcher husband, Chen Jiangshui whose sexual perversion requires his wife to scream in pain during coitus before he could achieve an orgasm.

Historically, therefore, Taiwan was under Japanese colonisation at the time the incident in the novella took place. Like any colonial system in the world, men, especially military officers, are usually in charge. The colonised, male or female, have very little say in governance unless the colonising power decides to run an indirect rule which allows some form of participation by influential but "friendly" colonial subjects such as traditional rulers or a few educated "natives." Thus, it is presumable that few Taiwanese women, if any, participated in governance during the Japanese colonial regime. At the familial level, Taiwanese men still had dominion over Taiwanese women in the exercise of power which confirms the notion that women under colonialism are in a double-yoke situation; first to the colonial masters, then to their "husband-masters" at home. For instance, the decision to make Lin Shin's mother to disappear for committing "adultery" with the soldier is taken by the men in the family, including Lin's uncle who kicked them out of her late father's house and moved his family into it (*The Butcher's Wife* 9).

Patriarchal oppression is visibly operative in this scene because no woman is present when Lin Shin's mother is about to be sentenced; traditional Chinese society places a higher value on masculine roles thus rendering feminine voice of little consequence. Had a woman been allowed into the family meeting in the Ancestral Hall, she may have listened to the plea of Lin Shin's mother that "she had eaten nothing but sweet-potato mash and pig slop" in the last few days, and when the soldier offered her two rice balls, "She'd been too hungry, that was all, too hungry to think about the consequences" (*The Butcher's Wife* 8). The same patriarchal oppression is also evident in the anti-female judicial system which the political heads at the family level employed which does not even seek to hear the woman's side of the story. Even though physically present, she is "unseen" in the patriarchal family structure because even though she speaks, whining aloud the family neglect that led to her misbehaviour, the clan elders did not "hear" her. One of the clan elders makes a half-hearted gesture of trying to plead for Lin Shin's mother her by pointing out that "since she had been forced to do what she did, she should not be judged as a common adulteress" (*The Butcher's Wife* 8), but his timid voice was soon drowned by the self-righteous thunder of patriarchy when the same uncle who caused mother and daughter's privation insists on bringing the full weight of traditional sanction on Lin Shin's mother, saying, 'if Lin Shin's mother had had any honor at all, she would have resisted to the end and died a chaste woman" (*The Butcher's Wife* 8). In other words, she should have starved to death rather than succumb to the soldier's temptation!

Had women been part of the "clan elders", they would have demanded from the "uncle" his reasons for kicking mother and daughter out of their legitimate inheritance thereby implicating him as the agent behind Lin Shin's mother's "adultery." But patriarchy does not ask such fundamentally disturbing questions because going in that direction will also implicate the clan elders as silent collaborators in the marginalisation and dispossession of mother and daughter. No doubt, Lin Shin's mother would still have been punished if women had been present among the clan elders, but with more understanding and less severity as was the case with the historical Lin Shin in the Shanghai story of the 1930's whose death sentence was eventually commuted given the circumstances surrounding her crime.

Marginalisation of women is also evident in the disproportionate punishments meted out to the two persons caught in the act of illegal sexual intimacy, as "adultery" cannot really be pinned on them given the fact that Lin Shin's mother had no husband at the time of committing the crime and no evidence is provided in the text indicating that the young Japanese soldier is married. The principle of natural justice, therefore, stipulates the same punishment for both the man and the woman, but the patriarchal ideology innate in the society intervenes to set free the

“superior being”, the man, while the woman, the other, the inferior and subordinate, is condemned to a mysterious “disappearance.” Inter-textually, the patriarchal judgement of the clan elders recalls the story of the woman caught in adultery and brought to Jesus Christ by the Jewish “elders” who demanded that she be stoned to death in line with the law of Moses (*The Holy Bible*, John 8: 3-11). Like the clan elders in *Butcher’s Wife*, the Jewish authorities, which also had no female representatives, had “pardoned” the man or men with whom the woman had allegedly been caught in adultery and were demanding capital punishment for the devalued “other” in clear violation of God’s law which unequivocally stipulates that both adulterer and adulteress are to be stoned to death (*The Holy Bible*, Leviticus 20:10).

Other households in the novel replicate the patriarchal structure above. Lin Shin’s uncle rules his household by “royal decrees” which does not admit of any consultation with the females in his household. Even though he has no choice but to abide by the decision of the clan elders that “arranged for Lin Shin to move into her uncle’s house, the very same tile-roofed house that had once belonged to her father” (*The Butcher’s Wife* 9), he attempts to sell her on a number of occasions (*The Butcher’s Wife* 11). Finally, he marries her off to Chen Jiangshui, a pig butcher who had remained single into his late thirties “for no family in Chencuo was willing to let him marry its daughter” (*The Butcher’s Wife* 11). The “marriage” was really a sale because “every ten days or two weeks, Pig-Butcher Chen was to send over a pound of pork” (*The Butcher’s Wife* 12). This is outright commodification of the female body. More importantly, no woman in Lin Shin’s uncle’s household was consulted before the “sale” of Lin Shin to Jiangshui took place, not even his wife. Lin Shin herself only knew about her impending marriage after the bargain had been struck between her “seller” and her “buyer.”

Chen Jiangshui, Lin Shin’s husband, does not only rule in his home along patriarchal lines, he is maniacal, megalomaniac and despotic. Even though a man is not expected to write in advance before engaging in sexual intimacy with his wife, it is expected that the wife will be handled in such a sensitive way that she is prepared psychologically for the act of intimacy. To this extent, therefore, one could talk about “sexual democracy” in marriage in that a psychological protocol is followed which sensitizes the wife, an indirect consultation that makes her to willingly participate in the ensuing coitus. Not so with Pig-Butcher Jiangshui who on his wedding night comes in drunk. Without even asking if his virgin bride had eaten anything all day, “ he insisted on fulfilling his conjugal obligation, causing Lin Shin to exhaust with pitiful screams what little energy she had left” (13). Afterwards, Jiangshui stuffs Lin Shin’s mouth with a big piece of pork and goes to bed. This is to be the pattern of their love making throughout the novel. Jiangshui so devalues his wife that he stops providing her with food when

she stops screaming during what amounts to the marital rape he foists on her. This is food insecurity and hostage taking at its worst expression. Even when Lin Shin manages to raise some ducklings on her own with the hope of providing for herself in future, her manic husband slaughters them with his butcher's knife in a fit of rage (*The Butcher's Wife* 119-120). He does not deem it fit to consult her on this or any other issue. In essence, in terms of access to power at the familial levels, *Butcher's Wife* shows that Taiwanese women are discriminated against and effectively marginalised within the power structure in their own country. This marginalisation and othering of females is also replicated at the state level where men, the Japanese conquerors held sway.

The analyses of political participation of women in the selected texts graphically illustrate the marginalisation of women in Nigeria and Taiwan at the fictive level. We will now proceed to examine data from the two countries to validate or invalidate the putative conclusion that women are still on the margins of the power game. In both countries, no woman has ever ruled as a military head of state or an elected president. In the case of Nigeria, no woman has ever been selected as a vice-president of the country. No woman has been elected as the president of the Senate, and all the Speakers of the Federal House of Assembly have been men except Hon. Patricia Etteh who held the post for four months and 26 days between June and October 2007 before she was compelled to quit over alleged graft. There are thirty-seven state governors in Nigeria in addition to the Administrator of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. None of them is a woman. In the fifty-three years of Nigeria's independence, only one woman Dame Virginia Etiaba became a governor, by default, and that for a short while. Etiaba was deputy governor to Governor Peter Obi of Anambra State. When he was impeached by the state legislature in November 2006, she served as governor for three months until February 2007 when an appeal court reinstated Governor Peter Obi. At best, some political parties select/appoint some women as deputy governors to "pacify" female voters, and to spruce up their public image as canvassers of gender equality. Still, only a few states of the federation implement such a policy. In the first and second republics in Nigeria, 1960 to 1966, 1979 to 1983, no woman was selected as a deputy governor of any state in Nigeria. From the 1990s till date, very few women emerged as deputy governors: Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu (Lagos State), Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong (Cross River State), Dame Pauline Tallen (Plateau State), Senator Kofo Bucknor-Akerele (Lagos State), Mrs. Sarah Adebisis Sosan (Lagos State), Mrs. Adejoke Orelope Adefulire (Lagos State), Mrs. Grace Titi Laoye-Tomori (Osun State), Mrs. Olufunmilayo Aduni Olayinka (Ekiti State), and Mrs. Valerie Ebe (Akwa Ibom State).

At the appointive level, more women have been appointed into executive positions in recent years even though their number still remains very low relative

to the number of men in the same sphere. In the days of the military, some were appointed into the cabinet as a token of gender equality. As a matter of fact, the Buhari military regime made it compulsory for each military governor to appoint at least one female into his cabinet, an order which was obeyed. The civilian governments have always appointed women into executive positions as ministers or ministers of state or commissioners. In this wise, it is notable that the Obasanjo Administration brought more women into the executive arm of government at the federal level than any government hitherto. The most outstanding till date are Dr. Ngozi Okonji-Iweala who was finance minister under Obasanjo and is still finance minister under President Goodluck Jonathan. In fact, she is the most important minister in Nigeria today because she is also the coordinating minister of the Nigerian economy. Obasanjo also brought to limelight Obiageli Ezewesilize, who held several portfolios under the Obasanjo regime, late Professor Dora Akunyili who was Director-General of the National Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and later Minister of Information under Obasanjo. The present administration has its own crop of appointed female executives, including Mrs. Allison-Madueke, the minister in charge of Petroleum, the mainstay of the Nigerian economy today.

In spite of the “incursion” of women into positions of executive power hitherto allotted to men in Nigeria, the ratio of females to males in executive positions across the country remains low. Moreover, there are certain key positions in the cabinet that no woman has ever occupied. For example, no woman has ever been the minister of defence, except Dr. (Mrs.) Olusola Obada’s brief tenure, July 2012 to September 2013. None has ever been appointed head of any of the security agencies, police, army, navy, air force, state security services, etc. No woman has ever been appointed as the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, and even though a few women have been chief justices in some states of the federation, the first woman Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Maryam Aloma Muktar, was appointed by the present administration of Goodluck Jonathan.

While Nigerian women have made some gains in appointive positions, the reverse is the case in elective positions. Udodinma Okoronkwo-Chukwu observes:

Women participation in politics in Nigeria is a thing of concern to many because of the continuous low record of female representation after elections. Whereas men occupy large number of seats in elections women are constantly left with few positions. The 2011 general elections with all the promises it held for women, at the end scored one of the lowest female representations in the history of elections in the country. This came in spite of the 35 percent affirmative action

and the huge campaign of the Women for Change Initiatives aimed at providing a soft landing for women in the elections.
(39)

A review of the performance of women in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections shows a downward trend. As mentioned earlier, no woman has ever emerged as the president or the vice-president of the country, and no woman has ever been elected as a governor, although one woman eventually became a governor for a brief spell by default. The next level of executive power in the country is the local government. During the 1999 elections, there were 710 positions available, but only 13 women were eventually elected as local government chairpersons. In the 2003 elections, there were 774 vacancies out of which women secured only 15 seats. In the 2007 elections, 740 seats were contested for out of which women won 27. In the 2011 elections, 740 seats were also contested for and women won none of them!

Elections into the nation's law-making bodies are regarded as crucial to women because it is believed that when more women are elected into these bodies, they could initiate bills that will empower women in various sectors of the Nigerian economy. Unfortunately, few women have been elected into the national assembly, state assemblies and local government councils between 1999 and 2011. In 1999, 109 seats were contested for at the Senate, and only three women won. In 2003, 109 seats were also available but only four women won. The same number of seats was available in 2007 and 2011, with women winning nine and seven seats respectively. Electoral performance of women in the House of Representatives was equally dismal. The number of seats available in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections was 360. In 1999, women won only 7 seats; 2003, 21 seats; 2007, 27 seats; and 2011, 25 seats. State assembly elections reflect the same poor electoral fortunes of women between 1999 and 2011. Out of 990 seats available in each election year throughout the thirty-six states of the federation, women won 24 seats in 1999, 40 seats in 2003, 57 seats in 2007 and 68 seats in 2011. In the local council elections, 6,368 seats were contested for in each election year between 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. Out of 6,368 seats women won 69 in 1999, 267 seats in 2003, 235 in 2007, and none in 2011. (Source: British Council Report, 2012, quoted in Okoronkwo-Chukwu 41)

A lot of reasons have been adduced for the electoral misfortunes of Nigerian women. The first is the high monetisation of the electoral process. In Nigeria, elections are very expensive and candidates who are not wealthy or have a "moneybag" supporting them are not likely to win. These moneybags are usually reluctant to support women because they fear that a woman is likelier to lose an election than a man. Okoronkwo-Chukwu notes:

To play politics in Nigeria money becomes more important than the political supporters. With money a candidate can buy overwhelming number of supporters few minutes to voting. Again, none of the women can match the men in money politics. Many female aspirants during the 2011 elections were abandoned by their supporters because they could not match the men in money politics. Finance determines a lot in any elections in Nigeria and men are way ahead of women in financial stability. (42)

Other reasons proffered for the failure of women to win elections in Nigeria include electoral violence (intimidation by political thugs during campaigns and on election day), the societal attitude which regards women in politics as morally bankrupt, failure of the governmental policy of Affirmative Action which stipulates that 35% of electoral and appointive positions must be reserved for women, and failure of sisterhood bonding. The last two reasons deserve some elaboration. Affirmative action is an offshoot of the National Gender Policy which was signed into law on 15 August 2008 but its implementation has not achieved the desired gender parity in the nation's political sphere by ensuring the successful campaign and election of more Nigerian women. In order to achieve this laudable objective the Nigerian Women Trust Fund was set up on 24 March 2011 under the Ministry of Women and Social Development with one hundred million naira to help about 230 women aspirants achieve their political ambition in the 2011 elections. It failed to achieve its set objective given the paltry sum of money which amounts to less than half a million naira (N500,000) for each female aspirant. That sum may not print enough campaign posters to cover ten out of the thirty-six states of the federation!

Recently, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced that it would insist on the full implementation of Affirmative Action in the 2015 election. According to Mrs. Blessing Obidegwu, Deputy Director, Gender Division of INEC:

The objective of the draft INEC Gender Policy is to integrate gender awareness into the electoral process and encourage gender equality and balance within political parties and in the identification of candidates. It is important to note that in January 2007, INEC came up with a mandate to address gender issues related to the 2007 elections and beyond. This is to strive towards the 35 per cent affirmative action for both appointive and elective positions for women.” (*Punch* April 15 2014 n.p.).

Given the failure of Affirmation Action in the 2011 elections, the success of INEC in the 2015 elections remains doubtful.

Sisterhood bonding is a feminist term which advocates that women should come together to support the aspirations of their own kind in any open contest with men. In *Butcher's Wife*, sisterhood bonding collapses as Auntie Ah-wang, the elderly neighbour of Lin Shin and her husband contributes immensely to the ostracism of Lin Shin by peddling false stories about her screams during sexual intercourse with her husband as evidence of Lin Shin's uncontrollable libidinal pleasure. With Ah-wang's needless and baseless rumour mongering, the battered bride is isolated by other women in the community. In Lin Shin's most desperate hour when she is forced to beg for employment and food, her prospect of securing a maid-job is shattered by another woman who whispers to the man about to employ her not to do so (131). Had she been given the necessary succour and sisterhood embrace, it is arguable that Lin Shin may not have been pushed to the brink of insanity and consequent manslaughter. In contrast to the ostracism of Lin Shin by her own kind, Ifeoma and Kambili demonstrate sisterhood bonding by cooperating (more like conniving) to keep Mama out of jail for the murder of her husband. Both also offer her staunch support in the years Jaja is in jail and after his release. Even Mama's maid, Sisi, does not leave her alone in the post-murder period when Mama's sanity and health gradually break down. If sisterhood bonding works at the political level, then more women will be elected into political offices in Nigeria.

Considering the fact that women constitute a large percentage of Nigerian voters, it is not inconceivable that if they all vote for women candidates, more women would emerge as winners in the political race. However, the pattern so far indicates the collapse of sisterhood bonding in the Nigerian political environment just as it collapsed in *Butcher's Wife*. The pathetic story of Sarah Jubril who was the only woman aspirant contesting for the position of the president in the 2007 presidential primary of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) somehow validates the collapse of sisterhood bonding in the Nigerian political scene. At a convention in which there were 4,101 delegates, male and female, Sarah Jibril had only four (4) votes! This makes one to wonder why all the female delegates at the PDP convention of 2007 did not vote for the only woman candidate in the race. In sum, women in Nigeria do not occupy 35% of all appointive and elective positions in the nation's political structure. This confirms that they have been marginalized by Nigerian patriarchy and incapacitated in the power game. This is feminine insecurity at its highest because the destiny of Nigerian women is in the hands of Nigerian men to do as they like.

Nigeria and Taiwan are kindred nations both having passed through the furnace of protracted military rule. Adding the different phases of strict civilian rule, Nigeria has experienced twenty-five years of democratic governance, while Taiwan has twenty-seven, 1987 to 2014. Taiwan's experience in democracy could, however, be regarded as more qualitative in that it has been one unbroken experience, while the Nigerian experience in democracy has been punctuated by long periods of military interregnums in her fifty-three years of independence. Consequently, it is expected that Taiwanese women should fare better than Nigerian women in politics. This appears to be the case going by the data on elected female politicians in Taiwan.

Even though no woman in Taiwan has won the presidency of the country till date, just like their Nigerian counterparts, a woman, Hsiu-Lien Annette LU, was the Vice-President of the Republic of China (Taiwan) from 2000 till 2008. She served under the first non-KMT president, Chen Shui-bian of the Democratic Progressive Party, DPP. However, she was neither the first nor the only woman to serve in government during the authoritarian regime in Taiwan and after the inauguration of the democratic dispensation in 1987. Other distinguished women who held high political positions in Taiwan include: Dr. Shirley W. Y. Kuo, who was appointed finance minister in 1988 by the then ruling KMT government; Chang Po-ya, Chairperson of Election Commission of the Executive Yuan, former minister of the interior, former minister of health, former Governor of Taiwan Province, former mayor of Chiayi city for three terms; Chen Chu, the first elected female mayor in Taiwan and current mayor of Kaohsiung County; Chi Cheng who was elected and served three terms as a member of the Legislative Yuan, 1980 to 1989, and was appointed a National Policy Advisor by President Ma Ying-jeou in 2009; Cho Chun-ying, former acting mayor of Tainan; Hsiao Bi-khim, a member of the Legislative Yuan; Hsu Shih-hsien, the first woman to obtain a doctorate degree in Taiwan, and former mayor of Chiayi City; Lai Shin-yuan, minister of the Mainland Affairs Council between 2008 and 2012; Kao Chin Su-mei, stage name May Chin, a member of the Legislative Yuan since 2001; Sisy wen-hsien Chen, a member of the Legislative Yuan, 2002 to 2005; Tang Bia, the most experienced DPP legislator, having being elected three times, currently city councillor of Tainan; Tsai Ing-wen, current chair of the DPP, former minister of the Mainland Affairs Council, former Vice-Premier of the Republic of China; Wang Ching-feng, minister of Justice, 2008-2010; Wang Shu-hui, former legislator; Wong Chin-chu, member of the Legislative Yuan; and Yeh Chu-lan, former member of the Legislative Yuan, former Vice-Premier of the Republic of China.

The statistics of women elected into political office during the military era and the current democratic experience indicates a gradual increase in numerical

strength which is an index of the growing presence of women in the governance of Taiwan. There are four legislative bodies in Taiwan into which representatives are elected: National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan (national level), Provincial Assembly, Taipei and Kaohsiung City councils (Provincial level), City/County Assemblies (county level), and Township/village Councils (village level). At the national level between 1969 and 2001, no less than 10% of members elected into the Legislative Yuan were women. The breakdown of the statistics is as follows: 1969, 9%; 1972, 11%; 1975, 11%; 1980, 10%; 1983, 11%; 1986, 8%; 1989, 13%; 1992, 11%; 1995, 14%; 1998, 19%; and 2001, 17%. (Bier-hi Chou, Clarke and Clark), Tsai-wei Sun observes that the records of women's electoral fortunes "have gradually improved, especially since the 1980s; and now women's shares of seats across all levels of election are above 20% (20.9% in 2004 Legislative Yuan, 32.7% in 2002 Taipei City Council, 22.7% in 2002 Kaohsiung City Council, and 22.1% in 2002 City/County Assemblies)" (156). Statistics of legislative election results from 2004 to 2012 shows that more women are getting elected: 2004, 178 males to 47 females; 2008, 79 males to 34 females; and 2012, 75 males to 38 females. (Source: National Election Commission)

The statistics above indicates that women in Taiwan enjoy more gender equality with their male counterparts than women in Nigeria in terms of political participation. According to the Directorate General Budget Accounting and Statistics, Taiwan is the country with the second highest rate of gender equality in the whole world. With 33.9% of all parliamentary seats in Taiwan, women in Taiwan certainly have much to be proud of in terms of broad political representation (*The China Post*, June 11, 2013). This cheering news is however mitigated by the fact that women represent only one-seventh of the officers in the Executive Yuan and, on the average, women receive 20% less pay than men receive (Shih-fang Lin, Awakening Foundation Secretary General, *The China Post*, June 11, 2013).

At the appointive level, Taiwanese women have also fared better than their Nigerian counterparts, having served in various positions in the cabinet and in the civil service. However, in comparison to their showing in elective position, they appear to have fallen below expectation. According to Clark and Clark, between 1988 and 2001 women held only about 10% of top positions in the national government, (political appointees and civil servants on Grade 10-14), which contrasts sharply with the 40% women held in the middle cadres (Grade 6-9), and more than 50% of the lower cadres in the same period (22). This statistics somehow buttresses the authors' assertion that a "glass ceiling" has been placed on women's advancement in the services. But at cabinet levels, the situation is more cheering to the extent that as at 2002, women representation was at par with

their legislative presence rising from 1 (3%) in 1988 to 9 (23%) in 2002) in the administration of DPP's Chen Shui-bian (Clark and Clark 23).

It is imperative to ascertain what factors were responsible for the better performance of Taiwanese women in governance compared to Nigerian women. Clark and Clark as well as Tsai-wei Sun identify about six factors. The most important is that **the 1946 Taiwan Constitution stipulates that 10% of all parliamentary seats must be reserved for women.** Consequently, if a political party does not field female candidates, it is a bonus for the other party. It is noteworthy that women now exceed that quota as shown above indicating that women are beginning to come into their own politically. Secondly, the electoral system is that of the multimember non-transferable vote which is also favourable to women. Thus, women are compelled to campaign against and with other women to woo or persuade women voters to vote for them which in a way enhances their political skills. Thirdly, women participated actively during the anti-military campaigns most especially when their husbands and colleagues were jailed by the Chiang Chin-Kuo Administration after the Kaohsiung Incident of 1979. The unfortunate affair turned out to be a political serendipitous fortune for Taiwanese women as the wives of the jailed activists picked up the mantle and mounted what is now known as the "Shounan Chiashu" (relatives of political prisoners) campaigns. Many women won elections into the assemblies at that time not on the power of their eloquence or political sagacity or organisational expertise, but solely on the sympathy aroused by the unjust incarceration of their husbands. And when the husbands were eventually released in 1986, the women were not pushed out by the men. Together they formed the DPP, and that accounts for the party's favourable disposition to promoting the political careers of women. It should be noted that the opposition party, the DPP was the first party in Taiwan to cede 25% of all political appointments to women, which was why there were nine women in the cabinet of Chen Shui-bian, constituting 23% of his cabinet. Other reasons that could be adduced for the better performance of Taiwanese women in political participation relative to Nigerian women include their increasing exposure to education, and the fact that all these changes took place at the time of rapid economic transformation (and relative prosperity) in Taiwan.

Taken together, however, do the gains of Nigerian and Taiwanese women in the public sphere translate to better security for the women of both countries? The answer to this question is at best ambiguous. While it is undeniable that more women are physically active in politics than before, the power game is still firmly in the hands of men. This is evident in Taiwan where ministerial slots usually allotted to women have to do with culture, interior, education, children and youth affairs, but never foreign relations or Defence etc. This means that in real terms,

men are still in control and decisions about the destiny of the country are taken by men, after consultation with the women. While the notion of reserved seats is admirable, it has its drawback in that it encourages tokenism and nepotism. In other words, it encourages the men at the helm of affairs in the political parties and in government to put up their relations, wives, daughters, nieces, etc. for election and appointments. This category of representatives can hardly be independent-minded on core issues but are likely to dance to the tunes called by their “sponsors.” In the case of Nigeria, on the surface it can be asserted that women are in charge. The mainstay of the Nigerian economy is crude oil, and right now the minister in charge is a woman, Mrs. Diezani Allison-Madueke who is the first woman to hold that portfolio in the history of the nation. As mentioned earlier, the Coordinating Minister of the Nigerian economy is the finance minister, Dr. (Mrs) Okonjo-Iweala, and the current Chief Justice of Nigeria is a woman, Justice Maryam Aloma Muktar.

But in terms of real exercise of power, men still have the upper hand. The President, the vice-president, the Senate president, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, all the state governors and the speakers of the state Houses of Assembly, except the recently elected Helen Nwaobasi of Ebonyi State are all men. And these are the people who in consultation with their political parties allocate political posts to everyone. Thus, the political parties in Nigeria, heavily influenced by former military rulers who bankroll many of the political actors/aspirants, wield a lot of power behind the scenes. In real terms, therefore, the women may be mere window dressing, while their puppeteers are hiding behind the curtains. The fact that Diezani Allison-Madueke is married to Admiral Allison Madueke (retired), one-time Chief of Naval Staff who was at different times military governor of Imo and Anambra states, and Dr. (Mrs.) Okonjo-Iweala is a former executive of the World Bank somehow lends credence to this notion. In Taiwan, the Confucian concept of Guanxi, kinship relations, somehow supports the notion of “political puppeteering” of women in the politics of Taiwan. Altogether, the insignificant number of women in the Nigerian legislative bodies, and the “domestic” or “feminine” portfolios usually allotted to Taiwanese political appointees confirm this notion. In essence, what this study posits is that patriarchal marginalisation is still in operation in Nigeria and Taiwan but at a subtle level. This impacts negatively on the way women perceive themselves as valuable members of the Nigerian and Taiwanese societies because freedom of political participation and aspiration has a psychological effect on identity formation and self-actualisation. Tsai-wei Sun puts it beautifully:

politics is not only about the pursuing of self-interest, but also about “*self-development*” ... and “*self-image*”.... To be sure, an individual’s identity and its way of life need to be recognized as having equal value with others in public, otherwise she

would feel being oppressed and, even worse, a sense of incapability. *The improvement of women's participation in all aspect of public affairs is thus essential to positive self-identity of women as well as the full development of their capacities.* (149, emphasis added)

Unlike what obtains in the past, women are now seen and heard in Taiwan, but may lack the ability to bring what they say to fruition. They may initiate bills and enact laws that will better the lot of women and children, but may lack the power to execute or implement those laws. This is patriarchal invisibilisation at its worst expression, a phenomenon whereby women/men are visibly in office but not in power because the authority to exercise power is being wielded by someone else, mostly likely a moneybag in the wings. Moreover, the murder of the feminist political activist Peng Wan-ru in 1996 shortly after pushing through the case for ceding 25% of all elected seats to women in the DPP underscores the still fragile security of women in Taiwan.

An unintended sense of futility may be aroused by the somewhat negative portrayals in the preceding paragraphs and the contrived events in the selected narratives. A useful corrective, therefore, is to bear in mind that women started from point zero in political participation. Thus, their modest achievement in Nigeria and Taiwan is commendable. As a matter of fact, this study recommends that Nigeria should emulate Taiwan by inserting the clause for reserved seats for women in the Nigerian constitution to encourage more participation and involvement of women in Nigerian politics. As for Taiwanese women, the need to evolve a more conciliatory strategy to ensure men's cooperation in their effort to break into the power nexus cannot be over-emphasised. One such strategy is to de-emphasise the "antagonistic" stridency of radical feminism and highlight the cooperative/negotiation stance and family values advocated by Womanism, Nego-feminism and Snail-sense feminism. This will not be achieved overnight, and Taiwanese women activists must be prepared for a long-drawn-out campaign. In the *Butcher's Wife*, the fact that men do not cooperate with Lin Shin and her mother worsened their plight and seal their terrible fates. But in *Purple Hibiscus*, the cooperation of Jaja, a male, combined with the understanding and constant encouragement of young Father Amadi helped to upgrade the quality of life of the female characters in the novel. The fact that Jaja, a male, chooses to go to jail in place of his mother indicates the possibility of a Nigerian Utopia where men regard women as equal partners in nation-building. In such a society, women will be secure and able to contribute their utmost to entrench the nation's highest goals.

As we round off this part of the study, it is important to ask two vital questions: (1) Is there indeed a link between political participation and feminine security? (2) Is the quality of life of contemporary Taiwanese and Nigerian women better than that of their fictive counterparts in the selected novels? The answer to the first question is positive, but the second may not be so confidently asserted. The involvement of women in the politics of Nigeria and Taiwan has no doubt yielded some gains. First, their voices are no longer silent; they are both seen and heard. Two, political participation enhanced by increasing education of women have led to women's awareness of their rights as well as their capacity to defend these rights when infringed upon which increases their security. Three, increasing political participation and security of women also impact positively on women's sense of worth, contribution to nationhood and actualisation of their potentials. Four, the involvement of women in politics has put women issues in the fore of national discourse where specific gains have been made by women. For instance, the political activism of the Annette Lu, former Vice-President of the ROC, late Peng Wan- ru, Tsai Ing-wen the DPP chairperson and other women politicians ensured that 25% of election positions are reserved for women in Taiwan's opposition DPP. And in Nigeria, late Prof. Dora Akunyili's war against fake drugs as the Director-General of NAFDAC increased the health of the nation, most especially in the area of maternal health where fake drugs often meant a high rate of maternal mortality. Dr. Okonjo-Iweala not only ensured that the nation got debt forgiveness during her tenure as finance minister under Obasanjo, the Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (Sure-P) which she initiates and is supervised by her ministry reserves about 30% for the empowerment of women and girls. Given these facts, it can be concluded that the participation of women in politics and governance has enhanced female empowerment which is a vital aspect of female security. To that extent, therefore, the quality of life of contemporary girls and women in Nigeria and Taiwan is better than that of the female characters in the selected novels. Still, a lot needs to be done if the desired equality between males and females in Nigeria and Taiwan is to be achieved, and this is manifest in the continuing marginalisation, domestic brutalisation and subtle invisibilisation of women from the core of societal power base by an unrepentant but wily patriarchy in these "modern" times. As stated earlier, this task can only be achieved with the cooperation of both sexes.

Education and Female Security in Nigerian and Taiwanese Novels and Societies

Feminism, a theory which advocates women's rights, advancement and emancipation, has relentlessly besieged the bastion of patriarchal concepts and practices which impedes and stifles the girl-child's aspiration to have equal access to education as the male child. Education is highly regarded in many parts of the world, Taiwan and Nigeria inclusive, because it is perceived as one of the

most effective means of ensuring mental emancipation through knowledge. The skills that guided instruction imparts in the learner also empower him/her to more effectively secure economic, political and social freedoms. In short, Western/formal education arms the girl-child with the requisite knowledge and tool to demand her rights in a male-dominated world.

The liberating and empowering nature of education may have informed patriarchy's assiduous restriction of women's access to education so that they do not know their rights much less demand them. According to Felicia Durojaiye Oyekanmi, patriarchy is

a set of social relations with a material base that enables men to dominate women. In other words, patriarchy describes a distribution of power and resources within the family in a manner that men maintain power and control of resources, and women are powerless and dependent on men. (84).

By preventing the girl-child from gaining access to Western/formal education, therefore, patriarchy perpetrates the marginalisation of females. Over the years, however, formal education has been made accessible to many Nigerian and Taiwanese girls as demonstrated by the fictive characters in the two national literatures.

The selected Taiwanese novels show an upward movement in the access of Taiwanese girls to education. In Li Qiao's *Wintry Night*, a novel set during the Second World War, the patriarchal divide between male and female children in terms of access to education still persists. Admittedly, neither the male nor female Hakka pioneers had the benefit of education. The men, Peng Aqiang, Liu Ahan, Huang Aling and all Peng's children did not go to school. So it is not surprising that Lanmei, Peng's wife and Dengmei, his foster daughter, have no formal education as well. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the only educated settler in Great Lake Village is Xu Rixing, a man, and "he was considered an important person and was addressed as 'sir' by the others" (*Wintry Night* 45). The settlers had sons and daughters but Mingji, Ahan and Dengmei's lastborn son, is "the only person in Fanzai Wood who received a higher education: he had a diploma from a technical college night school" (*Wintry Night* 173). There are hints in the novel that Japanese education is later made available to Taiwanese children but patriarchy again suborns and truncates the education of girls through early marriage over which they had no control. For instance, Yhonghui has six years of schooling but his wife Azhen has only four. She later suffers the effect of a too-little education when it takes her a long time to understand the letter written by her husband from the war front. "To understand all of his letter, she had to read it several times and read it aloud to try the

sounds” (*Wintry Night* 192). But by the 1970’s girls’ education has received a boost on the Taiwanese Island. This is manifest in Hsiao Li-Hung’s *A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers* where girls’ education is actively encouraged. For instance, while Zhenguan, the heroine, is preparing to write the university entrance examination, the whole extended family cooperates with her, relieving her of any chores or duty that might disturb her academic concentration. But as noted above, Zhenguan could not proceed further because of her internalised patriarchal ideology that a woman should not be too highly educated and that the Confucian moral focus on women virtues outweighs the acquisition of higher degrees. Another reason which she voiced later is that she would rather not go to university to allow her younger brother, Azhong, to complete his schooling. She later chooses to work to support Azhong’s educational career after their father’s death even though her mother assures her that she has enough laid by from her late husband’s estate to cater for Azhong’s education:

If you want to continue your education, you should go to cram school or study on your own. Whatever you decide, you have my support. No matter what, this family will provide you with the money for books and for school. (78)

Her mother’s plea falls on deaf ears as Zhenguan who has been indoctrinated by the patriarchal ideology couched in Buddhist and Confucian lore that a woman should value her moral virtues more than her educational attainments decides not to pursue higher education. The Chinese *Book of Rites*, for instance, says “that men were superior to women” (265) and even her mother “who had received only a few years of Japanese education...took care to observe Chinese etiquette,” one of which is that “Zhenguan is not allowed to step over her brother’s shoes; she had to make a detour to walk past them,” (*Wintry Night* 265). She has ample opportunity to regret her decision later when she discovers that she is academically inferior to Daxin, her lover, a brilliant academic who later goes abroad to study: “Zhenguan had started to regret not going to college. If she had, then she might be able to study abroad as well,” (*Wintry Night* 214-5). The author’s observation lends credence to the notion that Zhenguan’s lower educational achievement compared to Daxin’s is a remote cause of the eventual breakup of the ideal love between the lovers. It is noticeable that many of the males in Zhenguan’s immediate and extended family acquire higher education. “As for the girls, some worked at the fishery, some at the waterworks, and others at the farmers’ association” ((*Wintry Night* 31). In essence, at late as the 1970’s, the temporal coordinates of the novel, girl-child education was still being seriously challenged and inhibited by patriarchal ideology hidden behind religious and moral etiquettes.

Grandpa Hu, Hu Wenching, Taiming's father, and Licentiate Peng in *Orphan of Asia* all enjoyed Chinese Classical education before the Japanese colonisers banned the Chinese educational system and replaced it with their own form of education in furtherance of their assimilationist policy of obliterating the Chinese culture and memory in order to make complete Japanese subjects of their Taiwanese captives. Thus, Taiming's father is educated and practises as a traditional /alternative Chinese doctor but his son follows the path of Japanese education and secures a degree in Physics from a university in Tokyo, Japan. He is the first person in the village to acquire higher education from the exotic capital of their colonial masters. Taiming's siblings also acquire some Japanese education up to different levels, but it is noticeable that females are marginalised in terms of access to education while boys are favoured. For example, neither Ah-Cha, Taiming's mother nor Ah-Yu, his stepmother went to school; they did not even enjoy classical Chinese education. Taiming's sisters are not discouraged from attending school, but patriarchal opposition to girl-child education manifests in the suggestion of Zhigang, Taiming's brother, that the "tuition money reserved for Qiuyun, their younger sister, who was to enter a girl's school in a year," (*Orphan of Asia* 37) should be shared along with their father's property now so that their newly born step-brother would have nothing to inherit when he grows up. Even though Zhigang failed in his bid to stop Qiuyun's educational advancement at that point, patriarchy eventually wins when, like Nkoyeni in Nwapa's *Efuru*, marriage truncates her educational advancement towards acquiring a university education. She gets married to a medical doctor. Consequently, child-bearing as well as household duties truncates Qiuyun's chance of acquiring higher education. In the same manner, Nikoyeni's ambition for higher education was also terminated by early marriage in Nwapa's *Efuru*, validating Nwapa's observation that patriarchy stifles girl-child education because men insist on marrying them too early (*Efuru*192).

It should be noted, however, that not many families have the wherewithal to send both boys and girls to school during the Japanese colonial era in Taiwan. The Hus are regarded as the aristocrats of the village with wealth enough to avail their daughters of some form of education. Thus, Qiuyun would count herself lucky to get any form of education at all and the impression of the sensitive reader is that female education at this time in the history of Taiwan was not meant to really empower the girl-child but to increase her chances of getting or hooking an educated and materially comfortable husband like Qiuyun's who is a medical doctor. Like their Nigerian counterparts, Taiwanese fathers privileged their sons over and above their daughters in the provision of access to education. This is graphically demonstrated by Mr. Lin, a parent of one of the students in K Public School, the village school where Taiming taught before he travels abroad for further studies. Lin begs Taiming to give extra lessons to his last son so that he

will not fail like his two elder brothers. No mention is made of his daughters and their educational pursuits! His only agitation is that his three “boys” are underperforming educationally (*Orphan of Asia* 31-2). It is as if the girls never existed or they don’t matter. This seems the pervasive attitude of Taiwanese parents to girl-child education at that point in their history, a notion validated by the fact that Ruie, a female teacher in K Public School, is the most highly educated Taiwanese female mentioned in the novel. She never acquires a higher degree. Taiming later realises the value and urgent need to educate girls after the avoidable death of Aunt Xin, one of the workers under him in a farm he later manages. He comes to the conclusion that the woman’s death during a protracted labour is partly due to her ignorance and partly his fault:

... for he had never offered his learning to these people. These crazy ideas, the tragedy of ignorance, taught Taiming that education was not just for children but also for these unschooled adults whom he had advised but not taught. He had still been too much of the schoolteacher to see that there was no reason that systematic learning should not take place outside the classroom. (*Orphan of Asia* 80)

Consequently, he begins to teach the women in the evenings after their farm work is over and discovers that many of them are quite intelligent and responsive to education. It is unfortunate that they had been denied the benefit of going to school. Hence, they end up slaving as farm hands. Education is later made available to both genders in Taiwan, and this is evidenced in Wu Ming-Yi’s 2013 novel, *The Man with the Compound Eyes*, in which the female protagonist, Alice Shih, is a university professor.

Western education which is logocentric and privileging was an institution that was barred to the Nigerian girl-child at the inception of the white man’s incursion into the Nigerian space. This meant that the boy-child was unduly favoured to acquire western education at the expense of the girl-child who may be older because “most cultures tend to assign higher values to the roles played by males than those played by females” (Oyekanmi 83). This discriminatory practice is depicted and pilloried in many feminist narratives in Nigeria. For instance, in Emecheta’s *The Bride Price*, Ezekiel Odia named his first born, a girl, “Akunna,” meaning “Father’s wealth”. The name betrays the undervaluation of women in the Igbo culture of Nigeria relative to their male counterparts. To Odia and patriarchs like him, therefore, fathering a girl has only one consolation, and that is the bride price she would eventually bring her father (*The Bride Price* 4). Unfortunately for Odia, he dies too early to obtain this consolation. His family is forced to relocate to their village in Ibuza, south east Nigeria. During the burial ceremonies, one of the mourners, a woman, laments that: “The pity of it all ... is

that they will marry her [Aku-nna] off very quickly to pay Nna-nndo's school fees" (*The Bride Price* 36). Nna-nndo is Aku-nna's junior brother who is deemed more valuable than her elder sister because he is male. Consequently, the patriarchal Igbo culture decides he is superior to his older sister because he would carry on the family name. The verdict: Nna-nndo should continue schooling at the expense of his elder sister.

The patriarchal oppression graphically depicted in the Aku-nna story becomes more telling when cognizance is taken of the fact that her education is truncated not because she is dull or impervious to Western education but simply because she is female and considered less valuable than her junior brother. She used to go to school when her father was alive. However, it is obvious that even her father's main object in sending her to school was not to emancipate and empower his daughter to be able to compete in the emerging modern Nigerian society, but to increase the value of her bride price when she marries! In reality, therefore, even the little education Aku-nna gets only accentuates her commodification as a saleable object. As an educated lady, she is expected to bring a fortune to her father through her husband-to-be who will be compelled to refund the cost of educating her many times over. Aku-nna and her sister, Ogugua are allowed to continue schooling by their uncle, Okonkwo in the hope of bringing him great wealth in future through their bride prices. Aku-nna's story, therefore, instantiates the discrimination against Nigerian girls and women in terms of access to formal education, a phenomenon which has been documented in many societies (Oyekanmi 84).

While it may be excusable that no formal schools existed in the fictive world of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, being a largely pre-colonial society, the same cannot be said of Nwapa's *Efuru* where the most educated person in the novel is a man named Uzaru, a medical doctor (*Efuru* 95-96). Gilbert, Efuru's second husband also went to school, but had to withdraw due to financial constraints, (*Efuru* 85). In contrast, neither Efuru nor any of her friends had that privilege extended to them. Ironically, Gilbert discouraged his friend Sunday from sending his younger sister Nikoyeni to school, saying: "...it is a waste sending them [girls] to school, you know...I mean really the boys should be given the preference...if you had a little brother for instance and there is just enough money for the training of one, you wouldn't train Nkoyeni and leave the boy" (191). But the author speaking through her character Sunday blames the men for not allowing the girls to complete their education before demanding their hands in marriage. She/he argues further that a lady who is allowed to complete her education before marriage is an asset to her husband because she will bring in more money into the family when employed (192). The same patriarchal privileging of sons over daughters is also evident in Soyinka's *The Interpreters*,

where Dehinwa’s father “sent all his sons to England, but...said he wasn’t sending any girl to England only to go and get herself pregnant within three months” (*Interpreters* 36).

A mapping of the fortunes of the Nigerian girl-child through fiction indexes a rising graph which indicates the increasing presence of females in the field of education. For instance, Eugene in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* sends his two children, a boy and a girl, to school to empower them for life. Even more interesting is the case of their aunt Ifeoma who not only attended school alongside her elder brother Eugene, but has a doctorate degree and teaches in a university. Ifeoma’s case is more interesting when viewed against the backdrop of their father’s lack of Western education and penchant for traditional religion; he did not accept Christianity till death even though this made his Catholicism-fanatic son, Eugene, refuse to provide for him financially in spite of his millionaire status. In that novel, Ifeoma is symbolic of the liberating effect and empowerment conferred on people by Western education. Even though she is a widow, Ifeoma is able to train her two children and take care of herself. The same observation is applicable to Dehinwa in Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters*, who like her five compatriots studied abroad. However, her studies abroad were sponsored solely by her mother because her father does not see any palpable value in educating a female child abroad (*The Interpreters* 36).

These fictive representatives show a positive attitudinal change in the fictive Nigerian and Taiwanese parents towards the contentious issue of girl-child education. Interestingly, the upward mobility of the fictive girl-child in fiction is reflective of the male-female enrolment figures in contemporary Nigerian and Taiwanese schools. The figures below show the gender disaggregated statistics of enrolment in Nigerian primary schools between 2006 and 2010 in percentages:

Year	Male	Female
2006	55	45.4
2007	54	46
2008	54	46.1
2009	54	46.3
2010	53	46.6

(Source: Ministry of Education *Digest of Statistics*, cited in *Gender Statistics Newsletter* 6)

The enrolment figures for Nigerian secondary schools in the same period shows:

Year	M	F
2006	56.4	43.6
2007	56.7	43.3
2008	50.1	49.9
2009	54.3	45.7
2010	54.2	45.8

(Source: Ministry of Education *Digest of Statistics* 2010, cited in *Gender Statistics Newsletter* 11)

It could be argued that these figures show that boys still outstrip girls in Nigerian educational institutions (primary and secondary levels), but coming from a historical backdrop when girls were a rarity in Nigerian schools due largely to patriarchal structures in many Nigerian cultures, these figures indicate a great improvement in female enrolment in the education sector over the years. Still, females have a higher dropout rate compared to males in Nigerian schools and the World Bank puts the figure of out-of-school girls in Nigeria at 4, 626, 218 as at 2010, (*The Edstats Newsletter: The World Bank Education Statistics Newsletter* 3). Paucity of funds is one of the major factors responsible for withdrawal of children from school, and in a situation where available funds are insufficient to keep all the children in school, the male child is usually preferred over the female in Nigeria. Teenage pregnancy and early marriage have been specially cited as major factors responsible for the incident of out-of-school girls in Nigeria (Olanrewaju Afolayan 20). In the northern part of Nigeria, some fundamentalists still use the Islamic religion to prevent girls from obtaining Western education. This is compounded by the nefarious activities of the terrorist organisation, Boko Haram (Western education is evil), which discourages enrolment in schools, and targets girls and women for abduction. Over two hundred girls abducted by the group on April 14, 2014 are yet to be rescued or released as at the time of concluding this research. This study, therefore, agrees with Michelle Obama, the First Lady of America, that by kidnapping the girls, Boko Haram has indirectly declared war on girl-child education in Nigeria (*Vanguard* 10 May 2014 n.p.).

In the same period in Taiwan, 2006 to 2010, female enrolment figures at the first level of education (primary school) are: 861, 386 out of 1, 798, 393 (**47.89%**, 2006); 839, 593 out of 1, 754, 095 (**47.86%**, 2007); 802, 317 out of 1, 677, 439 (**47.82%**, 2008); 761, 409 out of 1, 593, 398 (**47.78%**, 2009);

and 725, 094 out of 1, 519, 746 (**47.71%**, 2010) respectively. At the second level of education (secondary school) female enrolment figures are: 813, 895 out of 1, 707, 038 (**47.67%**, 2006); 813, 162 out of 1, 707, 331 (**47.62%**, 2007); 812, 197 out of 1, 704, 855 (**47.64%**, 2008); 812, 741 out of 1, 706, 325 (**47.63%**, 2009); and 801, 748 out of 1, 682, 958 (**47.63%**, 2010) respectively. In terms of percentages, it is observable that males still outstrip females in Taiwanese schools even though the females in Taiwan demonstrate a slightly higher percentage relative to Taiwanese males than Nigerian females relative to Nigerian males. But if the high female drop-out rate of Nigerian females is factored into the equation, it is arguable that on the whole, Taiwanese females have greater access to education than their Nigerian counterparts. Nonetheless, the gender gap in primary and secondary education in both countries still exists. At a rough estimate, the ratio of females constitutes less than half of the student population in primary and secondary schools in both countries between 2006 and 2010. Given the capacity of education to empower individuals economically through quality employment (in government institutions and in the industry) the economic security of females is likely to be compromised relative to males even in these “modern times” unless the gap between males and females in terms of access to education is closed in Nigeria and Taiwan. Olaniyan affirms that

Schooling is widely acknowledged as a major investment in human capital that enhances later career opportunities and wages. It serves as an avenue for escaping poverty and reducing income inequality in an economy. The importance of schooling to a child’s social and economic status later in life cannot be overemphasized.... Unfortunately, in many developing countries children either do not have access to education or are enrolled in schools of questionable quality.... (1)

The sentiments expressed by Olaniyan encapsulate the emancipating propensity of education which Akachi Ezeigbo, award-winning author and academic also highlights:

As the struggle to emancipate women intensifies, it should be borne in mind that education is the key to achieving this goal... The neglect of women’s education in most cultures was one of the most prominent factors that delayed women’s participation in writing, in politics, the economy and in development technology. The neglect of women’s education in Nigeria contributed significantly to the problem of child marriage, the scourge of VVF [Vesico-

Vagina Fistula] and violence against women, particularly in the home. If a girl-child is fully educated and reaches the tertiary level, she will not be given in marriage at the age of twelve or thirteen, as is the case in some parts of Nigeria. (*Literature, Language and National Consciousness* 113)

Ezeigbo's argument can be summarised in a sentence: Education liberates the girl-child from negative patriarchal indoctrinations and empowers her to avoid its attendant booby traps: child marriage, economic dependency, political marginalisation, diseases and direct violence. Ezeigbo demonstrates her convictions in her trilogy, *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *The House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle*, all of which have strong female protagonists who are able to defend their fundamental human rights, prosper and contribute meaningfully to society because they are all highly educated. They are successful professionals whose education empowers them to recover their father's property when it is misappropriated by a member of the extended family. In essence, acquisition of modern education affords the female characters in the selected works certain rights and privileges hitherto unavailable to females in the Nigerian and Taiwanese social contexts.

However, education is not only for life but also for livelihood. As shown in the selected texts, education empowers economically and ensures independence from penury in modern times. Ifeoma in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is a university don. Having a stable income guaranteed by her acquisition of higher education empowers Ifeoma to refuse being remarried to any of her late husband's relation as customs demand while possessing the ability to take care of herself and her children. Dehinwa in Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* after her coming of age are other examples in Nigerian fiction of female characters that are empowered by education. Their counterparts in Taiwanese fiction are Alice Shih of *The Man with the Compound Eyes* who is a university professor and financially independent from her footloose husband, Thom, and Shuchum, Taiming's Chinese wife in *Orphan of Asia*.

In contrast, the poor educational status of Mama in *Purple Hibiscus* ties her economically to her abusive husband, Eugene. It is arguable that had Mama been educated and with an independent source of income, she would not tolerate the verbal, mental and physical abuses which Eugene inflicts on her. Consequently, she would not have resorted to the extreme measure of murdering him and losing her own sanity in consequence. The same observations are true of all of Okonkwo's wives in *Things Fall Apart*, most especially Ojiugo who is thoroughly beaten by her enraged husband during

what is supposed to be the Peace Week when no violence of any kind is tolerated (*Things Fall Apart* 21). The only exception to this rule in the selected Nigerian texts is Efuru who though lacking in Western education prospers economically through her thriftiness in mercantile activities without the help of her husbands. As a matter of fact, she helps to pay her own bride price through her trading activities with her first husband Adizua. Dengmei in *Wintry Night* is Efuru's alter-ego in that she is able to rise to the top without possessing any form of formal education. But other female characters such as Taiming's mother and step-mother in *Orphan of Asia*, Zhenguan's mother in *A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers*, Lin Shin, her mother, the prostitute, Golden Flower, in *The Butcher's Wife*, and so many other female characters in the selected Taiwanese novels are economically tied to their husbands or other men in the patriarchal structure of their societies because they lack requisite education to make them employable in the colonial and postcolonial epochs of the Nigerian and Taiwanese societies. It is therefore interesting that most of the female characters in the selected fiction who seem to survive economically are all educated.

The contention here is not that education empowers Nigerian and Taiwanese women to become instant millionaires; rather, it is being asserted that educating women will make women knowledgeable and empower them to stand on their own two feet instead of leaning on men sequel to financial constraints. As of today, there is no profession in which women are not represented in Nigeria and Taiwan. Thus, the quality of life of the fictive characters in the selected fiction seems lower than that of contemporary Nigerian and Taiwanese women. Still, imbalance exists in the percentage of women to men in the workplace. Statistics of women in some selected professions of both countries will buttress this assertion.

Teaching is often touted as the ideal profession for women in Nigeria. This is because most government-owned schools close earlier than the civil service or the private sector, and children go on regular holidays. So, female teachers have more time to spend with their families. Besides, it is considered a "safe" profession; even though the salary may not be fantastic, it is stable. Working in government schools guarantees fairly reasonable conditions of service and teachers are somewhat insulated from the cut-throat competition and boardroom politics of the industry. These are the factors that attract women to the education sector in Nigeria. Yet statistics shows that between 2006 and 2010 men had a slight dominance over women in Nigerian primary schools, 51% to men and 50% to women. The gap, however, widens at the secondary school level with men having 58% to women's 42%. The dominance of Nigerian men in most professions and economic activities is reflected in the

report of the National Bureau of Statistics which shows that as at 2010, 1.8% of persons employed in the education industry were males while females constituted 1.37%. In agriculture, the ratio is 21.14% males to 9.43% females. In the manufacturing industry, women have a significant edge, accounting for 6.67% to men's 4.33%. But this seeming advantage is obliterated in the building and construction industry where men have 2.35% to women's 0.21%. Given the fact that "petty" trading has always been dominated by women in Nigeria, women accounted for 17.42% of the wholesale and retail trade industry, while men constituted only 7.51%. In administrative and support services, men had 1.60% and women 0.43%; and in the human health and social work sector, the ratio is 0.74% males to 0.78% (all figures from the National Bureau of Statistics). These figures show that men still dominate in the workplace in Nigeria. The cheering aspect of the statistics is that it shows that there is no sector of the economy in contemporary Nigeria where women are completely absent. It also shows that in three key sectors, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and human health and social work, women have taken the lead. In the field of education, the gap is not that wide. Overall, these figures indicate a gradual but steady presence of females in the economic sector of modern Nigeria, and to some extent, patriarchal marginalisation has been reduced by the increasing rate of girl-child education in the country.

Statistics in the field of education from Taiwan is much more encouraging, indicating the dominance of female teachers over their male counterparts in primary and secondary schools. The figures are: 68, 628 female teachers out of 100, 692 (**68.15%**, 2006); 69, 420 female teachers out of 101, 360 (**68.48%**, 2007); 68, 655 female teachers out of 100, 206 (**68.51%**, 2008); 68, 066 female teachers out of 99, 155 (**68.64%**, 2009); and 68, 703 female teachers out of 99, 562 (**69%**, 2010). The trend continues at the second level (Secondary school) where the figures are: 62, 263 female teachers out of 100, 498 (**62.31%**, 2006); 63, 768 female teachers out of 102, 333 (**62.31%**, 2007); 64, 350 female teachers out of 103, 006 (**62.47%**, 2008); 65, 287 female teachers out of 104, 064 (**62.73%**, 2009); and 66, 066 female teachers out of 105, 128 (**62.84%**, 2010). But by the third level (tertiary institutions), these gains have been erased by the dominance of male teachers: 17 192 female teachers out of 50 388 (**34.11%**, 2006); 17 457 female teachers out of 51 128 (**34.14%**, 2007); 17 685 female teachers out of 51 501 (**34.33%**, 2008); 17 026 female teachers out of 50 658 (**33.60%**, 2009); and 17 229 female teachers out of 50 684 (**33.99%**, 2010). The gap in employment between males and females in Taiwan becomes wider and more glaring when the total employment figures for the five years selected for this study are put in perspective:

Statistics of Employees in Taiwan between 2006 and 2010

Year	Total	Females	%
2006	10,111,000	4,301,000	42.53
2007	10,294,000	4,426,000	42.99
2008	10,403,000	4,501,000	43.26
2009	10,279,000	4,502,000	43.79
2010	10,493,000	4,613,000	43.96

(Source of all figures: *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of China 2012*)

Despite the obvious gap in the employment of males and females in Taiwan, the picture painted by the above figures is not bleak. It shows that females in Taiwan are slowly catching up with the males in several sectors of the economy and this can be attributed to the greater access to education of Taiwanese females compared to Nigerian females.

But has access to education increased the security of women in Nigeria and Taiwan? To an extent we can assert that it has, especially in terms of economic security, mental emancipation and the arming of the girl-child with requisite knowledge that can help her secure her rights when these are infringed upon. But the continued physical violence against women in both countries and workplace huddles placed in the way of female workers indicate that a lot still needs to be done before structural violence is eventually wiped out or reduced to the barest minimum in Nigeria and Taiwan. The 2011 murder of Mrs Titilayo Arowolo (a Nigerian banker) by her educated husband Akolade Arowolo (*Vanguard* 27 February 2011 n.p.) and the recent stabbing to death of a Taiwanese lady by her lover, Chang Yen-wen on September 22, 2014 over an argument (ICRT: International Community Radio, Taipei 22 September 2014 n.p.) shows that education may not protect females from physical assaults by the males. What is being suggested here is that a new type of education, one that mainstreams gender issues from pre-primary to tertiary levels, may be required to gradually obliterate the ingrained patriarchal biases and ideologies from both males and females in society.

Insecurity and the Marriage Institution

Marriage is another institution where patriarchy leaves its indelible fingerprints. To radical feminists, marriage is oppressive because in most cultures of the world it places women under men. To them, the fact that a woman is the one compelled to leave her father's house and move into her husband's family is unfair and exposes the woman to a measure of vulnerability. Such radical feminists are

quick to point out that even the Bible does not require the woman to leave her family, but it is the man that is supposed “to leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife” (Genesis 2: 24). With such resentful sentiments, radical feminists encourage women to forsake the marriage institution altogether and embrace lifetime singlehood. At the extreme of such radicalism, such women also drift into lesbianism. In contrast, Africana Womanism, Nego-feminism, and Snail-Sense feminism embrace the marriage institution, but insist that the husband must regard his wife as an equal partner in the marriage contract and not his subordinate or doormat. The most vexatious issues in marriage are forced marriages and inheritance problems which confront widows upon the death of their husbands.

In *Wintry Night*, Dengmei is forced into marriage with Renxiu the youngest son of Peng and Lanmei Aqiang. As a matter of fact, she “had been purchased at birth for future marriage to one of their sons, as was the custom” (*Wintry Night* 23). Unfortunately, the union is never really consummated because the groom takes ill mysteriously and dies on the eve of the wedding (*Wintry Night* 53). Her subsequent marriage to Liu Ahan is another “sale” because the indigent Ahan pays by working on Peng Aqiang’s farm without receiving any remuneration. The issue of forced marriage is also fictionalised in *The Butcher’s Wife*, where Lin Shin, another orphan, is forced to marry the sadistic pig butcher Chen Jiangshu by her rapacious uncle who batters her away for a “pound of pork” to be delivered to his house every ten days (*The Butcher’s Wife* 11-12). Dehinwa in *The Interpreters* escapes being forced to marry someone other than Biodun Sagoe simply because she is educated and able to stand up to her mother. She firmly rejects the emotional blackmail of her mother who declares with teary eyes: “I haven’t worked and slaved to send you to England and pulled strings to get you a really good post in the Senior Service only to have you give me a Hausa grandson” (*The Interpreters* 36). In Buchi Emechta’s *Bride Price*, Aku-nna, is forced in marriage to Okoboshi who abducts her with the connivance of some members of his family. But she tricks her groom by lying that she has been deflowered by her true love, Chike (144-5) which makes Okoboshi to contemn and reject her. Aku-nna later elopes with Chike (151) and both get married in town far away from the village.

Given the increasing level of education in Nigeria and Taiwan, it should be safe to presume that forced marriages have been eradicated by now. Unfortunately, this seems not to be the case, especially in Nigeria where patriarchy still uses religion and other traditional beliefs to force young girls into early marriages. There is no statistics to show how many girls are forced into marriage every year in Taiwan or Nigeria. However, the reality of forced marriages is brought to the fore in Nigeria by two celebrated cases. The first has to do with the national

uproar caused by a Nigerian Senator and former governor of Zamfara State, Ahmed Sani Yerima, who married a thirteen-year-old Egyptian girl in 2010 and justified his action by saying he was following in the footsteps of Prophet Mohammed. He added that he would not obey the Child Rights Act or any other law of Nigeria forbidding marriage to a minor because it is against his religion, Islam (Nairaland Forum n.p.). The second case is more pathetic and fatal. Wusila Umar, a girl of fourteen, was forced to marry a thirty-five-year old man, Sani in Kano State of Nigeria. She protested that she would prefer to finish her education, but her father and the elders of her community decided she was ripe for marriage according to tradition and religion. They did not mind the fact that the Nigerian constitution says that a lady can only be married at the ripe age of eighteen, and that section 21 of the Child's Right Act prohibits child marriages, while section 22 of the same law nullifies any marriage contracted by any parent or guardian without the consent of the lady involved. In April 2014, the child-bride administered some poison into the food she had prepared for her husband. Consequently, her husband and three of his friends who ate the food with him died, and she was arrested by the police (*Vanguard* 16 April 2014 n.p.). At this point, it is appropriate to reiterate Ezeigbo's averment that when a girl is allowed to be educated up to the tertiary level, the obnoxious practice of forced marriages/child marriages will go into desuetude. A well-educated lady cannot be forced into marriage because she is not only armed with the knowledge of her fundamental human rights, she also knows how to enforce them without having to resort to manslaughter like the fictive butcher's wife, Lin Shin, or the flesh-and-blood Nigerian child-bride Wusila Umar.

A peculiar marital tradition imposed by patriarchy on women within the Igbo culture of South Eastern Nigeria was the practice of a "male woman." This refers to a lady forced by her aging parents to bear children on their behalf. The parents want more children but have passed childbearing age. They would then persuade or coerce their daughter to choose a lover for herself who would visit her regularly in her father's house and produce children through her. The father of the lady in question would not accept a bride price from the man and, according to custom, would claim all the children born of such an unusual union, especially the male children. This is the fate of Aziagba in Ezeigbo's *The Last of the Strong Ones*, whose father, Obiatu, wants a male child when her mother, Ejimnaka, has passed childbearing age. Ejimnaka notes:

It was Aziagba who solved the problem and saved all of us from slow death. She was willing to remain at home with us and produce *male children* for her father ...She chose Okoroji as a mate. And he was willing to enter into the relationship with her. (*The Last of the Strong Ones* 37, emphasis added)

Ona in Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* is also forced to be a "male woman" by her father, Obi Umunna, who

had maintained that she must never marry; his daughter was never going to stoop to any man. She was free to have men, however, and if she bore a son, he would take her father's name, thereby rectifying the omission nature had made. (*Joys of Motherhood* 12, emphasis added)

The concept and practice of a "male woman" is a throttle on the woman's freedom to choose who to marry, and to accept the joys and challenges arising from such a choice. Even though Ezeigbo's *Snail Sense Feminism* moots the idea of resurrecting this practice in contemporary Nigeria in order to overcome Nigerians' desperate search for the male child, she doubts if men and women will accept it "especially because they are educated and enlightened or because they are Christians" (*Snail-Sense Feminism* 31-2).

There are adequate legal provisions against forced marriages in Nigeria and Taiwan but how effective are they in curbing the incidence? Their effectiveness will depend on the willingness of the girls involved to report to the police as well as the willingness of the police to take prompt and appropriate action. But in a society where parents, especially fathers, have the force of tradition confirming their power to toy with their daughter's destiny as they like coupled with the inability or reluctance of a girl to report her father to law enforcement agencies, it is doubtful if these laws will not remain mere paper tigers. As pointed out above, there are no statistics in both countries to show how many girls are forced into marriage yearly. Nonetheless, the phenomenon persists and this study contends that this aspect of structural violence will continue to debilitate female security in both countries unless it is addressed legally, and through continuous education and re-education of the young and, especially, of the older generation who use culture and religion to force little girls into marriage.

Insecurity and Female Inheritance

Inheritance is another thorny issue that patriarchy uses to inflict structural violence on women in Nigeria and Taiwan, thereby compromising their peace of mind and inducing in them a crisis of being immediately they are widowed. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, daughters can inherit separately from their fathers, but wives inherit their deceased husband's property indirectly through their children. This is hardly the case in some other parts of the country. Among the Igbos and the Edos of Southern Nigeria, inheritance has traditionally been through the male line. In other words, the eldest male often takes the lion share of whatever is left by their dead father. In Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle*, the

fortuitous birth of the boy Nkemdirin saves Eaglewoman and her highly educated daughters from losing all that she and her late husband laboured to acquire throughout their lifetime. Even when a greedy relation encroaches on their property and the village council rules in their favour, the men instructed to erect permanent markers at the borders of the disputed land are reluctant to carry out the order of the council because the only male in the family, Nkemdirin, a secondary school boy, is not physically present at the scene. The patriarchal society does not reckon with the presence of the highly trained professional daughters – a medical doctor, a teacher, a doctorate degree holder, a graduate priest - and their aged mother, a well-known entrepreneur.

Patriarchal subjugation of women in terms of inheritance also manifests in the act of inheriting women along with other “property” left behind by their deceased husband. For example, in Buchi Emecheta’s *Joys of Motherhood*, Adaku and her senior wife are both “inherited” by the financially insolvent Nnaife at the death of his elder brother. In the same vein, when Odia Ezekiel dies in *The Bride Price*, his elder brother, Okonkwo, inherits his wife, Ma Blackie (*Bride Price* 73). These women are never consulted for their preference, to remarry into the family or to stay single or remarry outside the family. Patriarchal oppression of widows through disinheritance is also vividly demonstrated in the opening pages of *The Butcher’s Wife*, where Lin Shin’s uncle throws Lin Shin and her mother out of the house built by her late husband and moves in with his own family (*The Butcher’s Wife* 6). The woman’s sexual misconduct later in the narrative arises from the hardship of homelessness and penury which her brother-in-law’s misappropriation inflicts on mother and daughter. It could also be inferred that the frigidity and distrust of men which her uncle’s misdeed breeds in Lin Shin is partially responsible for the failure of her marriage and her subsequent act of manslaughter. Lin Shin not only kills her wicked husband but, symbolically, also kills her wicked uncle who disinherited her as well as the whole patriarchal structure of traditional Taiwanese society which spurns and succours the subjugation of females. If she had been a male, it is doubtful if the traditional Taiwanese society would have allowed the uncle to disinherit Lin Shin’s mother with such utter impunity. In *Orphan of Asia*, when the dispute over inheritance arises in the Hu family, it is notable that only the sons are reckoned with in the sharing of their father’s property (73). The same practice is observable in *A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers* where the inherited hectares of fishponds are shared among the four brothers (44-5).

Neither in Nigeria nor in Taiwan is there available statistics on the number of women annually disinherited by their late husbands’ relatives but there is no doubt that the practice still exists. However, a recent landmark judgement of the Supreme Court of Nigeria may bring some relief to daughters and widows

who find themselves trapped in such a situation in Nigeria. The apex court has ruled that daughters have a right to inherit their father's property and widows also have a right to inherit their husband's property contrary to traditional practices in some cultures of Nigeria. It describes the traditional practice of preventing daughters from inheriting their father's property and women from inheriting their husband's property as discriminatory and punitive, and a violation of Section 42 (1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution. Consequently, such discriminatory customary laws are declared null and void (*Vanguard* April 24, 2014 n.p.). If this ruling is strictly implemented by the police, many daughters and widows in Nigeria, especially in Igbo land, will heave a sigh of relief. In essence, females will no longer have to contend with this particular instance of structural violence.

Section Two: Direct Violence

Direct violence in the context of this study is limited to domestic violence (wife battery) and rape. Wife battery remains an important gender issue in Nigeria and, to a lesser extent, Taiwan. Patriarchy often calls wife beating "discipline", as if an adult female were a naughty seven-year-old for whom the good Book advocates regular doses of the rod. It also attributes wife battery to "nagging" on the part of the wife. In reality, wife battery evidences transfer of aggression by a frustrated husband who is probably unable to fulfil his responsibilities at home as a result of the economic downturn globally, or it could be the physicalisation of a subconscious patriarchal ideology that avers that being the "head" requires the physical humiliation of the wife once in a while to ensure she knows "who is the boss in the house." Wife battery occurs in some of the selected literary texts showing that it exists in the Nigerian and Taiwanese cultures for fiction is often a reflection of the society that produces it. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo often subjects his wife to serious beating and never receives a reprimand from his society until he beats his wife during the Week of Peace, a violation which threatens the very survival of the community. As Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess Ani puts it when he visits Okonkwo later in the day: "The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish" (22). He is thereafter fined one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries (22). It is rather strange that this punishment is meted out to Okonkwo not for beating his wife, but for endangering the life of the whole community. In other words, Okonkwo's society sees nothing wrong in wife battery, so long as it does not affect the health of the community. This shows the low regard of women in the Umuofian society, and this is further confirmed by the fact that even though Okonkwo is in the habit of beating his wives, he is never reprimanded again by his society, not even when he shoots at one of them but misses (28). To the patriarchal Igbo society depicted in the novel, wife battery is "normal."

If Okonkwo's beating of his wife could be excused on the ground of his lack of education, the same cannot be said of the highly educated Papa Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus*. In that novel, Eugene an educated successful business mogul and a committed Christian, regularly beats his wife, Mama, at the slightest excuse forgetting that the Bible specifically forbids wife beating by reminding husbands that no man beats his own body but nourishes and cherishes it (Ephesians 5:30). Thus, Eugene is expected to love and cherish his wife and not to batter her. But that is not what happens in the novel. As mentioned earlier, Eugene beats his wife regularly. Any time, Mama is beaten, she goes to clean the figurines in the sitting room, perhaps as a form of expurgation of whatever crime she committed leading up to the beating (*Purple Hibiscus* 18). For allowing Kambili, her daughter, to take a painkiller to relief her (the daughter's) menstrual pains, Mama is flogged along with the children. For excusing herself from visiting Father Benedict after mass because of her pregnancy and tiredness thereof, she is so severely beaten by her husband that she loses the pregnancy that had already reached an advanced stage (*Purple Hibiscus* 41-2). Another severe beating later in the narrative left her face "swollen and the area around her right eye was the black-purple shade of an overripe avocado" (*Purple Hibiscus* 197). Unable to bear the pain and humiliation, Mama, like Lin Shin *The Butcher's Wife*, poisons and kills Papa Eugene.

There are no official records of wife battery in Nigeria because most instances go unreported. As mentioned above, in many Nigerian cultures wife beating is regarded as "normal" unless it goes beyond the "bounds of reason" determined by patriarchy. As such, cases of wife battery are often treated as "family affairs" by the community, and the police are usually reluctant to wade in except in extreme cases. This observation is buttressed by the Nigerian Police which has no special records for wife battery, but classifies it as a part of "assault" cases. Statistics of prison inmates serving different jail terms for assault between 2006 and 2010 buttress this assertion: 2006, 6,300 males and 329 females; 2007, 7, 377 males and 225 females; 2008, 5,032 males and 400 females; 2009, 6,080 males and 457 females; and 2010, 4,974 males and 517 females. (Source: National Bureau of Statistics Annual Abstract of Statistics 2011) It is noticeable that more males are in jail for assault than females. The statistics of females serving time for assaults can be ignored on the ground that a woman cannot be in jail for beating herself, and it is inconceivable that *all* of the males serving time for assault in Nigerian prisons between 2006 and 2010 are in prison only for beating their wives. Moreover, the statistical label is "males" and not "men" which implies that some of them are single! Without adequate and representational statistics, it is difficult to ascertain the frequency and spread of wife battery in Nigeria.

Statistics from Taiwan does not only exclude wife beating, the closest to what the Nigeria Police labels as “Assault” is “Serious Injury.” This is just one of the entries under a general label entitled “Violent Crimes.” Other crimes classified as “violent crimes” include “murder and non-eligible manslaughter,” “robbery and forceful taking,” “kidnapping,” “intimidation,” and “forcible rape.” The other crimes listed are put under “burglary and larceny.” For “Serious Injury,” the number of reported cases between 2006 and 2010 are: 2006, 8,911; 2007, 6,059; 2008, 4,925; 2009, 3,799; and 2010, 2, 557. This statistics exclude Juvenile offenders whose cases are not only insignificant but irrelevant to this particular section of the study which deals with marriage. (Source: Statistical YearBook of the Republic of China 2013 133) As observed above, these figures do not indicate the number of wife beating cases reported to the police in Taiwan. Worse, the statistics from Taiwan is not gender disaggregated. Consequently, we are left with the putative conclusion that the Taiwanese society has been able to eliminate wife battery in all its inglorious manifestations. The veracity of such a conclusion is not only doubtful but dangerous in the sense that it may be sweeping an important security issue which affects Taiwanese women under the carpet. It is safest to aver from the statistics above that the internalised patriarchal ideology still holds strong in the Taiwanese society making instances of wife beating to go unreported.

The persistence of wife battery in any society is one of the causes of divorce, a situation that often destabilises the children along with the feuding parents. A puerile approach to wife battery is to advocate legal solutions which may end in divorce and single parenthood, both of which may not be desirable from the personal and societal standpoints. It has also been suggested that the increasing education of women and men would eventually eradicate wife battery, but the instance of the fictive Eugene nullifies this suggestion. In real life, educated men have also been guilty of this crime. Recently, a Nigerian, Arowolo, a graduate and a youth pastor, beat his banker wife to death and has since been sentenced to death by hanging. Thus education per se may not eradicate wife battery, but a gender sensitive re-education that consistently discourages wife battery and advocates gender cooperation may have a more lasting effect. In time, the message that wife battery is a social anathema will sink into the personal and collective unconscious of the people, and the new generation of boys and men will grow up to respect their wives, regard them as co-equals in the important but sensitive marriage enterprise and learn to settle quarrels within the ambience of love and law without recourse to fisticuffs.

Rape and Gender Insecurity

Rape is commonly defined as the act of having sexual intercourse with another without her (sometimes his) consent. In other words, someone is forced to have

sex with another by violence or the threat of violence. During war situations, rape is so common that it has been taken for granted by soldiers on both sides as a reward for risking their lives. Oftentimes women are taken captives as part of war booties. The United Nations and other bodies have documented cases of rape during past wars and on-going conflicts (the Bosnia-Herzegovina war, the systematic rape of women in Darfur, Sudan, the so-called “comfort women” who were forced by the Japanese army into prostitution during the Second World War to satisfy the sexual appetites of their soldiers stationed in Korea and Taiwan etc.). These instances of rape are not the primary focus of this study, but the sexual violence visited on women during peace time. In the primary texts selected for this study, no rape case is really depicted, except the marital rape of *Lin Shin* by her husband Chen Jiangshui who treats his wife cruelly in the act of sexual intercourse so that she would scream the way his favourite prostitute, Golden Flower screams in order to induce in her customers a sense of power that massages their ego and keeps them hooked on her. The cruelty of the pig butcher while sexually assaulting his wife is fully depicted in the following lines:

Chen Jiangshui still took her whenever he felt like it, and once he became aware that she had gotten used to the way he was mistreating her, and that her screams had lessened a little, he stepped up his abuses. After one particular violent bout, Lin Shin discovered bruises all over her arms, and they took more than ten days to disappear. (48)

The above scenario qualifies as rape because Lin Shin, though Jiangshui’s wife, is never sensitised by him about the ensuing coitus; her husband usually pounces on her at the most inauspicious moment, wrestle her to the ground to have his way. The violence he also inflicts on her to induce her to scream is evidence enough that what Jiangshui calls lovemaking is nothing but marital rape. However, the concept of “marital rape” is unknown to many policemen, and it would be hard for a poor uneducated woman such as Lin Shin to convince law enforcement agents that she has been “raped” by husband

Rape is one of the most under-reported incidents in many societies during peacetime because of the social stigma that it attracts and the reluctance of the police to investigate such cases. Until recently in Nigeria, rape is suffered in silence by the ladies involved to avoid social stigma. Thus, the police in Nigeria have very few records of rape incidents. In fact, rape cases are classified under “sexual offences,” a term that is rather ambiguous as homosexuality, lesbianism, defilement are all covered by the term. Between 2006 and 2010, the statistics of reported cases involving sexual offences is: 2006, 5,250 (males) and 20 (females); 2007, 3,505 (males) and 37 (females); 2008, 3, 556 (males) and 6 (females); 2009, 3, 897 (males) and 265 (females); and 2010, 2,040 (males) and

290 (females). (Source: National Bureau of Statistics Annual Abstract of Statistics 2011) As observed earlier, it is difficult to know the actual number of rape cases included in these “sexual offences.” In Taiwan, rape is classified as “forcible rape,” and not “sexual offences.” Between 2006 and 2010, the statistics is: 2006, 7 978; 2007, 7 529; 2008, 6 843; 2009, 6 139; and 2010, 5 365. The statistics of reported rape cases involving Juvenile offenders in the same period in Taiwan is: 2006, 378; 2007, 342; 2008, 398; 2009, 374; and 2010, 362. (Source: Statistical YearBook of the Republic of China 133-4) Given the population of Nigerian which is about 167 million to Taiwan’s 23 million, it is seductive to conclude that there are more rape cases in Taiwan than in Nigeria. Such a suggestion will be misleading. It is more “reasonable” to assume that there are far more unreported cases of rape in Nigeria than in Taiwan, given the higher level of literacy in Taiwan compared to Nigeria, and the protections and support which the Taiwanese government offers rape victims to remove the social stigmatisation which often discourage rape victims from reporting to the police. Still, it is safe to assume that rape cases are grossly under-reported in Nigeria and Taiwan. But beyond the statistics, what comes out crystal clear is that rape still exists in the two nations, and until incidents of rape are reduced to the barest minimum, the security of females in Nigeria and Taiwan is compromised.

Conclusion

As we conclude this study, it is imperative to reiterate the three objectives of the study and assess their confirmation or invalidation by the findings. The first objective of this research is to examine the ways the Nigerian and Taiwanese societies ensure the security of their female citizens at the fictive or reality levels. In terms of direct violence, the analysis above shows that in pre-colonial societies, for example, Umuofia in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the ruling council has its own security apparatus which protects all citizens. All able-bodied men in the clan go to war, and when a daughter of the land was killed by an outsider, these warriors are prepared to avenge her death and protect their community. Internally, the council of elders also decides on the measures to take when security is breached, and the *egwugwu* masquerades dispense justice and serve as the final court of arbitration in the community. However, there is no mechanism to protect women against an abusive husband like Okonkwo unless their misbehaviour threatens the very existence of the society. It is only then that religion will step in, to punish the offender for beating his wife at a particular period, not to stop the abuse. Hence, the punishment does not deter other men from doing same during a period considered “safe” for wife beating! In the other more recent novels, there are references to the military, the police and other security agencies of modern society.

As shown in the analysis above as well as the statistical data provided direct violence against women in terms of wife battery or rape is under-reported by the victims. Even when they are reported, the reluctance of the police to investigate such cases renders these security measures ineffective. The contention here is that until abusive husbands and rapists are dealt with by the community, the females in that community cannot feel totally secure. In terms of structural or indirect violence against women, the analysis demonstrates that while some gains have been recorded by women at the political front, especially in Taiwan, patriarchy uses invisibilisation (being in office but not in power) to subjugate women. Increasing access to education has meant increasing access to economic and other social freedoms for women, but it has not dealt with the issue of violence on women by men. This means that a new type of education which mainstreams gender issues at all levels is what is required. In essence, the societies depicted in the prose fictions of Nigeria and Taiwan are still largely patriarchal, and even though the fictionalised status of women in Nigerian and Taiwanese prose fictions is not as high as the status of girls and women in the Nigerian and Taiwanese societies of today a lot still needs to be done to bring women at par with men and ensure their security.

The second objective of this study is to assess the impact of gender (in)security on the empowerment or helplessness of the female, in reality and as reflected in the fictive lives of female characters of the selected Nigerian and Taiwanese novels. Simply put, what this study set out to validate is the notion that when women feel secure, they experience no crisis of being, their sense of worth is enhanced and this has a salutary effect on their productivity and empowerment. The obverse is also true; insecurity breeds repressed helplessness, anger and lack of creativity in females. The increasing number of girls and women exposed to education has contributed in no small measure in boosting female confidence in the competitive global environment. Education also empowers them to contribute meaningfully to society in areas where they were hitherto excluded. The fact that there is hardly a profession in Nigeria and Taiwan where females are totally absent, not even in the military, shows the empowering value of education. Many examples have been cited from our primary texts of women in Nigerian and Taiwanese fictions who are able to stand on their feet financially and still make their marks in their chosen professions without having to lean on men. They include Ifeoma of *Purple Hibiscus*, Efuru in *Efuru*, Shuckum in *Orphan of Asia*, Dehinwa in *The Interpreters*, and Alice Shih in *The Man with the Compound Eyes*. But many other women also exist in the same texts who are still largely subjugated and disempowered by patriarchy because they have little or no form of education. In short, gender security, especially in the area of structural violence, radically affects the confidence, productivity and empowerment of women in the Nigerian and Taiwanese locales.

The third objective of this study is to explore the role of feminism and gender activities in the fictional and actual emancipation and empowerment of Nigerian and Taiwanese girls and women in the twenty-first century. Although no statistics exists to prove the link between feminism, gender activities and the emancipation of girls and women in Nigeria and Taiwan, it is arguable that female access to education is a result of feminism and gender activities over the years. Furthermore, strong female characters like Efuru (uneducated but liberated), Shuchum, Dehinwa, Alice Shih, and Ifeoma are physical embodiments of the feminist philosophy that a girl or woman given the same educational opportunities like her male counterpart can be independent and still contribute meaningfully to her society. These strong, anti-traditional female characters then become role models for Nigerian and Taiwanese females. By fictionalising the success of such female characters, feminist literature encourage flesh-and-blood females in Nigeria and Taiwan to emulate them and seek to replicate their success stories in their lives at the educational, economic and political levels. Nevertheless, the thesis of this study that women need the active cooperation of men to achieve total emancipation from all forms of insecurities is validated by the analyses of the selected literary texts. Women in both countries cannot do without the support of males like Father Amadi and Jaja in *Purple Hibiscus*, and Ah-ying in *The Butcher's Wife* who warned Pig-butcher Jiangshui against mistreating his young wife.

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