

**MOTHERHOOD AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN BLACK WOMEN'S
LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF BUCHI EMECHETA'S *THE JOYS OF
MOTHERHOOD* AND EDWIDGE DANCTICAT'S *BREATH, EYES, MEMORY***

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of a Degree of Master of Arts in Literature of
Chuka University.**

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other University

Signature Date 16th Oct 2024

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Recommendation

This thesis has been examined, passed and submitted with our approval as the University supervisors

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DEDICATION

To my children; Mwenda, Nkatha and Muthomi. Thank you for making my motherhood journey adventurous.

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ABSTRACT

Black female characters in literature have attracted immense interest from both writers and critics, with many scholars exploring the portrayal of black women through the lens of western ideologies on feminism. Within these feminist studies, little research has been carried out on the social and cultural contexts or circumstances that shape motherhood, that is, societal expectations of what black motherhood should entail. Minimal attention has been paid on how these contexts shape black motherhood and the depiction of black mothers in literature in Africa and the Caribbean. This study has attempted to fill this gap by analyzing Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* which is set in the Caribbean and partly in the United States, and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, based in an African context, in order to understand the portrayal of black motherhood in the two contexts. The study was guided by two objectives; first, to explore the socio-cultural contexts of black mothers in the two novels, and secondly, to analyze black mother characterization in order to get insights into the world of mothers and the environments that shape them into the mothers that they are. Black feminism theory as advanced by Kimberle Crenshaw was used in this study to analyze data on literary representation of black motherhood. The argument that the experiences of black women are shaped by a combination of race, class and gender, resulting in discrimination of black women was crucial in the analysis, in order to reveal what influences the character of black mothers in the two contexts. Literature on studies concerning black mothers, black motherhood, women in literature, socio-cultural contexts of women's writings and experiences of women in literature has been reviewed in order to reveal the gap that this study fills. A qualitative research design was used and analysis of the two novels was done using close textual reading. Data was collected from the two primary texts and secondary sources emanating from the internet and the library, such as literary journals and periodicals. The study used literature review matrix and theoretical framework matrix as the main tools for data collection. The major conclusions of the study are that: black mothers resist oppressive structures in the society in their quest for their identities in the two novels under study, black mothers go through emotional and physical pain in their struggle to create a good life for their children, mothers go against cultural expectations to be good mothers to their children, the society fails to view mothers as sexual beings once they deliver babies or are nursing and this affects them as mothers and finally, various factors such as religion, education, culture, gender and morality intersect to cause oppression on black mothers. This study contributes to the ongoing debate on women, gender and motherhood studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Literary studies have been done around the globe on women, often focusing on characterization, exploitation by the patriarchal systems, inequality, alienation, sexuality, womanhood, women's consciousness, social realism, identity, attitudes, marriage and other forms of representation of women in literature. Studies on race in literature have been concentrated in the United States and the Caribbean, with many of them focusing on racial and cultural hybridity. In race literature there have been 'concerns of aesthetics' as advocated for by WEB Du Bois in the Pan African spirit. These 'concerns' revolve around black consciousness, beauty and the universal spirit of black people anywhere in the world (Gikandi, 2005). Experiences of women in literature, their characterization and writings have been studied under variations of the feminist movement which arose out of the need to advocate for the rights and privileges of women in the world, fueled by the proceedings of the Berlin Conference of 1884.

The feminist movement, originating from the European environment, consisted of multiple waves addressing issues of suffrage, reproductive rights and the objectification of women by mainstream media. The first feminism wave was in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and its main aim was to open up opportunities for women. It developed from a society that dwelt on urban industrialism and it focused mainly on suffrage. (Handal, 2013). The second wave of feminism was against the portrayal of women only as wives and mothers by the media. These second wave feminists were also concerned with sexuality and the women's right to reproduction and the male ideology that viewed women as objects of beauty whose duty was staying at home or in poorly paying jobs. (Rampton, 2008). In the mid-1990s, the third wave of feminism arose, whose goal was to chart a new path for women and avoid the idea of focusing only on the experiences of white women. The women of this wave tried to avoid the role of victim through their own definition of feminine beauty in order to become subjects, as opposed to objects, of a sexist patriarchy. The fourth wave feminism, which began in 2012 advocates for the empowerment of women, the use of internet tools and intersectionality between class, race and gender and how the three contribute to extreme oppression of women.

The ideals of feminism were received differently in Africa due to the unique contexts of the continent dictated by culture and experiences. Women from African continent have seen the need for a different kind of feminism. What constitutes the need for African feminism are the challenges that face the African woman, which the white woman is insulated from (Arndt, 2002; Fayemi, 2009). Black feminists find that their white counterparts are reluctant to talk about issues of race, class and gender in their own backyards, subjecting blacks to racial discrimination in western societies, and so they see the so-called feminist movement as hypocritical, aimed at championing white interests. The white feminists ignored issues of motherhood and its intersectionality with race, class, gender and other positive ideas of African culture such as respect for women and mothers, unity of society, interests of low-class women and issues of disabled women who could not speak out against their oppressors.

Black women writers therefore advocate for the involvement of black women in politics and the multidimensional aspects of their oppression in the world as it seeks to understand the injustices affecting their daily lives. Black feminism also emphasizes intersectionality, that is, the cumulative effects of many forms of discrimination based on race, class and gender. The movement rejects the alienation, racism and sexism that black women were subjected to by organizations which focused only on advancing the interests of middle-class white women, thereby ignoring the interests of black women, and most importantly, the unique and diverse experiences of black mothers.

The consequence of this is that vast scholarship on women, gender and motherhood in Africa and the Caribbean has been done to portray motherhood in various ways, without giving much attention to the universality of the experiences of black mothers. For instance, Akujobi (2011) explores motherhood in African Literature and Culture in works by female writers so as to understand their perceptions regarding themselves as mothers and how they make sense of their experiences of motherhood. Akujobi concludes that the theme of motherhood in African literature finds relevance in the way it is largely documented by women writers in the continent. Scholars have studied how motherhood studies in literature differ from culture to culture and the role of motherhood in the African setting. This implies that African communities perceive motherhood in different ways although all hold motherhood in reverence. In Africa,

motherhood gives a woman identity but also limits her identity (Devi, 2017). This means that motherhood accords women recognition in the community, but at the same time gives men favorable grounds for oppressing women.

Studies on motherhood have also been done in the Caribbean, focusing on various aspects that seek to reveal the condition of mothers. For instance, in a study on novels by women from transatlantic literary traditions, Mohamed (1998) exposes the role of the patriarchal society in silencing women's accounts of motherhood, and its failure to honor their lived bodily experiences as women. This implies that female authors often write with fear of the existing patriarchal conditions and consequently, such studies give minimal attention to experiences of mothers in the Caribbean. Studies on motherhood in the Caribbean have also exposed how mothers relate with their daughters and the perception of mothers as colonizers by their daughters and how this has resulted in strained relationships between them (Thomas, 2007). In his study of motherhood in the Caribbean, Brown has also reviewed Edith Clarke's *My Mother Who Fathered Me*, to explore the aspect of mother headed households, which consist of a woman and her children, hence exposing a shift in gender roles in the Caribbean (Brown, 2023).

Most scholarly works in Africa and the Caribbean have therefore dealt with issues like, how women perceive themselves as mothers, the role of motherhood in the African setting, how motherhood differs from culture to culture and the role of the patriarchal society in silencing women's accounts of motherhood. This has exposed the need for an examination of the circumstances that shape Black motherhood through a study of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* which is set in Africa and Edwidge Dancticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* which is set in Haiti and partly in Brooklyn, New York. Dancticat was born in Haiti and later relocates to Brooklyn, New York to join her parents. Most of the events in the novel take place in Haiti, thus the novel is categorized as a Caribbean text in this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Research relating to representation of women in literature has often focused on sexuality, exploitation by culture and patriarchy, inequality, womanhood, identity, marriage and other forms of representation of women in literature. Little critical

attention has been directed on aspects of black motherhood focusing on specific contexts, feelings of characters, attitudes and even personal ambitions. In cases where attempts have been made to study motherhood, attention has been directed towards viewpoints of men towards mothers, how mothers describe their motherhood experiences, the role of patriarchy in silencing women's accounts of motherhood as well as on relationships between mothers and their children. This approach has reinforced patriarchal attitudes in motherhood studies, rather than on contexts that shape black mothers in literature. This study sought to fill this gap by examining the multiplicity of factors affecting motherhood from a black people's perspective in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Edwidge Danciccat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* in order to reveal what shapes the experience of motherhood in a black people's context, (in addition to patriarchy). The study contributes to the ongoing discussion on gender studies.

1.3 Research Objectives

This research study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To explore the contexts that define black motherhood in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Edwidge Danciccat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.
- ii. To analyze black mother characterization in the selected novels.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What are the contexts of black mothers as depicted in the selected novels?
- ii. How is the black mother character depicted in the selected novels in terms of attitudes, their inner feelings, decisions, their perception of the world, personality, reactions, speech and actions?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine motherhood in literature by black women writers in the Caribbean and African cultural contexts.

1.6 Justification of the Study

This study adds to the rich repertoire of women's literature and the multiplicity of approaches towards studies on motherhood. The study has contributed to the existing knowledge on motherhood in black feminist literature through an examination of the

representation of black mother characters in the two selected texts and the many factors that intersect to shape black motherhood. The novels, having been authored by women, provide insights into the feminine world, specifically the portrayal of black mothers in Africa and the Caribbean. The themes discussed in the novels also makes them suitable for this study. Secondly, the study calls for a re-examination of common approaches, such as from the purely feminist to specific categorizations of women as widows, mothers, wives, working class and even students since their experiences are varied.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study analyzes two novels authored by female writers from Africa and the Caribbean namely, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Edwidge Danciccat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. The analysis focuses on the portrayal of African and Caribbean mothers in socio-cultural setups and their characterization in the two novels so as to understand the idea of black motherhood through an afro-feminist approach in order to understand the circumstances that shape these mothers and how they affect the formation of mother characters in the two novels.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

- Black Motherhood** : Female characters of the black race from Africa and the Caribbean
- Sociocultural Context** : This refers to the circumstances or conditions that shape black motherhood.
- Womanhood** : The qualities considered to be natural to or characteristic of a woman.
- Intersectionality** : This refers to the variety of factors informing our understanding of motherhood.
- The Joys of Motherhood*** : Abbreviated as *The Joys*
- Breath, Eyes Memory*** : Abbreviated as *BEM*

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Women in Literature

The major concern of literature for and about women is to work on categories of study areas for women writers. Riverra (2017) asserts that ‘before the introduction of women’s literary history colleges into academia and the renewed efforts of scholars to explore, recover, and preserve the literary tradition, women themselves were often the only champions of themselves, their contemporaries, and their predecessors.’ This implies that the patriarchal status of the community failed to support female writers then.

The portrayal of women in medieval English Literature was based on patriarchal notions as observed by Lucas & Ordeniza (2023). Women are often portrayed as second-class citizens and as commodities in new medieval literature. Lucas and Ordeniza further argue that the common and positive image of women during this period was that of the ‘pure’ woman, and unmarried. The women were regarded as pure until their wedding night. Writers in the new medieval also represented the idea of Mother, which was the main role of women.

However, in his review of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *‘A Vindication on the Rights of Women’*, Taylor (2003) contends that ‘the book paved the way for many women after Mary Wollstonecraft to not only publish their works but also to engage in the overall critical discourse surrounding the issue of women in literature. This was a beacon of hope for the female writers as they began active participation in writing, critiquing and production of literary materials.’ Kelly (1993) also contends that, ‘women writers of this period were faced with a literary discourse that assigned learned, sublime and controversial genres, public and political themes to men.’

Jacobus (2012) contends that ‘the second wave feminism in the 1970s and 1980s sparked a resurgence in forging a place for the works of women. Colleges began offering courses in women’s history and literature, and in recent years, a greater emphasis on intersectionality has encouraged exploration into the relationship between race, gender, religion and class to even further prove the importance of acknowledging the marginalized groups in literature.’ According to Tanjim (2016),

the advancement of women in the arts over the ages has also resulted in their becoming a symbol of change in more recent times. This symbol represents changes in how women are portrayed to the public as well as the recognition and deference accorded to women writers who are still making history through their works. Further, Tanjim argues that in the patriarchal Elizabethan era for instance, women were portrayed as the weaker sex and they were also brought out as voiceless characters. This notion of the weaker sex has greatly improved and women literature has been recognized and even male critics have begun paying attention to literary works by women, and as a result, the presence of literature by women has been felt around the globe.

In the African context, women writing plays the role of outlining the history of women and how they perceived their experiences over the centuries. Thus, women writings expose tales about women who have suffered under male defined narratives that bring out the men as superior to women. Nnaemeka (1994) argues that some critics refuse to accept the gender discriminations in the colonial system of education as a reason why women writers took time to begin writing and getting appreciated by the scholarly world. This is despite the fact that researchers have captured information about women who understand and participate in coming up with narratives, preserving them and even in transmitting them during occasions in the community.

Finnegan (2005) also observes that women in Africa not only performed songs and narratives in events, they also participated in the creation of such songs and narratives and they helped to recreate oral traditions that had the input of women. This implies that women writing in literature has indeed exposed the history of women and how they got involved in writing as they transitioned from oral to written literature. Despite many studies on women, gender and motherhood, few studies have been carried out on the universality of motherhood. In addition, the existing body of literary works has a lesser input of literary materials by women than by men. According to Kumah (2000), African women are not fully represented in the literary world. Moreover, the existing literature on women explores the western ideals of gender and often, women from African continent are treated as lesser beings by their male counterparts and their works are rarely appreciated by critics. This implies that

male writings about women in the past exposed women from a western feminist perspective and women writers had few opportunities to showcase their writing skills. Matiang'i (1992) singles out Sembene Ousman, Mongo Beti, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o as examples of male African writers who have portrayed women positively in their writings. Achebe & Robertson (2019) contend that men misrepresent women in their writings:

We have been ambivalent, we have been deceitful even, about the role of the woman. We have...said all kinds of grandiloquent things about womanhood, but in our practical life the place of the woman has not been adequate.... We have created all kinds of myths to support the suppression of the woman, and...the time has come to put an end to that...the woman herself will be in the forefront in designing what her new role is going to be, with the humble cooperation of men (pp.3-4).

Therefore, scholars like Achebe & Robertson (2019) understand the implications of misrepresenting African women in their literary works and have contributed to the changing perception of female writers by male writers. The positivity can be seen through the influx of female authored works in Africa and the world. Achebe makes significant contribution in the agitation for recognition of women's role in art and life. However, there is a need to look at particular contexts within works of literature in relation to specific aspects of female characterization within the black feminist framework.

Male critics have tended to focus more on works by male authors. Lapin (2013) emphasizes on the various ways that men view works by women writers and further criticizes male writers for their little interest in works by female writers. Aidoo (1986) states that most creative works by women have not received enough attention. This, she contends, might be because matters regarding women are not taken seriously in Africa. Therefore, male critics have tended to concentrate more on works by male authors and paid little attention to works by female authors.

Kabira & Burkweyo (2016) also observe that women from Africa have tried to air the challenges they face through their literary works and through this method, they are able to assert their femininity. For instance, Begum (2020) argues that:

African women's writings explore a cultural life for women not choked by traditional customs but laced with women's struggle for women

empowerment. The contemporary African women writers further create protagonists that are self-determined, hardworking, rebellious and full of controversy (p. 16).

It is evident that this is the positive representation of African women by their fellow writer. The critics mentioned above therefore demonstrate the desire by African women to have a voice and to find inclusivity in a world that was previously dominated by men. Black women writers have glorified their female characters and accorded them strength and free will to explore and live life in their terms. The positive portrayal of women by male authors has stamped credibility to works by females. Despite the evolution in regard to portrayal of women by male writers, there is need for further scholarly work not only on women but also on black motherhood to explore circumstances that inform the creation of female characters.

Women have also been portrayed stereotypically in African literature. Chesaina (1987) notes that women are presented stereotypically in African literature in that many works give women the duties that men have termed as feminine leaving them no choice other than to comply. Collins (2000) observes that men portray their mothers on the framework of devotion, self-sacrifice, unconditional love and superstrong. He points out that it's strange that a great deal of black males who give credit to their own moms feel less obligated to the mothers of their own children.

Collins (2000) therefore points out that men may have respect for their mothers but fail to have the same feelings when it comes to their wives because the woman they regard highly is the one that bore them. Ogun-dipe-Leslie (2001) argues that the sweet mother stereotype has been used predominantly in African literature, where the mother is brought out as a symbol of self-sacrifice. The analyses by these scholars point to the hypocrisy of men in the treatment of women not only in art but life as well. These stereotypes focus on marriage, childbirth and even failure to become mothers and a woman was expected to live as per the stereotypical expectations of the community, although this is continually changing in the contemporary world. These studies make important contribution in this regard, but it is necessary to analyze women in terms of their own perceptions, feelings and actions away from the males.

Uko (2006) contends that an African woman is not viewed as an individual who can reason, make decisions and work on her own; she has to be attached to people in her life for the society to see her essence. Uko further argues:

Social and psychological factors may lead to spousal abuse, a situation in a marriage where one partner in the marriage becomes a punching bag and that this can easily break the union. The punching bags are mostly women, because in African societies, women are expected to be submissive (p. 82).

Women suffer silently in the hands of such men and the society fails to realize that this is wrong as a result of the objectification of women. Bouziani (2015) corroborates this study when he points out that women have experienced patriarchy for a long time. The treatment of females by men in traditional Africa exhibited inequality, because men would beat their wives and this was perceived to be normal. Such and other acts of male dominance on women have caused women writers to struggle for freedom from oppression, through art. As a result, there has been considerable growth of women in the literary arena as many have taken up writing to expose patriarchy and how badly it affects women in literature and in general. It is important for women writers to resist the existing narratives of dominance and come up with new ways of exploring the unique experiences of women, more specifically black mothers, and how they are shaped in the changing global setup.

According to D'Almeida (1996), attempts have been made to examine women in African culture today, and as a result, works published in the present day include female protagonists. The female characters in their works are now multifaceted agents who are central to the story rather than being shown as anonymous people with no voice. In her commentary on the evolving portrayal of female characters in modern women's literature, Stratton (2020) also highlights Nigerian authors like Adichie and their contributions to the discourse that aims to elevate women from the periphery to the forefront as they challenge patriarchy and other forms of gender marginalization in all of their works. She is successful in giving her female characters a voice by going against the patriarchal hierarchy. The aforementioned statement suggests a shift in the way African women characters are viewed in fiction, as they strive for self-actualization and add to conversations about marriage, love, motherhood, and nation-building by sharing their unique experiences and presenting fresh viewpoints. In an

effort to create a voice for women, the need for exploration of black motherhood experiences arises, for one to understand their uniqueness.

2.2 Contexts of African Women's Writings

African literature has evolved with regard to its representation of women characters in literature. Historically, women have undergone many challenges in transcending patriarchal norms and societal expectations. According to Ba (2020) there are many vital insights into the transformative influence of feminist movements on the depiction of female characters and the backdrop of African literature. Just like many other parts of the world, women have often undergone discrimination and marginalization within literary circles. Patriarchy in most African societies has subordinated women within literature and the overarching social contexts. In most cases, women are commonly represented in adverse and limited manners that promote stereotypes and entrench gender roles. However, feminist movements have challenged such narratives and encouraged re-evaluation of women's perspectives and roles in literature. This study has explored such roles in the Caribbean and African contexts.

As mentioned above, the prevalent evolution of women's roles portrays changes in societal attitudes towards female empowerment and gender equality. Therefore, feminist ideologies have played a critical role in remodeling female characters into multidimensional depictions. Ba (2020) recognizes the transformational impact of feminism based on how African writers empower and portray female characters. Women are no longer portrayed in relation to men, but rather as people with their own sense of individuality and agency contrary to the past norms. By avoiding representing women as objects of male desires, or mothers and wives, feminist ideologies have inadvertently challenged the patriarchal structures. By looking at the representation of motherhood, this study has examined how the two authors reveal the traits of mothers that resurface out of influence from the contexts within which they live and their condition of being mothers, and it has revealed that black mothers are shaped by socio-cultural factors as we shall see in Chapter Five.

Despite feminism-oriented developments, chauvinistic undertones are still evident in most societies and they perpetuate misrepresentation of women in literature. Olutoyin (2014) contends that, "Conventional societal expectations and gender

norms continue to influence how female characters are portrayed by perpetuating stereotypes of mistreatment and subservience...” (p. 30). Although people in the modern-day society recognize the role of women in the society, gender expectations still limit how women characters are portrayed.

Different scholarly works highlight the sociocultural contexts that modify such representations and pinpoint women’s high status and societal contributions. In specific cultures, women embody hope for growth in the society. However, very few narratives represent the positive depiction of women as they are commonly juxtaposed within the themes of marginalization and oppression, which portrays the intricacies of gender dynamics in most societies due to the fact that black motherhood has often been used by patriarchy as a way of marginalizing women and turning them into overly submissive beings. In the changing world, the influence of conventional systems is still felt even by women who by the standards of the society, seem to have evolved. It was therefore important to examine these experiences of women in order to understand how such environments build character traits of black mothers.

Often, political and sociocultural contexts influence women representation in literature. Gwendolyn (1995) contends that, historically, women writers have experienced challenges transcending the social expectations and patriarchal norms. However, feminist movements have been influencing the depiction of female characters to represent and recognize women’s empowerment and agency within literature. The mainstream feminist movements have in their fight for equal representation of women and men, overlooked the uniqueness of the experiences of black women. Issues that are pertinent in the African context such as motherhood have also been overlooked. This background made the present study necessary in order to further explore the experiences of black mothers in the context of their existence.

2.3 Representation of Experiences of Women in African Literature

This subheading deals with the representation of women writers in African literature and their struggle to overcome limitations imposed on them by men writers. The

information will guide the study on the connection between women, gender and motherhood, which is the concern for my study.

Women have had a huge struggle to overcome the influence of the male literary tradition in Africa, which tended to relegate women to the periphery of literary studies as well as literary writing. If women's writing is to have a distinct collective character from that of males, it will take a lot longer than it has already, according to Uko (2006) (as cited by Mill 1869), for it to be freed from the influence of acceptable models and allowed to follow its own impulses. Despite the many obstacles women encounter when attempting to be represented in literature, they have succeeded in defining and growing a literary heritage based on both their feminine experiences and the things that give their life structure. The perception of the male writers towards the lived experiences of female writers was treated lightly despite the desire by women writers to expose their attitudes, feelings, desires, hopes and aspirations in life. The analyst theorizes on the experiences of women and leaves out the experiences of specific characters in specific texts which was the concern of this study.

The earliest women writers like Grace Ogot in the Kenyan context faced criticism from male writers, who wondered why a woman would choose to write stories involving sacrifices and traditional medicines instead of writing about Christianity and salvation. Nnaemeka (1994) asserts that:

By the time Flora Nwapa's novel, *Efuru* was published in 1966, a male literary tradition had already developed in Africa and that its impact on African female writers can be hardly overstated, in that, stylistically and thematically, creative works by female writers exhibited close affinity to the works by male writers (p. 137).

Nnaemeka's assertion alludes to the male dominance of the literary space in Africa, and the struggle by African women writers to create a literary space for themselves. This study looked at motherhood and, in the process, attempted to figure out how the experience of being a mother affected the visibility of women in other spaces other than the literary one.

Because male reviewers often insist on imposing moral standards on female authors, resulting in the condemnation of any character who deviates from the established

norms, female African writers have complained about the constant gaze of male critics. For instance, Ade (1982) condemns Emecheta's characters in her novels, for instance *The Slave Girl* for crying out for women's liberation and further castigates Mariama Ba in *So long a Letter* for advocating for divorce. Aidoo (2005) consequently observes that: "There is pervasive exclusion of African women writers from anthologies and books on African literature, which bring to light some of the problems facing female African writers" (p.173). Studying ideas on motherhood, in a way minimizes this problem of exclusion.

Ade and Aidoo point out the struggles by women writers and their struggle for liberation from the challenges that have befallen them. They note however, that certain issues such as the male opinion towards their literary works have considerably hindered their success. However, between the early to mid-twentieth century there has been a positive change in the treatment of writings by women. There is a need though, for scholars to link the theme of motherhood to characters, which is what my study has done, through an analysis of mother characters in the two novels under study.

According to Piirto (1998), modern female authors are preoccupied with the tensions that exist between love and art, as well as between responsibility and self-fulfillment. They have also insisted on using languages that were previously exclusive to male writers in order to discuss previously forbidden aspects of female experience. According to Piirto, modern women writers are conscious of their role in the political system and their relationships with other women. As a result, they see themselves as attempting to bring the disparate parts of the female experience together through artistic vision and are interested in defining what it means to be an autonomous woman writer. The focus of these twentieth to twenty first century writers has been on different issues affecting women and their desire to be liberated. That is why the present study became central in order to examine other pertinent issues affecting women, such as motherhood in order to reveal the connection between the experiences of black women and the emergence of specific characters in specific contexts.

Literary works by African women writers have been influenced by western perceptions. Kivai (2007) contends that Western theories have highly influenced works by African female writers in that they are interpreted in a Eurocentric manner, thus getting divorced from the sociocultural milieu. Through an analysis of Adichie's works, Kivai highlights the struggle by African women and how Adichie imagines the problems of humanity in her novels. Harrow (1998) also states that: "Africans or Black feminists must step in as agents in documenting knowledge the way our foremothers passed it on to us for the preservation and actualizing..." (p. 171). Assertions by scholars who have read African art from a feminist lens expose the need for interrogation of such works in a way that honors the uniqueness of black women, which was the concern of the present study.

Every aspect of life is covered by women writers. According to Jacobus (2012), women write on a variety of topics, including relationships with men, housekeeping, childbearing, and even relationships with other women. They write about females' experiences as moms, sisters, and those who discriminate against them as well as their bravery in the face of adversity. Due to the fact that writing was not a recognized career for women, the majority of women who wrote before 1800 did not see their work as a reflection of or an element of their experience as women (Jacobus, 2012). Despite the many areas explored by women writers, the present study saw the need to focus on the black mother characters and how they are shaped by the discrimination and other challenges based on their context.

According to Samantha (2015), the use of male pseudonyms by early female authors signaled a significant historical change since it demonstrated that women recognized the need of role-playing in order to be accepted into the mainstream of literary society. Early female authors saw their desire to write as a contradiction to their social standing as women. Despite feeling degraded by the sarcasm of male writers and critics, these women writers saw writing as a sign of success. As a result, they made the decision to make up for their lack of writing desire by working from home, advocating for selflessness and submission, and criticizing feminine audacity. While many female writers penalized bold heroines, Samantha goes on to say that in order to cope with personal ambition, they projected the philosophy of success onto masculine characters, whose initiative, thrift, industry, and tenacity were directly inspired by the

experiences of the female authors. This points out the desire by women writers to do the “right” thing in accordance with the patriarchal expectations placed on a woman, even as they tried to find footing in the male dominated literary world. However, there is need to address issues on women in a more practical manner and the real circumstances that result to how they behave and react towards art and life. This study addressed the issue of socio-cultural factors that shape black motherhood and analyzed how black mother characters are formed.

After years of enslavement, the rise of women's literature in Africa gave women the confidence to look for their position in society and marked the birth of strong women. Women discovered their voices via writing and their great desire to be free to live as complete citizens rather than as subservient creatures in their societies, claim Kebdi & Iamrade (2019). African women embraced writing as a kind of rebellion against the oppressive circumstances they found themselves in. They intended to shed light on their own fate and increase awareness of women's issues by more accurately portraying the truth of their circumstances. The strength portrayed by female characters as a result of the change in the perception of women by men, has created a need for the exploration of whether this is also applicable to black mothers as they nurture their children in a male dominated environment.

2.4 Representation of Women in Caribbean Literature

This subheading deals with the representation of early Caribbean women writers in literature and the challenges they faced to find their place in a male dominated literary field. This will help us understand how studies on women, gender connect with motherhood studies in the Caribbean.

Caribbean women's writings are deeply rooted in the intricate sociocultural contexts of the region, reflecting historical legacies, cultural traditions, and contemporary struggles. Hansford (2022) observes that:

African background and indigenous customs, which echo throughout the Caribbean narratives, serve as inspiration for Caribbean women writers. Narratives that discuss the intricacies of cultural hybridity and the diaspora are infused with a spirit that is fostered by attributes like persistence and creativity, which are pulled from the core of Caribbean women” (p. 14).

Hansford contributes to the repertoire on Caribbean literature by addressing the inspirations for Caribbean writers in the course of their writings. However, focus should also be placed on linking such experiences with specific characters in specific texts, which the present study does.

The literary works of Caribbean women are deeply connected with the region's rich cultural legacy, complex past ongoing struggles for representation, self-identification and self-definition. Reeser (2023) studies Caribbean women and provides a multidimensional exploration of Caribbean women's experiences, identities and literary contributions. Reeser creates a significant scholarly endeavor that offers a comprehensive examination of Caribbean women's lives and writings from diverse disciplinary perspectives including, literature, history, sociology and cultural studies.

According to Vella (2014), writers like Jamaica Kincaid, Maryse Conde, and Rosario Ferre contributed to the surge of women's literature in the Caribbean in the 1970s and early 1980s. Although there had been female authors in the Caribbean before then, such as Jean Rhys, women's voices and storylines were more prominent in the 1970s and early 1980s. The first cohort of female authors was articulating the validity of writing as a Caribbean woman and conveying female awareness. Through their writings, they fought against male dominance over literature and making a space for female voices. The analysts have focused on the progress of female literary tradition in the Caribbean, without getting concerned with the experiences of black mothers and circumstances that shape them.

Caribbean women's writings are catalysts for social change. Boyce-Davies & Nixon (2021) reveals how Caribbean women writers used their narratives as a tool for unmasking and confronting violence, shedding light on its underlying causes, consequences and manifestations. Hamlyn (2021) also underscores the transformative potential of Caribbean women's writings as a catalyst for social change and collective action. Through their literary interventions, these authors not only bear witness to the violence and injustices faced by Caribbean women but also inspire readers to engage critically with power structures, challenge systemic inequalities, and work towards building more inclusive and equitable societies. Nilak (2016) delves into the works of Caribbean female authors, analyzing how they confront and challenge dominant

narratives while advocating for social change within the complex framework of postcolonial Caribbean societies. While the studies mentioned above are crucial in giving agency to Caribbean women, they do not link the experiences of black women or mothers outside Africa despite the fact that the Caribbean has prevalence of black people. The intersectionality between gender, race and class reveals the need for exploration of black women's roles in shaping their society, which has been used to examine characterization of black mothers in chapter five.

Graham, (2021) sheds light on the diverse thematic concerns and narrative innovations of Caribbean women writers in the postwar period. Through close readings of their works, he explores how these authors engage with issues such as identity, migration, colonialism, gender and sexuality, while also challenging and subverting traditional literary forms and conventions. By examining the intersections of gender and other forms of identity, Graham highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of Caribbean womanhood. The idea of black motherhood was addressed in this study to expose what creates black mother characters in literature.

One prevalent theme in Caribbean literature is the exploration of women's experiences within the context of colonialism and its enduring aftermath. Brown (2016) offers a compelling reassessment of the literary contributions of Caribbean women writers in the postwar period. By examining the works of these women within the broader context of Caribbean literature, Brown provides valuable insights into their experiences, perspectives, and literary achievements. One of the central ideas is the reevaluation of the canon of Caribbean literature to include the voices and perspectives of women writers who have often been marginalized or overlooked in traditional accounts, as well as the voices of black mothers that have been silenced by patriarchy. The analyst has made a great contribution to literature, though a gap exists in the evaluation of black motherhood through an examination of the experiences of specific characters.

The experiences of women in Caribbean literature are richly depicted, capturing the diverse and multifaceted realities of their lives within the region's complex socio-cultural landscape. These experiences are often marked by challenges, triumphs, and resilience, shaped by historical legacies, cultural traditions, and contemporary

struggles for liberation and empowerment. Opara & Ryan (2024) argue that: “Caribbean women have been subjected to various forms of oppression and exploitation, including slavery, identity, and colonial rule. Their narratives often bear witness to the profound impact of these injustices on their lives, families, and communities, shedding light on the enduring legacies of trauma, displacement, and cultural dislocation” (p. 1193).

Further, Cozart (2023) explores how the cultural politics of sugar shaped colonial ideologies, discourses, and representations of the Caribbean region. Despite the numerous studies on women in the Caribbean, the analysis of specific experiences by women and how such experiences intersect with black motherhood is an area that needs further interrogation, which is what this study focused on.

By tracing the emergence of sugar as a symbol of wealth, power and prestige in European societies, Cozart (2023) illustrates how colonial powers justified and perpetuated their exploitation of the Caribbean through narratives of civilization, progress and racial superiority. Sandiford (2021) also examines the ways in which sugar production influenced the development of Caribbean literary traditions, including the writings of women authors. Lawrence (1983) contends that: “Women in Caribbean literature operate vis a vis a man and of course children. Very often, these male/female relationships are tension filled, tenuous, and polygynous...” (p. 6). By situating these literary works within their historical and cultural contexts, Cozart highlights the ways in which Caribbean writers have engaged with the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and sugar production in their narratives. By examining the intersections of gender and other forms of identity, Brown highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of Caribbean womanhood. The present study focused on the black mother character and the circumstances that create her.

A study by Morrissey (2021) delves into how female Caribbean authors navigate and challenge traditional gender norms and expectations within their narratives, offering insights into the complexities of Caribbean womanhood. One of the central themes in the study is the exploration of how Caribbean women writers used their literary works to interrogate and subvert prevailing gender ideologies. Moreover, Opara (2020) highlights the ways in which Caribbean women writers engage with issues of

sexuality and the body within their narratives. Although these narratives expose the feminine side of women, their characters as mothers in the Caribbean need to be explored.

Therefore, female writers in the Caribbean seek freedom to express their thoughts and opinions without being stopped by the existing patriarchal institutions. According to Knutson (2008), writing becomes a means of reclaiming the female body, which has been destroyed by patriarchy, slavery, and imperialism. Caribbean women authors speak about their physical, corporeal experiences in the Caribbean. She goes on to say that by liberating the female body, the Caribbean region with its bountiful natural resources and diverse cultures is also reclaimed. In the Caribbean literary works by male authors, most of the literary protagonists who suffer madness in the colonies are women, due to the existence of patriarchal systems in the Caribbean. This double oppression of women is the fuel behind the emergence of women's writings in the Caribbean. While it is evident that the experiences of Caribbean women are widely researched, the present study sought to examine how these experiences link with motherhood in order to understand what influences characterization, especially in literature that features mothers in specific contexts.

Women in Caribbean literature are often placed at the core of the fight against oppression by religion and other oppressive forces in the community. Rahim (2011) delves into the ways in which these authors engage with and subvert traditional religious narratives, offering alternative visions of faith, identity, and liberation within the context of the Caribbean. At the core of Rahim's analysis is the recognition of the centrality of spirituality in Caribbean cultures, which often draw from African, and European religious traditions. Brown (2020) argues that: "Caribbean women writers infuse their narratives with elements of spirituality, drawing on diverse religious symbols, rituals, and myths to explore themes of power, agency, and transformation" (p. 130). Through their writings, Caribbean women authors challenge patriarchal interpretations of religion and spirituality, offering representations of goddesses, deities, and sacred feminine figures that celebrate women's wisdom, creativity, and resilience. These representations not only provide a counter-narrative to dominant religious discourses but also affirm the spiritual agency and authority of Caribbean

women. Caribbean women writers use the elements of spirituality in their narratives to bring comfort to themselves when they face challenges such as barrenness, failure in marriage and oppression by the men in their lives. Despite the many researches little focus has been dedicated towards motherhood in the Caribbean and how issues such as religion shape it, which this study focused on.

Through their narratives, Caribbean women writers challenge dominant narratives, assert their agency and illuminate the diverse experiences and struggles of women in the Caribbean and beyond. Mohammed, (2017) explores a significant anthology that brings together a diverse range of essays from Caribbean feminists, scholars, and activists. The collection serves as a platform for exploring various issues related to gender, sexuality, and power within Caribbean societies, including their representations in literature and other forms of cultural production. According to Medwinter (2021), one of the key strengths of this anthology is its interdisciplinary approach, which allows for a comprehensive exploration of Caribbean women's experiences from multiple perspectives. Contributors draw on insights from fields such as literature, sociology, history, anthropology, and cultural studies to examine the complex intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality within the Caribbean context. Moreover, Haynes (2024) argues that: “The anthology provides valuable insights into the ways in which Caribbean women's experiences are represented in literature and other cultural texts” (p. 15). The presented study examined experiences of Caribbean women to deduce the ideals that shape maternal figures and their character traits.

Caribbean women writers also portray the intersectional identities of women in the region, acknowledging the complexities of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality that shape their experiences. These writers have faced the challenge of dealing with the traditions of the region that fight their efforts at exploring their unique experiences as black women and black mothers. Morrissey, (2021) looks at how these authors navigate and challenge traditional gender norms and expectations within their narratives, offering insights into the complexities of Caribbean womanhood. One of the central themes in the study is the exploration of how Caribbean women writers used their literary works to interrogate and subvert prevailing gender ideologies. Traditions have a great impact on any society, as they

partly shape the existence of people in that particular region. Female authors have addressed its impact on womanhood, but its effects on motherhood should be examined too, which was the concern for this study.

By depicting diverse sexual experiences, desires and pleasures, Caribbean authors challenge taboos surrounding sexuality in the region and assert the right of women to control and express their own sexual urges. Kempadoo (2009) observes that Caribbean women have never fully gained sexual freedom and further critiques existing epistemologies that have excluded women's voices and points to the 'centrality of sexual intimacy and private sphere for conceptualizations and practices of citizenship.' Further, the colonizer has regulated the intimate sphere as a means of continuously asserting colonial power but also nationalists' obfuscation of gender and sexuality in facilitating the efforts of male centered nation building therefore depicting the sexual violence enacted upon Caribbean women's bodies.

Kempadoo further delineates 'antiromance' as a primary mode of Caribbean feminist poetics that refute the narrative of domestic bliss at home and at the level of the nation, especially when legal systems do not protect women and girls from sexual violence. These studies on sexuality of women in the Caribbean expose females that are not yet sexually liberated, meaning that they are not allowed to express their sexual desires openly and the males take advantage of the women sexually through cases such as rape. This study examined the influence of such negative sexual encounters on the women's roles, such as that of being mothers and nurturing or failing to nurture children as a result.

2.5 Motherhood in Literature

Literary studies on motherhood explore what various writers perceive motherhood to be and its importance in the society. Tanjim (2016) observes that scholars have established the notion of motherhood as women's sacred duty, and therefore challenges this assertion as he depicts the image of "New Woman" as well as "New Mothers" and how these women are not satisfied with only being a mother. Further, Tanjim explores the aspect of shared motherhood by American mothers and how this creates opportunities for the "New Mother" to flourish. The study also challenges the notion that women's sexuality does vanish with the experience of motherhood.

Tanjim's analysis shows the modern expectations of what motherhood should be and how mothers can get fulfilment by not only being perceived as mothers but also being recognized in other ways in life. The present study focuses on the black mother and how various contexts shape her character, which adds to the analysis done by Tanjim.

Scholars have explored the oppression of mothers, first by the colonizers and secondly by the male figures in their lives. Bhatt (2023) attempts to unveil the history of black mothers and how their voices have been repressed by the society. Bhatt argues that: "The mothers are tortured by societal and cultural expectations of what motherhood should be and accorded no avenues for self-expression as mothers" (p. 25). The conclusion of the study is that motherhood is evolving and that it has moved from the margins to be the centre of analysis in literary studies. The study implies that, although in the past black mothers had no voice, in the contemporary society motherhood has been accorded attention, due to the importance appended on mothers globally. The present study will focus on black motherhood and what defines the black mother character.

Literary studies on motherhood in Indonesia indicate that motherhood is the primary role of women and this places them to the fore as mothers in the society. According to Elias (2020), Indonesian women are required to plan on being excellent moms in addition to becoming mothers in order to contribute to their country. This suggests that motherhood is a source of fulfillment in Indonesia, and that a woman who delays having children beyond an acceptable amount of time may face severe physical, psychological, and social abuse from her spouse and the society. Arimbi (2014) further articulate that:

Not having children results in a sense of role failure with social and emotional consequences for both men and women. This can often result in social stigmatization of the couple and particularly of the women concerned. Within the household, childlessness may also mean physical and psychological abuse for women (p. 33).

As a result of prevailing gender ideologies in communities, women are blamed for all failures in the society, such as the failure to have children once they are married. The present study attempts to examine other contexts that define black mothers.

The traditional African conception of femininity shapes how African women are socially constructed and the roles that society assigns them. Waweru (2014) argues that a woman in Africa is defined by her ability to bear children and that for any marriage to be fulfilling, there must be children. However, she further argues that there are challenges that impede the mental as well as the physical growth of mothers and that this should also be acknowledged. This implies that a woman might have children and may feel whole, but the problems that she encounters while bringing up the children may deny her of the perceived joy of being a mother. An examination of the black mother character and the contexts that define her is important for a clear understanding of black motherhood in literature.

Literary scholars have also looked at the role of mothers in Africa and how feeling like a mother is a crucial theme for completing a woman's cultural identity and establishing her femininity. Rubaya (2022) contends that:

In African culture, a woman is considered adulterous or cursed if she fails to conceive. Her femininity is questioned and the success of her marriage is dependent on her ability to have children. The family of the woman, her husband and her mother-in-law and the society advises such a woman to tell the husband to marry another wife. They also stop treating her well (p.8).

For example, becoming a mother is the only source of pleasure and being barren is the only source of tragedy in Igbo culture. In a similar vein, Kebdi & Iamrache (2020) note that a woman living on the periphery of society without children is like to a tree without fruit. The scholars conclude that the depiction of motherhood varies, because some analysts portray the importance and fulfilment a woman gets as a mother while other scholars portray the challenges that make motherhood not as fulfilling. This implies that the theme of motherhood is a wide area that requires more examination for instance, to understand black mother characters and how they are shaped by contexts such as the society and culture of origin.

Motherhood has been glorified in male writings to portray the mother as a pure symbol, which has contributed to the oppression of women. Belgum (2020) examines how African authors, whether male and female, represent women in their works of literature, with a focus on the idealization of motherhood in men's writings. Belgum draws a conclusion that female African writers need to be unified in their portrayal of

motherhood in African literature so as to create a new African consciousness on matters relating to motherhood. The aspect of glorifying motherhood adds to the oppressive structures that give undue pressure to mothers as they struggle to prove themselves worthy to their men, which instead of bringing the expected joy of being a mother, exposes mothers to pain and humiliation. The present study is an attempt to explore how the experiences and traits of black mothers are shaped by the environment.

Caribbean scholars have also focused on the mother-daughter relationships and how they define motherhood experiences. Babineu (2014) argues that:

In women's literature throughout the Caribbean, particularly on those works focusing on migration and exile, representations of maternal figures and of mother-daughter relationships have become far more complex and problematized (p. 211).

In addition, Babineu compares the writing of French- and Spanish-speaking Caribbean authors. She also examines the impact of mother-daughter relationships on female protagonists, who are the daughters of the diaspora in the Caribbean, as they negotiate their sense of place, as well as their personal and cultural identities. Babineu contends that these relationships can either help or impede the protagonists' efforts to reconcile the various cultural and geographic contexts that make them objects of migration. This implies that the issue of mother-daughter relationships has been a constant topic of discussion by various Caribbean authors. Katie (2007) similarly studies motherhood in the Caribbean, through an examination of relationships between mothers and daughters and the challenges they face in the process of growing up. The study presents a scenario where the Caribbean daughter views her mother as a colonizer and struggles to free herself from her. Katie concludes that there has been an ongoing strain in the relationships between daughters and mothers in the Caribbean, a situation that creates tension in many Caribbean homes, therefore exposing the need for further studies on the black mother character.

The centrality of motherhood in larger family dynamics has been examined. Caccavaio (2013) focuses on what 'New World' women writers say about motherhood and explores it through the postcolonial lens, focusing on its centrality in the family. The scholar argues that motherhood is an important aspect of the

community and should be studied in the larger family dynamics to show how the society views mothers. The results of their study imply that the study on motherhood is an ongoing issue that evolves with changing times and necessitates further exploration into specific contexts that define black mothers.

Scholars like Palko (2010), who examines women's novels from transatlantic literary traditions, particularly from the Caribbean and Ireland, which have a tendency to mute women's experiences of motherhood, have studied the impact of the patriarchal culture on motherhood in the Caribbean. Palko contends that motherhood and mother-daughter interactions were part of the unwritten histories of the Irish and Caribbean cultures up to the 1990s. The study exposes how men dominated women and mothers in general and did not allow them to enjoy and appreciate their lived experiences as mothers, and this creates a gap for an analysis of specific black mother characters to understand how aspects such as patriarchy as well as other contexts define them.

African American and Caribbean enslaved women served as the model for modern black feminist conceptions of black motherhood. By exploring the various interpretations that can be drawn from the unique simultaneity of oppressions affecting African American motherhood, Brooks (2008) aims to extend this concept to the Afro-Caribbean and explores the significance of location in shaping mothers' relationships with their offspring. The research highlights the successful acts of resistance by black mothers to patriarchal notions of inheritance and remain matrifocal or mother centred. The study opens up a gap for further exploration of other issues that define black motherhood, apart from patriarchal notions, which is the focus of my study.

2.6 Studies on the Selected Texts

2.6.1 Review of Studies on *Joys of Motherhood* (1979)

Buchi Emecheta's novel, *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), set in Ibadan and Lagos tells the story of female protagonist Nnu Ego who always desired to be a mother. After being married for a year to Amatokwu, she returns to her father's house for being unable to bear children. She gets married a second time to Nnaife and after months of her second marriage, she gives birth to a boy named Ngozi, who ends her

stigmatization for being barren. Nnu Ego's happiness is however short lived as Ngozi dies rendering her helpless and desolate. She feels incomplete and like she had failed as a woman. She later gives birth to three sons and four daughters, but unfortunately, she fails to achieve the joy she desired. Nnu Ego lives in miserable conditions with her family and struggles to help her husband and to better herself. Nnu Ego's husband leaves home to go and work in Fernando Po and leaves Nnu Ego to take care of their son Oshia. Nnu Ego hears no news about her husband for many months and her responsibilities increase while he is away, due to the changing economic times. Upon her husband's return, after a short while Nnu Ego gives birth to twin girls which complicates her life even further, as she now has a large family to fend for.

When she goes to visit her family at Ibuza, after the burial of her father, Nnu Ego is reluctant to go back to Lagos because of the challenges she had faced there, such as lack of food for her now big family. The novel also has a narrative strand of colonialism in Nigeria which brings many changes, economically and morally. Nnu Ego's sons go to school while the daughters work alongside their mother to raise school fees for the brothers. Towards the end, Nnu Ego's sons go to study abroad. Oshia goes to the United States to study and marries a white woman and rarely contacts his mother, while Adim travels to Canada. For her daughters, Taiwo gets married to a clerk but Kehinde later runs away from home to go marry a Yoruba, although her father is not in support of her decision. At the end, Nnu Ego returns to Ibuza where she dies years later alone by the roadside. Nnu Ego's story of struggles of marriage and motherhood is however contrasted with that of her inherited co-wife Adaku whose urge for more children is not like Nnu Ego's. She has only two daughters and is often rebellious to societal sanctions that Nnu Ego cares so much about.

Generally, this text can be said to be a critique of motherhood in an African context as it features a mother who gives her all to educate her children who in the end abandon her. Emecheta contrasts the character of Nnu Ego with that of her co-wife Adaku who refuses to fit in the straight jacket of African motherhood. Various scholars have read and critiqued *The Joys*.

In her criticism of Emecheta's *The Joys* (1979), Umeh (1980) argues that Emecheta defies the common African literary presentation of motherhood as an honorific, illustrating that children do not always have close, loving relationships with their moms into adulthood. She contends that it must have been challenging for Emecheta to create controversial drawings of African motherhood that defy the conventions of literature, particularly when dealing with such a delicate topic, and contends that: "Emecheta's ideas in the novel reflect her long exposure in British society to the detriment of her Nigerian background..." (p. 190). Umeh concludes that Emecheta exposes a different perspective of womanhood, different from the one exposed by male writers, of the mother as gold, which contributed to the use of motherhood in the oppression of women and makes significant contribution in understanding motherhood in African context. The current study went further than Umeh's to examine mother characters in the selected novels.

Topin & Bazin (1986) argue that *The Joys* does not draw a line between tradition and modernity as it delves into the traditions of Igbo people of Nigeria and also exposes the challenges of modern-day motherhood. The present study picked the strand of motherhood and explored it further in order to understand how it is shaped by different socio-cultural contexts and in the process show what kind of characters these contexts produce.

The Joys has also been explored as an insight into Nigeria's pre-colonial and post-colonial society. Andrade (1990) states: "*The Joys* affirms Efurú's claim that pre-colonial Igbo women had more independence than their colonized descendants" (p.91). Andrade asserts that colonialism brought change to Igbo society, and that women were oppressed by men in the society. The present study adds onto Andrade's study, as it examines the contexts of black motherhood and how these contexts influence character formation.

In her later novels, Emecheta, according to Ward (1990), explores the predicament of the modern woman torn between her African culture and her feminist aspirations. She also looks back into the traditional worlds of her grandmother and mother to understand how she ended up trapped between two worlds, two visions, and two destinies. Ward goes on to say that Emecheta's development as a writer is connected

to a growing realization that African customs serve as a means of oppression for African women. Ward concludes that *The Joys* appears to finally acknowledge Emecheta's Africanness, a fact that this study has investigated through the lens of motherhood. Another claim is that because African experiences have traditionally been told from a masculine perspective that either minimizes or exalts the female presence, critics contend that in order to achieve a balance of viewpoints, the African woman's presence needs to be appropriated and reconstructed from the perspective of the female.

In this light, Lewis (1992) states that:

Buchi Emecheta's treatment of maternity in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) is historically comprehensive, a sobering response to the idealized view of a pre-colonial society that has been idealized by Chinua Achebe. By describing women's role as bearers of labor power, and men's control over women's reproductive power, Emecheta analyzes the political economy of maternity during the precolonial period (p.43).

Evidently, these scholars point out the existing myths on motherhood as well as the influence of politics on maternal experiences in the Igbo society. However, the study is different from this study, as it sought to explore the various circumstances that inform black motherhood and character formation in the selected texts.

Many thematic concerns such as the influence of colonialism, the danger of resisting change, patriarchy, the ambiguous rewards of motherhood and even an exploration of African stereotypes have been explored in *The Joys*. According to Stratton (1994), the book accomplishes two main ideological goals: it challenges stereotypes of women and celebrates the creation of a female literary tradition. This entails exposing many facets of colonial experience and contesting the patriarchal ideology's creation of motherhood and prostitution. Stratton goes on to say that Emecheta's depiction of the protagonist's inseparability from their social and historical background is what defines her realism in *The Joys*. She concludes that women writers have evolved and created female protagonists who are considered 'different' from the previously explored characters who were exploited by the male characters. Stratton therefore attempts to portray women in a different way other than what the society construes a woman to be. Additionally, Stratton observes that a character cannot be separated from social and

historical context. This study explored the gap identified by Stratton through an examination of these contexts that shape the black mother character.

Nnoromele (2002) asserts that: “Existing scholarship on *The Joys* are like a framework for reiterating old stereotypes about Africa and its women and for oversimplifying an otherwise complex relationship” (p. 178). Such stereotypes include the over explored theme of exploitation of women by the patriarchal society. Furthermore, according to Nnoromele, African customs such as bride prices and polygamy reduce African women to the position of commodities; fathers rule their daughters and husbands control their spouses, maintaining a society in which women are perpetually subjugated. Moreover, girls are not afforded the same opportunities as boys because they are only valuable to their fathers for the money they bring in through their bride price; girls are not allowed to choose who they marry; sexual relationships are not romantic because fathers sell their daughters to the highest bidder; and these factors demonstrate how girls are relegated to the background of social and political decisions within the family and the community. The present study focused on black motherhood as a theme, and in the process, gauged to what extent motherhood has served to relegate women to the periphery and how it has served to influence their character in a patriarchal context.

Killam (2004), in his review of the novel, states that Emecheta highlights the way in which the patriarchal discourse values male children more than the female ones, and concludes that the effects of patriarchy are felt harshly by the female characters who have to contend with the males for the same opportunities, in a community that prioritizes men over women. Killam’s study pays attention to the girl child, who later develops into womanhood, and little attention is paid to the black mother character in the novel, an aspect this study examined.

Kebdi & Iamrade (2019) observe that *The Joys* is a feminist novel, and that many scholars have conducted research on the novel from a feminist perspective, highlighting the suffering and oppression of the African woman in a patriarchal society. The two further carry out a study on the differences between Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru* and Buchi Emecheta’s *The Joys* and their perception of motherhood. Both researches focus on the exploitation of women in patriarchal societies and the use of

motherhood as a form of oppression in the novels. This study, just like many others have analyzed women's issues from a feminist perspective, often dwelling on their exploitation which is among the issues that shape motherhood. Further studies are therefore necessary to address the other contexts that shape black motherhood, therefore exposing the formation of black mother characters, a gap that the present study addresses.

In their review of *The Joys*, Mothabeng (2022), show the oppression of women by men in a patriarchal society and they conclude that the female protagonists in the novel are controlled by the existing patriarchal systems. The present study put the patriarchal systems mentioned by Mouthabeng et al into context in order to examine issues facing black women within their backgrounds as they attempt to live up to motherhood.

2.6.2 Review of Studies on *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994)

Breath, Eyes Memory (1994) is a novel by Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian American writer, which is set in Haiti and partly in Brooklyn, New York. It is a novel about Sophi Caco, the daughter of Martine who has spent the first twelve years of her life growing up in a Haitian village under the care of her aunt, Tante Atie. Due to the after effects of colonialism, there is unrest in Haiti and Martine gets raped by macoutes (Haitian paramilitary created by dictator Duvalier in (1959) and becomes pregnant and gives birth to a girl whom she names Sophi.

Sophi's mother Martine leaves her under the care of her sister Tante Atie and relocates to New York so she can provide a better life for her daughter Sophi. Martine communicates to Sophi and her sister through cassettes as she sends money for their upkeep. Sophi has never met her mother and she loves her aunt like her own mother. Martine sends a plane ticket for Sophi to relocate to New York to live with her. Before leaving for New York, Sophi and her aunt visit Granma Ife, Sophi's maternal grandmother who advises her to obey her mother. Tante Atie buys Sophi a new dress as a parting gift and takes her to the airport so she can be ready for her flight. On arriving at New York, Sophi meets her mother who is quite excited to see her. Martine takes Sophi shopping the following day and even introduces her to her

boyfriend Marc. With time, she opens up to Sophi about her traumatic experience of rape and the trauma it has caused her over the years. Sophi joins school and when she is eighteen, they move to a small house in a nicer neighborhood, where Sophi meets Joseph, a musician and they fall in love. When Martine realizes this, she tests Sophi for sexual purity as was the custom in Haiti. This angers Sophi, who later inserts a pestle in her girl parts to end the pain of testing.

Later, Sophi and Joseph get married and they relocate to a place called Providence. Two years after they are married, Sophi goes back to Haiti with her daughter Brigitte. She is running away from Joseph, as she feels tormented whenever she sleeps with him. Her mother also comes back to Haiti to look for Sophi and they reconcile. On their way from Haiti, Martine confides in Sophi that she is pregnant but has no plan of keeping the baby. Later Martine commits suicide by stabbing herself in the stomach seventeen times. Sophi gets her mother's body transported to Haiti where she gets buried. During the burial, Sophi runs into the cane fields and screams as she violently beats the canes. At the end Granma Ife consoles Sophi and helps her she knows how to answer the question as to whether she is free or not.

Gerber (2000) observes that the novel is about the unspeakable violence on mother daughter relationships. The author interrogates the legacy of rape and violence in the book, especially the violence meted on daughters by mothers while testing them for sexual purity. This is an act that emanates from the dictates of the patriarchal society, where a mother is expected to keep her daughters pure before marriage. Four generations of Haitian women artists and storytellers who preserve and develop cultural traditions are represented in the book, according to Gerber, who also claims that the book illustrates the transformational power of narrative and storytelling. The critic is concerned with some cultural practices that degrade women such as 'testing' where a mother periodically checks the purity of her daughter before marriage and also explores the artistic nature of Caribbean women. The present study is different as it called for a re-examination of the categories of women as mothers in order to discover their characterization.

Christopher (2001) argues that *BEM* has several thematic concerns, such as suffering, strength and courage. He further argues that the novel is very artistic because the author is able to put both worlds together to create a masterpiece. In his review of the novel, he points to the colonialists and how their presence in the Caribbean resulted in traumatic experiences among the women and shifting of the burden of providing for the families to females. This study exposes the strength and resilience of Haitian women, overlooking the contribution of the mothers in the growth of families within the harsh conditions in the Caribbean, which is the concern for the present study.

Literature exposes evils that befall people in the society and explores avenues for solutions. According to Suarez (2003), fiction serves as an allegory of violence and its aftermath by revealing the horrible and allowing survivors to express themselves and preserve their memories. Additionally, her review exposes the violence of rape and its repercussions and how they are felt even in the diaspora. The conclusion of the study is that action needs to be taken to portray the effects of these brutal acts on women in Haiti and those who choose to migrate to the western countries. There is a necessity for scholars to address the issue of black motherhood through an examination of their experiences even as the literary space seeks to solve and help to reconcile those in the diaspora with their motherland, which is what this study does.

The nation's political upheavals in Haiti, poverty and refugees overwhelm the global imagination, hence subordinating women's stories of sexual abuse. The narratives of the nation are therefore often accorded more importance than the suffering of the women, often viewed as the 'other.' In his study, Donette (2004) explores the sexual histories of women in Haiti, such as rape by the Macoute's and the sexual violence emanating from patriarchy of 'testing' the girls often for sexual purity. She however argues that such narratives have not been given the attention they deserve as they are viewed as less important than other issues affecting the state. The idea of motherhood which was the concern of the present study helps to reveal other narratives away from the story of the nation, which helps to address the gap that Donette (2004) identifies.

Alexander (2011) illustrates how women's bodies experience a dehumanization process when they are militarized and scrutinized by the nationalist government that is

ruled by males in his interpretation of *BEM*. To support this, Alexander notes that the idea of motherhood and its potential effects on women's life received particular attention, with instances of military surveillance highlighted by the Macoutes' rape of women. While there was focus on the theme of motherhood as stated by Alexander in his review of the novel, a refocus on the circumstances that define motherhood and an analysis of how mother characters are formed was necessary, so as to comprehend the complex experiences of black mothers. The present study does this analysis on socio-cultural contexts that define black motherhood and analyzes how black mother characters are formed.

There is a problematic mother-daughter relationship in *BEM*. Mehni (2011) partakes in a study which explores this relationship between mother and daughter in the novel, through abjection theory of psychoanalysis, with the aim of identifying the root cause of the problems between the protagonist and her mother. The conclusion of the study is that abjection takes place between the protagonist and her mother, which results in their problematic relationship. The trope of the strained relationship between mothers and daughters is widely covered in Caribbean literature and symbolically represents the colonial masters and the colonized people in this case referring to the daughters. This exposes a gap in the study of motherhood as one seeks to comprehend the complexities that women who are mothers face in nurturing their children and other circumstances that shape them to behave the way they do towards their children.

Literary studies have also been done to reveal the traumas that have befallen Caribbean women in *BEM*. Eerinen (2016) investigates how the issues affecting the Caco women in the book are a result of the collective traumas faced by Caribbean women. According to Eerinen, in an attempt to provide a thorough and coherent interpretation of the difficult situation of the major characters, most academics have only addressed one or two of the traumas mentioned in the book, ignoring a wide range of traumas. Additionally, the research highlights the phenomena of black womanhood in the book and how it impacts the Caco women, who are the novel's protagonists. Several concerns have been addressed, particularly the issue of black womanhood, which raises the question of black motherhood and its construction in the novel. This study sought to fill this gap.

Pandey (2018) analyzes *BEM* by looking closely at the female characters and how they survive the traumatic experiences they go through in their lives. The study unveils how female characters practice verbalization or narrativization to negotiate their traumas, which lessens the pain in their hearts even as they seek liberation from their unwanted experiences. Pandey has however overlooked the roles played by mothers in the text in the effort to help their children overcome the trauma brought by the aftermath of colonialism. This study fills this gap by exploring black motherhood within the hybrid cultures in the Caribbean and the experiences that these mothers go through which are viewed as shaping their character in this study.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The analysis done in this study is based on black feminism theory as advocated for by Kimberly Crenshaw (Villaverde, 2008). The theory is a sub strand of feminism theory which advocates for working to increase equality, expanding human choice, eliminating gender stratification, ending sexual violence and promoting sexual freedom. Feminism argues for equal social, political and economic rights for women and men and it is divided by feminists and scholars into three waves. The first wave is concerned with women's suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the women in the second wave protested against the mainstream media images that reduced women to the role of wife and mother and also focused on their sexuality and reproductive rights. The women of the third wave sought to avoid the role of victim through their own definition of feminine beauty in order to become subjects, as opposed to objects of a sexist patriarchy and also advocated for empowerment of women through the use of internet tools and intersectionality between race, class and gender (Ugwanyi, 2017).

The black feminist theory calls for intersectionality, which was introduced by Kimberly Crenshaw in 1989 and highlights the interconnectedness of various systems of oppression. Black feminists contend that the intersection of race, gender and class is important for addressing the complex realities of black women's lives. Crenshaw argues that black women are discriminated against in ways that often do not fit neatly within the legal categories of either 'racism' or 'sexism'-but as a combination of both (Smith, 2013). Crenshaw further observes that the legal system has generally

described sexism as based upon an unspoken reference to the injustices confronted by all (including white) women, while defining racism to refer to those faced by all (including male) blacks and other people of color. This implies that oppressions such as race and gender work together in producing injustice and that the needs of black women are different from those of white women and must be addressed according to their uniqueness. The aspect of the uniqueness of the experiences of black women has been used in chapter five which explores specific mother characters in their specific contexts and how their attitudes, beliefs, decisions and even perceptions of the world are shaped by their environments.

In the African context, black women writers have embraced African feminism, which addresses the challenges of African women in the continent. African and Diasporic women have rejected the term 'feminism' because they argue that it originates from the Western environment (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Womanism was later adopted to describe the experiences and challenges of the African woman. Ogundipe-Leslie further argues that womanism refers to the lived experiences of women of colour and it is based on their struggles in a patriarchal society. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) disassociates herself from feminism and uses the term STIWANISM due to her argument that 'African feminism must include the issue around the woman's body, her person, her immediate family, her society, her nation, her continent and their locations within the international economic order that determines African politics and impacts on women.' Attanga (2013) explains that STIWANISM, from the acronym STIWA-Social Transformation in Africa Including Women, focuses on the oppressions that face women as a result of social institutions and how African women have adapted to patriarchy and even endorsed it themselves.

Motherism is another principle of African Feminism coined by Acholonu (1995) who defines it as the ability of a woman to nurture a child into adulthood and its weapon is tolerance, mutual understanding and love for all sexes. According to Nnaemeka (2004), there is a type of feminism called Nego-feminism which she defines as the feminism of negotiation and stands for 'no-ego' feminism. Nnaemeka's argument is that in order to attain freedom, African women should negotiate and at times compromise on matters regarding patriarchy for the woman's benefit. Femalism by

Chioma Opara refers emphasizes on the importance of a woman's body while snail-sense feminism by Akadi Adimora-Ezeigbo emphasizes the need for women to work in a slow pace with men and to learn how to survive in a man's environment in order to overcome the challenges in their lives. Cultural feminism as proposed by Buchi Emecheta proposes for feminism with a small 'f' as Emecheta argues that she is a feminist with a small 'f'.

The above principles of African feminism have been used to examine how social structures and culture intersect to shape the lives of black mothers in chapter four and to interrogate the unique experiences of black mothers and how this helps in character formation as discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Location

This study took place at Chuka University Library because the research involved close textual reading.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed qualitative research design. This entails collection of detailed descriptive information about participants' perspectives, experiences and contexts (Hennink & Bailey, 2020). It aided in examining the sociocultural contexts of black motherhood and in analyzing the mother characters in the selected novels. The design was appropriate for analysis and interpretation of the primary texts through close textual reading of the two African and Caribbean novels.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected through close textual reading of the two texts under study in relation to the objectives of this study. Secondary sources such as journals, periodicals, dissertations and articles were also used to provide more information on the research topic.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Sampling refers to the process of selecting sources based on their relevance to research questions and the depth of information they can give (Frankel & Wallen, 2006). In literary research, sampling involves the process of selecting literary texts for a study in accordance with the literary aspects being studied and determining the sample size.

A sample of two novels was obtained from a population of six novels that had to be read from Africa, the Caribbean and America. These regions are home to eighty percent of the world's population (Davis,2010). This study purposely sampled the two novels under study. This is a procedure used in research to select a specific group of individuals or units, allowing the researcher to focus on specific areas of interest and gather in-depth data on the topics (Campbell et al.,2020). The texts were selected

because of the gender of the authors, the themes addressed and the cultural aspect, which were crucial in addressing the concerns of the study.

3.5 Data Analysis and Presentation

In light of the study's goals and Black feminist theory, the data was examined utilizing content analysis. In order to infer or deduce an explanation for a phenomena from qualitative data, content analysis is a data analysis approach that looks for certain words, themes, or ideas. Content analysis looks at who says what, to whom, and how to best characterize the qualities of the content in a document (Bengtsson, 2016). Detailed information on contexts of black mothers and depiction of black mother characters was gathered from the primary texts and secondary materials. The researcher then established relationships or trends from the data. The data was examined using black feminism theory and conclusions made in response to each research question and presented as per the research design. Chapter four examines objective one, on the socio-cultural contexts of black motherhood, while chapter five analyzes black mother characters in the selected novels, which is objective two. Chapter six is Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

In order to guarantee that the study is trustworthy, legitimate, and carried out with respect for all individuals involved, a set of guidelines known as ethical considerations must be followed (Cacciattolo, 2015). The Chuka University Research and Ethics Committee granted research approval for this work (see appendix 1), and before any research could be conducted, a research permit was requested from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) (see appendix II). All works cited are acknowledged to ensure there is no plagiarism.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXTS OF BLACK MOTHERHOOD IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD* AND EDWIDGE DANCTICAT'S *BREATH, EYES, MEMORY*

4.1 Introduction

To understand contexts of motherhood, this chapter examines the place of social institutions and how they shape black motherhood in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Edwidge Dancticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. The chapter examines aspects that influence black motherhood which include: family structure, economic aspects, morality, gender roles, tradition and modernity and aspects of migration and identity which are crucial in the Caribbean context. Towards the end, the chapter concludes that the above listed socio-cultural factors define black motherhood in the two novels under study.

4.2 Socio-Cultural Contexts

Traditions play an important role in the shaping of motherhood, as they dictate on the expectations of mothers by the society. This includes aspects such as how many children a woman should have, the importance of having male children and even the behavior of girls to ensure they remain chaste until they get married. The family structure also has an influence on motherhood for instance how polygamy affects the experience of black motherhood and how the absence of fathers affects motherhood, a situation that is prevalent in the Caribbean due to the death of fathers in the plantations and also due to rape by the macoutes like in Matine's case.

The Joys reflects the difference in lifestyle in the traditional Igbo society and the life in Lagos, where a mother had to struggle to take care of the children. The narrator says: "In Lagos, a wife would not have time. She had to work. She provides food from her husband's meagre housekeeping money but finding the money for clothes, for any kind of comfort in some cases for the children's school fees" (p. 53). This assertion captures a different kind of setting other than the one Nnu Ego is used to, where the men only provide food for the families and not at all times and the mothers must work so as to buy clothes and other necessities for their children. The author further states: In Ibuza, women made a contribution but in urban Lagos, men had to

be the sole providers; this new setting robbed the woman of her useful role. Nnu Ego told herself that the life she had indulged in with the baby Ngozi had been very risky: “she had been trying to be traditional in a modern urban setting. It was because she wanted to be a woman of Ibuza in a town like Lagos that she lost her child” (p.93). Nnu Ego blames herself for the death of her son Ngozi because the society has taught her that men cannot do anything wrong and she is a character who adheres to traditionally set systems till she dies. Collins (2000) discusses how traditions shape the lives of black mothers and how the mothers aid in perpetuating and challenging societal norms, like in the case of Nnu Ego, who lives as per the societal expectations even when she feels stifled by them.

When Nnu Ego arrives in Lagos, she is faced with a culture shock. She encounters a man who was different from the Ibuza men she knew. The author says:

...in walked a man with a belly like a pregnant cow, wobbling first to this side then to that. The belly, coupled with the fact that he was short, made him look like a barrel. His hair, unlike that of men in Ibuza, was not closely shaved; he left a lot of it on his head, like that of a woman mourning for her husband. His skin was pale, the skin of someone who had worked for a long time in the shade and not in the open air... (p. 46).

Nnu Ego’s dislike for Nnaife is based on the comparison between him and her first husband Amatokwu, whom she had loved very much and whose physical features differ from those of Nnaife. Farm life in Ibuza creates men who are strong, energetic and muscular unlike the men in Lagos who are used to soft life like washing and cooking for the white man. The colonial legacy in Nigeria has created this difference and Nnu Ego lacks satisfaction in knowing that this would be her new husband. The author states:

She was used to her long wiry Amatokwu who would glide inside her when she was ready, not this short, fat, stocky man, whose body almost crushed hers. What was more, he did not smell healthy either, unlike men in Ibuza who had the healthy smell of burning wood and tobacco. This one smelt all soapy, as if he was over washed (p. 47).

In the above description of Nnaife, we are told that he smells as if he is over washed. While there is no fault in being clean, this could be symbolic of the erosion of traditional culture and the adoption of the white man’s ways. Nnaife feels the extent of Nnu Ego’s dislike for him. He feels that there is nothing he can do to change the

way he was made, and the knowledge of other people who have been in worse situations than his give him comfort that all will be well. Nnaife also feels that the women are expecting too much from the men, as they desire to come to Lagos where they would not have to work too hard, and expect to find a handsome, strong figure of a husband into the bargain. Nnu Ego on her part feels that despite her obvious dislike for her new husband, she would rather die than in Lagos than go back home to tell her father that she dislikes the man he has chosen for her. On a brighter note, Nnu Ego thinks about the untold joy she would feel if this man made her pregnant. Emecheta therefore uses Nnu Ego to explain the patience expected in a woman, if only the situation will result to motherhood. The desire to have children of her own keeps Nnu Ego in her marriage with the hope that she may be blessed with a child soon. As such, the influence of tradition vis a vis the modern-day Lagos on motherhood is felt, as well as the importance of motherhood to a woman, thus bringing out the effects of colonial legacy on black mothers and their sacrifice just to be called 'mother.' In this context, Ogunyemi (1985) argues that the freedom of African women is tied to their culture and therefore, African women must respect their traditions in their quest for liberation. Further, Ogunyemi contends that colonization changed the normal structure of African lives and also brought new expectations on men and women, some of which have brought conflict between couples, like in the case of Nnaife and Nnu Ego.

Additionally, in Lagos there were no limiting traditions, as seen through Adaku who decides to leave her husband's home to go and live as a single mother and to practice prostitution in order to take care of her children. Adaku does not feel obliged to live like Nnu Ego because there were no strict Igbo traditions in Lagos. Adaku's departure from Nnaife's home shows resistance of black mothers against patriarchal structures that undermine black mothers' ability to choose the kind of life they want to live. In her quest for a better life for her daughters, Adaku redefines the meaning of motherhood in modern day Lagos. Hooks (1981) argues that black mothers need to have agency in order to pave a path for their children, like what Adaku does. She eventually succeeds in taking her daughters to boarding school and providing a better life for them.

In *The Joys*, families are headed by men and mothers are shown to be second in command. This implies that the family structure has an impact on black motherhood. For instance, Nwokocha Agbadi, Nnu Ego's father was a very wealthy chief who had many wives and mistresses. Amatokwu, Nnu Ego's first husband is the head of his family and he provides for his family and makes decisions that affect his family as expected in the society. A family in this society is also regarded as complete only if it has children. When Nnu Ego fails to have children in her first marriage, Amatokwu brings in a second wife to bear him children so that he can build his lineage as expected of him by his people. He tells Nnu Ego that: "I have to raise children for my line" (p.33). This statement hurts Nnu Ego and she sheds tears of pain in her heart because she feels betrayed by her husband, who no longer desires her because she does not have children. When Nnu Ego fails to have children and Amatokwu brings in a new wife, this shows the expectation of the Igbo society, that a family is only complete if it has children, particularly male children for continuation of the man's lineage. Collins (2000) contends that motherhood in many African communities is placed in contexts that aid in marginalization of mothers who fail to conform to societal expectations. Emecheta exposes the pain of black mothers in male dominated African societies that define women through their ability to be mothers and denies black mothers agency.

Men are allowed to marry as many wives as they can. For instance, Nnu Ego's father Nwokocha Agbadi, is a wealthy chief and is represented as having many wives and has a special preference for those from big houses, daughters of chiefs and rich men, as he feels that such women are confident and beautiful. The author states:

He married a few women in the traditional sense, but as he watched each of them sink into domesticity and motherhood, he was soon bored and would go further afield for some other exciting, tall and proud female. This predilection extended to his mistresses as well.... Two of Agbadi's wives came from Ibuza, two from his own village of Ogboli, three were slaves he had captured during his wanderings; and he also had two mistresses (p.8).

Agbadi ignores his wives when they are either pregnant or nursing and marries more women, despite him having even mistresses. Davis (1981) explores how societies often commodify women's reproductive labour and maintains them at a subordinate

position, in order to marginalize them further. Agbadi's behavior therefore exposes the pain of motherhood and exploitation at their most vulnerable stage in their motherhood journey.

Polygamy also brings suffering to black mothers, because it affects them psychologically as they struggle to bring up children without complete support from their husbands whose attention is divided among many wives. Nnu Ego goes through a lot of pain when Nnaife becomes polygamous through the inheritance of his dead brother's wives as culture dictates. It is common knowledge to her neighbors that Nnu Ego dislikes her husband's younger wife, Adaku. However, Nnu Ego feels the need for peace in her home and promises herself that she will be patient with her. The author states:

She hurried in and, to take her mind off herself, busied herself entertaining people who came throughout the evening to see the new wife. Nnu Ego fought back tears as she prepared her own bed for Nnaife and Adaku. It was a good thing she was determined to play the role of mature senior wife... (p. 152).

Nnu Ego bears the pain of sharing her husband with another woman bravely although this affects her in the long run as she feels neglected by Nnaife. Not even the name, 'senior wife' can comfort her paining heart from the betrayal by her husband Nnaife. As a mother, she has to withstand all the pain for the sake of her children as it is expected of her by the society. The pain of polygamy also befalls Nnu Ego when her husband refuses to increase the money he leaves to the family despite them having grown in number after Adaku comes in. He instead leaves the responsibility of providing to Nnu Ego as the senior wife and says it is her duty to feed them and that she should sell her lappas or simply use her head on how she is going to feed the family (p. 169). Nnu Ego feels that she is a prisoner in her own home, imprisoned by her love for her children and her position of senior wife:

On her way back to their room, it occurred to Nnu Ego that she was a prisoner, imprisoned by her love for her children, imprisoned in her role as the senior wife. She was not even expected to demand more money for her family; that was considered below the standard expected of a woman in her position. It was not fair how men used a woman's sense of responsibility to actually enslave her (p. 169).

The position of a wife and mother works against Nnu Ego and it becomes a form of oppression in that she is not expected to complain for providing for her family, which was traditionally a man's role. Nnaife expects her to help in supporting even the new wife. This shows that mothers are oppressed within the family because they are supposed to obey the demands of their husbands without questioning their decisions. The Igbo society uses titles such as 'senior wife' to cover oppressive tactics on women. The urge of being a mother in this society enslaves women in this society because mothers have to obey their husbands for the sake of their children's wellbeing. Ogunديpe-Leslie (1994) states that cultural expectations burden African women as mothers and wives and that women are expected to adapt to institutional oppressions without complaining as they understand the place of patriarchy in their African contexts. The assertion implies that patriarchy intersects with motherhood to cause oppression of mothers in the text under study. Despite Nnu Ego's struggle to have patience with Adaku, the pain of leaving her bed for another woman is too much that she feels like screaming especially on listening to the sounds that Adaku makes as her husband is making love to her (p. 153). The aspect of sharing a husband and at the same time struggling to provide for her children makes Nnu Ego bitter and therefore her experience of motherhood is not as pleasant as she hoped it would be.

It is also evident that the presence of British colonizers has a great impact on the family set up in Lagos. For instance, Nnaife works for a white master, Dr. Meers who works at the Forensic Science Laboratory in Yaba. The white master lives with his wife and Nnaife is their washerman, a job that takes most of his time and this makes Nnaife and Nnu Ego draw apart with time. Nnu Ego argues that there is no longer time for petting or talking about love, although notably, she disliked her husband from the beginning (p. 57). She feels that this change emanates from the busy schedule of their husbands as they work for the white men. For these mothers, the excitement of buying new items such as lappas overtakes the need and desire for closeness in the family. The emotional distance between Nnu Ego and her husband Nnaife has a toll on her and although she engages in petty trading to supplement his income, she does not feel appreciated as a wife and as a mother to Nnaife's children.

Jobs such as washing for the white masters, which are traditionally meant for women cause the emasculation of men like Nnaife and it is made worse by the disapproval of

his wife as seen when she confides in her friend Cordelia. Cordelia tells Nnu Ego: “Their manhood has been taken away from them” (p. 56). This emasculation of men who live in Lagos affects mothers. For instance, when Nnu Ego gets into labour, she is assisted by the Owerri woman and Cordelia to deliver. Nnu Ego observes that Nnaife is still asleep despite her being in labour, while “back home in Ibuza, when a wife is in labour the husband becomes restless” (p. 58). Later Nnu Ego spends all her savings during her baby’s naming ceremony to show her pride as a new mother. According to Collins (2000), the experiences of black women, particularly mothers are unique and should be addressed as such and this is evident as discussed above where mothers help one another through the process of childbirth while their men sleep through it all. Although Nnaife is not concerned with Nnu Ego during her delivery process like men in Ibuza are with their wives, Nnu Ego does not harbor any ill feelings towards him because the joy of having a child supersedes other challenges that she may be facing.

Motherhood among the Igbo people was viewed as sacred and a way of proving the manhood of one’s husband and therefore failure to be a mother was also viewed with great disdain. Arndt (1996) argues that barren women in the Igbo society are either charged with being malicious or alleged to have a malignant *chi* (p. 31). For Nnu Ego, the perception that she was barren when she was married to Amatokwu is attributed to her *chi* and attempts are made to ensure that the slave woman who was her *chi* is appeased so that she can have children. Nnu Ego’s *chi* is bitter because she was forcefully buried with Agbadi’s wife Nnu Ego, who is also Nnu Ego’s mother as was the tradition among the Igbo society. Nnu Ego is taunted for failure to have children and eventually chased away by Amatokwu, placing the responsibility of having children on mothers in this instance. The Igbo community places the responsibility of mothering children to mothers and ignore the role of men in the formation of children and therefore, failure to conceive is solely blamed on mothers.

Religion is also a context that shapes black motherhood. Religions all over the world are regarded as an important aspect in motherhood as they control the behavior of mothers and how they relate with their children and other members of the society. According to Akujobi (2011), religious imagery sentimentalizes and idealizes

parenting since religion is a sphere that is largely glorified for women. For example, the Madonna is a symbol of Christianity, Devi is a symbol of Hinduism, and in Africa, the goddess of creation is often shown as a beautiful lady or mermaid and is connected to the moon and ocean. When Nnu Ego experiences childlessness in her first marriage and links her bareness to her *chi*, it demonstrates the influence of religion on the formation of motherhood. Nnu Ego therefore utilizes the traditional religious methods of appeasing her *chi* by contacting a *Dibia*, a traditional medicine man:

After a while, Nnu Ego could not voice her doubts and worries to her husband anymore. It had become her problem and hers alone. She went from one *Dibia* to another in secret, and was told the same thing-that the slave woman who was her *chi* would not give her a child because she had been dedicated to a river goddess before Agbadi took her away in slavery... (p.31).

Praying and making sacrifices is one of the ways of appeasing dead spirits in Igbo society. Amatokuwu, Nnu Ego's first husband marries another wife who would bear him children. Soon enough, her pregnancy becomes noticeable and she delivers a baby boy. Nnu Ego helps her in taking care of the young child, until it becomes a habit. She however longs for her own child. When the child is barely one year old, the younger wife becomes pregnant again. At the same time Amatokuwu beats Nnu Ego and chases her away. Nnu Ego goes to her father's house where she is received warmly and taken care of by her father's wives until she heals mentally. Amadiume (2015) observes that African societies often place a high value on motherhood as a way of ensuring the continuity of lineage and this often places a woman in a position where her value is based on her ability to be a mother. This reason makes Agbadi to make expensive sacrifices to Nnu Ego's *Chi* to appease the slave woman where he begs her to forgive him for taking her away from her original home and promises her that he has stopped dealing with slaves and has freed the ones in his homestead and adopted the rest as his children. He goes on to inform her that because they were now his offspring, he had made it unlawful to refer to them as slaves. Agbadi makes all of these compromises in order to protect his daughter Nnu Ego's mental well-being. Following through on all the prescribed rituals, Nnu Ego becomes pregnant in her second marriage to Nnaife and has a large brood of three boys and four girls.

The traditional religious beliefs are used to ridicule the society's purported faith as reflected in the experience of motherhood. When Oshia gets sick, Nnu Ego takes him to a native medicine man who listens to the boy's story and warns Nnu Ego to protect him from the jealousy of the younger wife, Adaku, although the *Dibia* knows that the boy is lying. Oshia was hurried by Nnu Ego to the traditional medicine man, who heard the boy's tale. Since the *Dibia* had to make a living, he refrained from telling the youngster he was lying or that he was just dreaming the entire event. Rather, the *Dibia* jabbered, spit, convulsed, and danced in turn before declaring in an odd voice: "The child is right. You must protect your sons against the jealousy of the younger wife. If you bring me two hens and a yard of white cloth, I shall prepare a charm for your sons to wear. No jealousy will be able to reach them after that" (p.141). The *Dibia* lies to Nnu Ego out of his dislike for Adaku. The *Dibia* is therefore a symbol of the exploitation of gullible mothers by religious people in the society. The *Dibia* manipulates Nnu Ego which points at the view of the society towards mothers as seen where the religious leaders like the *Dibia* take advantage of their vulnerability. The exploitation of Nnu Ego by the *Dibia* shows how mothers are blinded by their desire for the wellbeing of their children. Nnaemeka (2004) emphasizes on the aspect of nego-feminism which argues about women being agreeable to discussions about the challenges they face as a result of being in patriarchal contexts and the ability to accommodate the results of their negotiation. This means that although African feminism appreciates the role of mothers, the ease with which they are exploited by religious leaders such as the *Dibia* is criticized.

Although in the family set up in Africa, motherhood is revered, being the mother of a male child is regarded highly. Umeh (1996) asserts that a woman's husband is her greatest asset, that a mother feels complete when her kids are healthy, that she is a failure if she has no males, and that marriage generates male heirs who continue the husband's family line. Page 18. Akujobi (2011) concurs with Umeh's assertion by arguing that:

It is no longer a secret that the Nigerian woman considers herself a real woman only when she has proved herself to be fertile and the 'halo of maternity' shines over her. This holds true for most women in Africa where the index of motherhood is used to define 'real' women or responsible women. This is so in the sense that motherhood is a

prerequisite for social acceptance and many non-mothering women experience feelings of rejection and low self-esteem (p. 19).

This assertion is evident through Nnu Ego in *The Joys* when she keeps comparing her first husband, Amatokwu to her new husband and Nnaife gets angry and tells her:

Pity your ideal Amatokwu almost beat you to death because you did not bear him a son...the day you mention Amatokwu 's name in this house again I shall give you the greatest beating you have ever had.... You who put Amatokwu manhood in question so that he had to marry again quickly and have many children in quick succession... (p. 53).

The utterance by Nnaife in his moment of anger shows the suffering that a woman goes through for failure to give her husband a child, and more specifically, a male child. This perception by the society places a mother in a confused state like Nnu Ego, as she does not understand how all this is her fault. Emecheta's idea of making Nnu Ego get more children after her failed marriage is read as a form of resistance to society's perceived notion about women being responsible for motherhood. Nnu Ego emphasizes on the importance of a male child when she tells the Owerri woman that: "I know what you mean. Girls are love babies. But, you see, only now with this son am I going to start loving this man. He has made me into a real woman and a mother. So why should I hate him now?" (p. 58) Nnu Ego develops love for her husband because he has turned her into a 'real' woman according to the dictates of the society. According to Igbo society, womanhood is only defined through motherhood as seen in Nnu Ego's case. Nnu Ego further comforts her friend Cordelia that one day she will have a boy, as she only has daughters. The intersection of gender and cultural expectations unravel through Nnu Ego when she gets a son because her identity and worth as a mother are pegged on her ability to bear sons. This is a form of oppression on black mothers that black feminists seek to address. Jorgensen (2018) observes that:

The Joys of Motherhood begins as a confrontation with oppression when the author introduces the protagonist, Nnu Ego, who has lost her only child and that she is faced with her co-dependence on socially constructed roles (which she has subconsciously accepted as her own) and desires to commit suicide (p. 62).

This means that the society has held mothers captive through its oppressive expectations of what motherhood should be and even gone mute on the pain that mothers go through in order to fulfill what is expected of them. The co-dependence felt by Nnu Ego is as a result of fear that she harbors to what the society will think of

her now that she has lost her only child. Nnaife emphasizes the importance of having sons during the naming ceremony of his second born son Adimabua which means “now I am two.” He tells the world that now he has two sons, so he is two persons in one, which means he is a very important man (p.110). Further, when Adaku starts living with Nnu Ego and her family, Nnu Ego questions her place in the homestead but she later comforts herself by reminding herself that she is the mother of the sons of the family. The author states:

Even when it came to sharing the piece of meat for the two children, one of the duties of the woman of the house, she pointed out to Dumbi that she must respect Oshia, as he was the heir and the future owner of the family. Their few possessions...the four-poster iron bed which Nnaife had bought from his journey to Fernando Po and the large wall mirrors...were things of immense value to Nnu Ego, and if her son never grew up to be a farmer, she wanted to make sure that whatever there was, was his (p. 150).

Nnu Ego takes part in dignifying male children over female children. It is ironical that she supports the same system that oppresses mothers like her for failure to be mothers to sons. The desire of a mother to protect her family is seen in Nnu Ego’s decision to lecture the young Dumbi (Adaku’s daughter) concerning the position of Oshia as the heir apparent of the few belongings they have. There is portrayal of social inequality based on gender even through the sharing of food, where male children are given the larger portions of meat than daughters. The importance of male children is further seen when Adaku delivers her first pair of twin girls. Nnaife does not appreciate their birth and he even questions Nnu Ego, “What are these? Could you not have done better?” (p.156) However painful this may sound, it is the reality among the Igbo people, and it makes mothers desperate to live to it. For instance, when Adaku delivers a male child who dies of convulsions a few weeks after birth, she questions God as to why He does not take one of the girls instead of her son, which reflects how society has conditioned mothers not to think about their personal value as human beings but to live up to societal sanctions that subordinates them through motherhood. Hooks (1981) critiques the way patriarchal societies, within the context of black women’s experiences, have historically placed undue importance on women’s reproductive roles and emphasizes that women should be valued beyond their roles as mothers. Although Hook observes the African society’s gender discrimination,

mothers like Nnu Ego do not resist these oppressive structures, rather they struggle to fit in to the societal definition of motherhood.

The importance of the male child is further emphasized when Adaku has a quarrel with Nnu Ego and judgement is made in favor of Nnu Ego although she was the one who had wronged Adaku. Ezigbo (1997) asserts that the relationship between Nnu Ego and Adaku illustrates the complexities of relationships between females in the novel within a male dominated society, and that, while women share common struggles, their different responses to these challenges reflect the diverse ways in which women navigate and resist oppression. Since Adaku does not have any male children, Nwakusor judges in favor of Nnu Ego:

Don't you know that according to the custom of our people, you, Adaku the daughter of who, you are committing an unforgivable sin? Our life starts from immortality and ends in immortality. If Nnaife had been married to only you, you would have ended his life on this round of his visiting earth. I know you have children but they are girls, who in few, years' time will go to build another man's immortality (p. 24).

Adaku is therefore discriminated against for having female children in Igbo society; it is not enough for one to be just a mother, being a mother to male children accords a woman preference and sometimes favoritism in the society. The words uttered by Nwakusor are heavy and they reflect the position of the traditional Africanists towards male children and their role in building the man's lineage. The purpose for female babies is to build another man's immortality and are therefore deemed as only useful to their husbands. Delving into the traditions of the Igbo people, one can feel Adaku's pain when she is disgraced by men who are supposed to help her and her cowife to coexist in peace. Lorde (1984) contends that practices like preference for the male gender devalues women and strips them of their agency and reinforces their oppression and advocates for equality between the sexes. Such gender dynamics affect the societal view of mothers without children and deny mothers the happy experience of just being a mother, to either a son or a daughter.

Mothers believe that children bring joy to their parents in their old age. After the birth of her son, For the first time in her life, Nnu Ego completely embraces Nnaife, and she feels satisfied. While giving her kid a bath and preparing food for her husband, she believes that she will have a nice old age and that someone will survive her to call

her mother. In the hope that it would provide her a comfortable old life, Mama Abby also provides for her kid, particularly her son, by investing in his education. Nnu Ego and Mama Abby bring out the socially constructed expectations about motherhood in Igbo community which marginalize women who do not have children. Hill-Collins (2006) observes that black women, particularly mothers, are often judged by their ability to adhere to socially constructed notions that limit their identities and marginalize them as seen in Nnu Ego and mama Abby whose fulfillment is pegged on their roles as mothers as dictated by the society. The socially constructed notions of motherhood affect black mothers like Nnu Ego and Adaku, although later Adaku resists and takes care of her daughters on her own. Such acts of defiance to oppressive practices are as a result of love for her children.

A woman without children is viewed by this society as a failure. When Ngozi dies, Nnu Ego runs to Carter bridge and wants to commit suicide due to the tragic loss that has befallen her and Nnaife. The people around the bridge do not understand why such a young woman wants to end her life. One woman even slaps her hard on the face to reprimand her irrational behavior. However, when Nnu Ego tells them that she had lost her only child, a son, people understand her pain and even share their personal stories with her to encourage her. At the end of it, they all agree that a woman without a child for her husband was a failed woman. This shows how a woman without children is treated with disdain by the society and though there might be sympathy, nothing can change their perception of such a woman. As such, the family set up defines motherhood through its expectation as dictated by the society; a dictate that causes a lot of suffering to women. When Nnu Ego gets her second child, she is more careful in its upbringing and does not have much time to practice her business. She contends that whenever new mothers complained of their inability to keep indulging in their usual businesses, one usually received the answer: “never mind, he will grow soon and clothe you and farm for you, so that your old age will be sweet” (p. 92). This further signifies the expectation placed on mothers in the family and society in general.

Morality as a social construct defines the experience of motherhood in the two novels under study. The aspect of morality in the novel, *The Joys* (1979) has been explored to expose how it defines motherhood. Girls in Ibuza village have to go through a

virginity test before they marry to ensure that they are untouched before being handed over to their husbands. As such, Agbadi, Nnu Ego's father rejoices when the people of Umu-Iso come to thank him and the rest of his family because his daughter has been found to be an unspoiled virgin. He says: "My daughter has been found an unspoiled virgin. Her husband's people are here to thank us" (p.31). We read: Each visitor would peep into the kegs of palm wine and shout, "Oh, the kegs are very full. Nnu Ego has not ashamed us. We pray that in less than ten months our in-laws will come and thank us again for the birth of her baby..." (p. 32). This shows the importance pegged on virtuousness of a woman before marriage.

As shown by Idayi's remark above, the ability to be a mother is based traditionally on easy conception. These expectations placed on women are modes of oppression of women through the glorification of sexual purity, but the question of Nnu Ego, who has already been acknowledged as pure by the men in the community yet she fails to conceive for her first husband Amatokwu arises: why does she take so much time to conceive then? The society, through the patriarchal structures have only come up with ways to exploit women and dwell much on this as a basis for ashaming women who have trouble getting children. Kolawole (1997) asserts that African women are products of multiple forms of subjugation: "Patriarchy, tradition, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and gender imperialism, all combine to acts against the African woman's self-assertion" (p. 25). This is evident in the way black mothers are treated with disdain by the society for failure to fulfill societal expectations, like immediate conception of babies once they get married.

In the Caribbean context, the Caribbean family structure also has an impact on motherhood and it consists of a mother, father and children, just like any typical nuclear family. Sophi narrates that: "...while they were all working together, Ante Atie's father (Sophi's grandfather), stopped to wipe his forehead, leaned forward and died" (p. 10). The family used to work together in the cane fields. However, as a result of slavery and colonization, there has been a change in the organization of the Caribbean family, forming matrifocal families caused by the absence of men such as Sophi's grandfather who dies while working in the fields while others are killed by the macoutes such as Dessalines (p. 106). The absence of men is also caused by

inhuman acts by the macoutes because they rape mothers and their daughters fearlessly and therefore women deliver and raise children who do not know their fathers. Sophi narrates that: “My father might have been a Macoute. He was a stranger who, when my mother was eighteen years old dragged her into the cane fields, pinned her down on the ground” (p. 122). Sophi therefore did not know who her father was.

As a result of the absence of the fathers in the Caribbean, mothers in these families have taken up the roles of providing for the families, protecting the children, nurturing them, cooking for them and basically being in control of the families. For instance, Tante Atie looks after Sophi after her mother relocates to New York. Sophi regards her like a mother, such that she even writes a poem for her every year on mother’s day. However, her aunt Atie tells her that the card belongs to her biological mother, not to her. James (1989) defines othermothers as:

...those who assist blood mothers in the responsibilities of childcare for short to long-term periods, in informal or formal arrangements. They can be, but are not confined to, such blood relatives as grandmothers, sisters, aunts, cousins or supportive fictive kin...This concept of other mothering which has its roots in the traditional African worldview and can be traced through the institution of slavery, developed in response to an ever-growing need to share the responsibility of child nurturance (p. 45).

Tante Atie takes on the role of othermother to Sophi Caco and takes her to school, cooks for her and loves her like her own child. She however, reminds Sophi of her biological mother Martine and that she did not abandon her. Indeed, Atie is Sophi’s othermother or surrogate mother as she is given custody of the baby after her sister’s decision to relocate to New York. She plays her motherhood role well and Sophi also loves her, as she does not even know her biological mother in person. Factors such as slavery and colonialism upset the normal family structure and create a new family order in the Caribbean context. Unlike in the African context where we have seen that motherhood is complicated by patriarchy and colonialism, in the Caribbean there is an additional aspect of slavery. Crenshaw (2015) explores how systemic oppressions like colonialism and slavery have historically shaped family structures in the Caribbean, by reshaping motherhood into a communal and adaptive practice and how this has continued to influence the practice of black motherhood. This shows the resilience of black mothers in the face of oppression.

In *BEM*, patriarchy dominates the lives of the Caco women. This system of oppression has resulted to practices that demean women and strip them of their privacy and self-dignity. Men have dominated over mothers in *BEM* as shown by the way Tante Atie thinks about her life as a Haitian mother:

According to Tante Atie, each finger had a purpose. It was the way she had been taught to prepare herself to become a woman. Mothering. Boiling. Loving. Baking. Nursing. Frying. Healing. Washing. Ironing. Scrubbing. It wasn't her fault, she said. Her ten fingers had been named for her even before she had been born. Sometimes, she even wished she had six fingers in each hand so she could have two lefts for herself (p. 151).

Mothers within the family setting have no say, they are expected to cook, clean, wash, iron and be good mothers to their children. While these are roles meant for women in the society, the duty of motherhood has pushed mothers such as Martine to relocate to New York so as to provide a better life for their children and this is an indication of the importance placed on motherhood in this society and the extent to which mothers are ready to go for the sake of their children.

Like in the African context, the boy child is regarded highly than a girl child in the Caribbean family especially in Haiti, as shown in the novel when Granma Ife is narrating to Sophi what happens during delivery of children in Haiti: "If it is a boy, the lantern will be put outside the shack. If there is a man, he will stay up all night with the child? What if it is a girl?" "If it is a girl, the midwife will cut the child's cord and go home. Only the mother will be left in the darkness to hold her child. There will be no lamps, no candles, no lighter" (p. 40). This indicates gender inequality in the Caribbean and it is similar to the African perception of the male child as superior to the female child. Due to the migration of people as a result of slave trade, black communities in Africa and the Caribbean have similarities in their perception of motherhood, based on patriarchy and legacies of colonialism.

Mothers serve to perpetuate patriarchy within the family setting by accepting to carry out the virginity test on their daughters. According to Lerner (1986), women must cooperate for the patriarchal system to continue. Many strategies are used to achieve this collaboration, including gender indoctrination, educational deprivation, denying women access to their past, and segregating women based on sexual activity to define

what constitutes "respectability" and "deviance" (p. 217). Grandma Ife tested her daughters for sexual purity, and in turn Martine tests her daughter Sophi hence creating a strained relationship between mother and daughter, in that Sophi associates her mother with her oppressor due to the pain she causes her. Through Sophi, we realize Haitian mothers' obsession with sexual purity:

I have heard it compared to a virginity cult our mother's obsession with keeping us pure and chaste. My mother always listened to the echo of my urine in the toilet, for if it was too loud, it meant that I had been deflowered. I learned very early in life that virgins always take very small steps when they walked. They never did acrobatic splits, never rode horses or bicycles. They always covered themselves well and even if their lives depended on it, never parted with their panties (p. 154).

The word cult has a strong meaning in this context. It is more than an obsession with a particular thing. This obsession is out of the fear that girls will not get men to marry them if they are found to be pregnant. Since the men in the society expect to marry pure girls, the women help them to keep the girls pure for marriage, hence aiding patriarchy. The effect of the virginity test on the relationship between mothers and daughters is felt as it ruins how daughters like Sophi relate with their mothers. Sophi feels that Martine does not love her and that is why she inflicts pain on her.

Colonialism has an impact on how Martine perceives herself as a mother to Sophi due to the traumatic experience of rape that she is subjected to by the macoutes. The macoutes were paramilitary police under the leadership of dictator Duvalier and they killed, raped and tormented Haitians during Duvalier's regime. Martine tells Sophi about her attempts to abort her when she was pregnant because she reminds Martine of her terrible experience of rape, "drinking all kinds of herbs, vervain, quinine, verbena and baby poisons. I tried beating my stomach with wooden spoons. I tried to destroy you, but you would not go away" (p. 190). Martine's trauma is so intense that when she becomes pregnant for Marc, she even hears the fetus calling her name, "it has a man's voice, so now I know it is not a girl. I am going to get it out of me. I am going to get vit out of me, as the stars are my witness" (p. 217). The pain increases until Martine commits suicide by stabbing herself seventeen times. This pain that Martine feels makes her doubtful of her mothering ability and it is evident that she and Sophi have a strained relationship. Sophi seeks to break the pattern of trauma in

her family for the sake of her daughter Brigitte by going to the cane fields where Martine was raped and beating the canes. This is an act of resistance, as advocated by black feminists, who feel that black women should struggle to free themselves from intersecting factors of oppression such as slavery and colonialism as they impact motherhood experiences in the Caribbean.

BEM (1994) also explores how moral values are shaped by cultural, social and personal experiences in the novel. Watkins (2016) argues that a combination of sexist beliefs engrained in the society, intense censorship during the Duvalier regime, and self-imposed silence out of fear of reprisals account for Haitian women's reluctance or incapacity to speak out against injustice. Since then, customs and beliefs strongly rooted in patriarchal norms have shaped the generation that includes Sophi's grandmother Ife. Therefore, she tests her daughters for sexual purity as this is a way of upholding the moral values in the society and also to prepare them for marriage and eventually for motherhood. During the Duvalier era in Haiti, mothers were subjected to injustices such as rape and often times, the macoutes would rape them in the presence of their daughters. The experience of motherhood as depicted by Dancticat was highly defined by violence and trauma in Duvalier's era.

The process of testing for virginity affects the mothers' sexual lives and they do not enjoy sex as they suffer from psychological and physical trauma. For instance, Sophi Caco struggles with the expectations of the society about what a wife and mother should be. She explains the trauma of the practice of testing, where mothers test their daughters for sexual purity and the daughters test their daughters too. According to Counihan (2012), the testing logic creates a fantasy in which moms exercise some degree of sexual agency: by adhering to the limits of sexual propriety that the tests designate, mothers might prevent impending rape. Thus, Martine views her rape incident as a way of stopping the ongoing testing. This negatively affects the relationship between Martine and her daughter Sophi as she instills pain in her. Motherhood in the Caribbean is an experience that is filled with pain and uncertainty as seen through Martine, Sophi and even Granma Ife. Crenshaw (1991) asserts that oppressions meted on black mothers are unique and should be treated as such. This

assertion is evident in the experiences Sophi and Martine go through in their journey of motherhood.

A daughter can either bring shame or pride to her family. In *BEM*, Granma Ife tells Sophi: “From the time a girl begins to menstruate to the time you turn her over to her husband, the mother is responsible for her purity. If I give a soiled daughter to her husband, he can shame me, my family, speak evil of me, even bring her back to me” (p. 156). This shows the seriousness of the aspect of good morals among girls in the Caribbean. Martine also uses Sophi’s chastity as a measure of whether she is a good mother or not. Haitian women have a desire to be accepted in the society and therefore force other women into a state of subjectivity; which runs through generations.

Haitian culture has also incorporated the use of folklore to emphasize on the importance of morality. The stories are narrated from generation to generation to instill fear in girls so they cannot break their virginity until they are of marriageable age:

A story is told of an extremely rich man who married a poor black girl. He had chosen her out of hundreds of pretty girls because she was untouched. For the wedding night, he bought her the whitest sheets and nightgowns. For himself, he bought a can of thick goat milk to drink with a drop of her hymen blood... (p. 155).

The lengths to which men go to maintain their honor is incomparable to anything else; their selfish attitudes are also evident in the above folklore. The message brought out in the narrative is the voicelessness of mothers in a society that objectifies them and have been given power over their bodies by traditions of the community. That is why mothers are used to aid in maintaining their daughter’s chastity to avoid such tragic incidences.

The place of morality and its influence on motherhood in the two novels cannot be overemphasized. In accordance with the traditions and cultural set up of Africa and the Caribbean, girls are expected to be virgins before marriage. In both novels, if a girl is not pure before marriage, she brings shame and dishonor to her mother. She can even be sent back as explained by Dancticat. The implication of these acts is that black mothers suffer to act according to African societal expectations. In *The Joys*,

(1979) the father and the whole society in general rejoice when a daughter is tested and found to be a virgin. They know soon enough that she will have children, as they believe sexual purity makes conception easier. However, the study has found that contrary to the belief that virgins have an easy time to conceive, Nnu Ego suffers childlessness until she is chased away by her first husband. Secondly, mothers are expected to advocate for morality in their daughters, which has caused conflict between mothers and daughters in a bid to fit in the society. It is therefore evident that traditions, morality, religion and family structures define motherhood in Africa and the Caribbean, and these factors often intersect to form oppressive structures and to resist agency by black mothers. Collins (2000) contends that black motherhood is both a form of resistance and marginalization and apart from gender, race and class, many other factors oppress black mothers and that the unique experiences of black mothers are important in understanding their plight.

4.3 Modernity as a Context

Modernity as a context refers to the changes brought by colonialism such as change in gender roles, relocation, change of family structures and education. Although literary scholarship has presented black mothers as dependent on the men in their lives: their fathers, brothers or their husbands, the relocation from the village to Lagos changes this perception for Nnu Ego. When Nnu Ego gets married to Nnaife, she has to move to Lagos to live with her new husband. According to Mohanty & Torres (1991), social, educational, and economic institutions sustain dependence ties based on race, sex, and class, which are the connections among women in the Third World. Furthermore, according to the two academics, certain portrayals of African moms depict them as being economically and politically dependent or as having no other employment options than prostitution. In the 1979 film *The Joys*, the moms assist their husbands in providing for their families' everyday necessities. Even though they are raising the kids, they still have to work to pay for things like clothing for the kids.

Nnu Ego struggles vainly to make ends meet:

Nnu Ego still sold firewood, garri and other foodstuffs. Every morning neighbors could hear her calling “Oshia, Adim, twins, wake up and let us go to the waterside! “There she would buy firewood for the day’s sale and they would all carry it home. She normally left Nnamdi with Iyawo Itsekiri...” (p. 174).

Nnu Ego engages in petty trade and leaves her youngest child Nnamdi with Iyawo so she can fend for her family. The children are also involved in helping their mother to carry firewood which she later sells to pay their fees and buy food. Nnu Ego paves a path for other black mothers to get help from other women so they can provide for their children. Although Nnu Ego is not the modern educated woman, she has the wisdom to know that she should seek help when possible so she can carry out other motherhood duties.

Nnu Ego further cries. “On my life, I have to work myself to the bone to look after them, I have to give them all. And if I am lucky enough to die in peace, I have given them my soul” (p.186). Amadiume (1987) discusses the socioeconomic dimensions of the character’s struggles, with the argument that Buchi Emecheta highlights the economic dependency that exacerbates women’s oppression. For her, motherhood involves giving your sweat and blood for your children and even in death, she hopes to have given them all she can. According to Hooks (2000), the society exploits women’s labour through the glorification of the sacrifice of mothers and this is a form of oppression for them. In the modern-day Lagos, mothers are expected to work hard to help their husbands as evident in the case of Nnu Ego, Adaku and other mothers in Lagos who labour to provide for their families.

Education as an aspect of modernity influences the experience of motherhood in Emecheta’s *The Joys*. The arrival of the colonialists marked the beginning of education and other aspects such as Christianity. Although Nnu Ego and her husband Nnaife are not educated, Nnu Ego works hard in her petty trade to educate her sons. She feels that by educating them, they will have a better life than hers. Oshia gets admission to a college in Warri and Nnu Ego proudly accompanies him to his new school and advises him not to go the way of the rich boys in his school, so he can succeed. Mama Abby is also described as a wise mother who saves all her money to use for her son’s education (p. 131), as she believes that it will secure a happy old age for her. In the traditional Igbo community, once of age, sons were to till the land and provide for their families through the proceeds from the land. However, modernity upset the usual societal expectations and brought another way of prospering through going to school to attain education. Adaku also understands the importance of education and for this reason, she takes her daughters to school. When she realizes

that Nnaife has failed to provide enough for the family, she leaves to go and practice prostitution in order to educate her daughters, despite the ill talk about her by her neighbors, who are still bound by traditions (p. 211). Adaku represents a modern woman who is not cowed by any traditions in her struggle to provide a good life for her two daughters. Adaku's act of taking her daughters to school challenges Nnu Ego who says that: "it would be really something for a woman to be able to earn some money monthly like a man" (p. 241). According to Wallace (1979), the struggle for education among black mothers is not merely a quest for personal development but it is also a mode of resistance against the various forms of oppressions that they face. Wallace's assertion shows that mothers like Nnu Ego, Mama Abby and Adaku understand that with the onset of modernity, their children will get better lives if they get educated.

Change in family structures is another aspect of modernity that has shaped motherhood in the two novels under study. The families in Igbo community consisted of a father, mother and children, although some families were polygamous. In Lagos however, there is evidence of change in such organizations of family, for instance, Mama Abby is a single mother who single handedly takes care of and educates her son. Adaku also leaves Nnaife to become a single mother of two daughters when she realizes that Nnaife is not living to his expectations as a man, which is to adequately provide for the family. Such family structures overburden mothers and they have to work hard to meet the needs of their children. Adaku for instance, has to practice prostitution despite also selling agbadas to earn a living.

Modernity is interconnected with the theme of survival in *BEM* where Dancticat explores how black mothers grapple with the needs of their families and their attempts to provide for them. After Sophi's marriage to Joseph, she works at a clinic on Rhode island in Providence. This job provides her with an opportunity to provide for her family and to attain individual autonomy, a factor that black mothers still struggle with. She departs from the traditional roles placed on a mother such as cooking and cleaning to pave a way for her to find her identity beyond the confines of family and marriage. Sophi states: "I got a job at a health clinic. The work was hard but I liked being able to support myself and my child" (p. 176). Sophi is an example of how

black mothers struggle to attain financial independence and how this redefines motherhood.

Although Martine sends money regularly to support Sophi, Tante Atie and Granma Ife, Atie also works to ensure that Sophi has a good life. When Sophi is almost leaving for New York, her aunt works extra hours so as to buy her gifts for her trip. Her love for Sophi is seen through this sacrifice. Atie states: "...I know I have not been here all week. I wanted to work extra hours to get you some gifts for your trip" (p. 28). Apart from cooking, washing and caring for Sophi, she has a job that earns her income, which is also a departure from the normal roles assigned to black women by the society. Similarly, Martine works to support her daughter, sister and mother whom she leaves back in Haiti. She is an embodiment of economic hardship and the pursuit of a better life through immigration. She represents the challenges of immigrant black mothers, their resilience and the sacrifices they make for their families back home. As Collins (2022) contends, indeed economic self-sufficiency is essential for black mothers to resist and challenge systemic oppressions. The experiences of Martine align with this assertion, based on her hard work in order to defy the traditional notions of what black motherhood entails; she works multiple jobs to provide for Sophi a good education; a proof that economic empowerment is necessary for black women. Sophi says that: "...Martine worked as a night janitor at an office building and in the day as a caretaker for an old lady" (p. 58). Mothers in both Haiti and New York as represented by Martine go through economic challenges which portray in a broader perspective, the problems of other black mothers globally.

In Edwidge Danticat's novel, *BEM*, both formal and informal education shape the aspect of motherhood. When the novel begins, we find Sophi Caco coming from school and her aunt Atie welcomes her with open arms and inquires about school. The young Sophi enjoys all the lessons apart from the reading lessons where pupils are paired with their parents to teach them how to read. Sophi laments that she dislikes how Monsieur Agustin pairs her with an old lady who likes to learn how to read. Tante Atie tells Sophi that she does not appreciate being taught how to read by small children, and reminisces on the days in the past when she would have given anything

in order to be in school. Now, she says, cooking and cleaning, looking after others, is her school. She laments:

Cutting cane was the only thing for a young one to when I was your age. That is why I never want to hear you complain about your school...as long as you don't have to work in the fields, it does not matter that I will never learn to read that ragged old Bible under the pillow (p. 9).

Tante Atie is ready to do anything for Sophi to remain in school and not work in the cane fields like she and her sister Martine did. She assumes her motherhood role seriously and does not mind never having to read her old Bible. After Sophi's relocation to New York to be with her mother, Atie goes back to Port au Prince to live with her mother. In the company of her friend Louise, she decides to learn how to read. This shows her determination to live a better life, despite having been stripped of the only role that gave meaning to her life, that of mothering Sophi.

Tante Atie remembers why she and her sister did not get education as they were born of peasants and who worked daily in the cane fields to provide for their children. She considers the kind of house they live with Sophi and appreciates the efforts of Martine, Sophi's biological mother as they would not be living the same as Monsieur Augustin, a schoolteacher, and further advises Sophi to work hard and be obedient to her mother for opening the door of education for her. At the same time, she reminds Sophi that her mother did not abandon her, that she and Martine had no control over anything, not even their bodies; therefore, Martine goes to New York to provide a better life for her family. The sacrificing spirit of Martine is exemplified through this as she works tirelessly to open doors for Sophi and provide opportunities that were not available to her and her sister Martine. Although Martine is not a present mother, she assumes her motherhood roles with diligence, often sending money and cassettes to Sophi, and money for her upkeep.

Through a conversation between Sophi and her mother Martine, we get to know about the dreams that Martine and her sister Atie had for a good education; they aspired to be the first women doctors from their mother's village.

Martine states:

...you should have seen us when we were young. We always dreamt of becoming important women. We were going to become the first women doctors from my mother's village. We would not stop at being doctors either. We were going to be engineers too. Imagine when we found out we had limits (p.42).

In the patriarchal society they live in, coupled with their humble background, their dreams are not realistic. However, Martine advises Sophi to take her education seriously as that is the only thing that would earn her respect from other people, and no one would break her heart because she couldn't read or write. This points at Tante Atie, who was in love with Monsieur Augustin but he left her for another wife perhaps because Atie could not read or write. Education here would be a tool for Sophi's liberation from the cultural and even personal traumas she has faced. The author portrays the caring aspect of Martine as a mother, in how she seeks only the best for her daughter. Sophi does not like the system of education at the Maranatha Bilingual Institution because most of the lessons are in French except the English composition. The bullying outside the school is also too much as the students from the public school across their school refer to them as 'stinking Haitians.' In this context, Hudson-Weems (1993) asserts that African feminism dwells on the specific issues facing African women and it exposes their struggles while instilling collaboration within the community. This aligns with Martine's advice to Sophi to attain education as it is the only way she can break free from patriarchal limitations.

Despite these challenges, Martine supports her daughter in learning English words. Sophi states: "When my mother was home, she made me read out loud from the English composition textbooks..." (p. 59). Although Martine had no chance of formal education, she knows the opportunities education can provide for her daughter Sophi. Martine is brought out as an often-absent mother and she fails in her attempts to be the mother Sophi hoped she would be, but her emphasis on Sophi's education seems to be her way of protecting her daughter from the harsh realities of being an uneducated woman in the society. Martine's love for her daughter is seen in her efforts towards giving Sophi a good education so that her life can be different than hers.

Sophi falls in love with a musician called Joseph, they get married and she has a daughter called Brigitte. This causes a strain in the relationship between mother and daughter as her mother had anticipated that she would study and become a doctor. Sophi therefore dashes Tante Atie's and her mother's hopes of being an educated woman. However, Sophi gets a job as a secretary in a clinic on Rhode Island, which enables her to contribute to the needs of her family, which is beyond her roles as a wife and mother. As a black mother, she strives to help her husband Joseph to support the family financially. Education helps Sophi to land a job at a clinic on Rhode island and therefore gives her the ability to contribute in the upbringing of their daughter Brigitte without too much strain.

Black mothers suffer to secure education for their children as discussed above. The intersection of factors such as gender and education contribute to marginalization of black mothers. However, the resistance of mothers to this is shown in Martine's effort to ensure her daughter becomes a doctor; which does not happen due to the trauma that she faces from her mother when she carries out a test on her to confirm whether she is a virgin or not. Informal education through narratives like the ones by Sophi's grandmother is also important as it provides life skills that are important in one's life. 'Othermothers' like Tante Atie use informal education to keep their families running; for instance, Atie cleans, feeds and educates Sophi and since she understands the meaning of a proper formal education, she encourages her to work hard in school. Therefore, mothers are seen to support the education of their children as they understand it is a way of empowering them.

Christianity is an aspect of modernity emanating from the colonialists and it is seen through Nnaife who works for the white man. Christian beliefs influence motherhood experiences in *The Joys*. When Nnu Ego becomes pregnant, her husband tells her not to tell anyone the news as he may lose his job if his employer came to know about the news. This is despite the excitement she had as she was finally going to be a mother after all the pain of childlessness she had experienced. Nnaife says:

Well, if you are pregnant, and believe me, I hope to God you are, there is still one problem. What will they say in the church? We have not been married there. If I do not marry you in church, they will remove our names from the church register and madam here will not like it. I

may even lose my job. So, keep it quiet, will you? Ubani the cook had to marry his wife in the Catholic church to save his job (p.50).

Modern religion inhibits motherhood through its doctrines because one must wed in church before getting pregnant unlike traditional set up where moving into a man's homestead was a gateway to a man's homestead was a gateway to getting pregnant. For instance, where one had issues with the traditional gods like Nnu Ego. Although the aspect of Christianity seems to affect men directly, it helps in shaping the experiences of motherhood in the novel. Mothers like Nnu Ego feel stifled by the harsh demands of the new religion that does not allow for the celebration of an event as important as hers; for she had suffered the pain of childlessness and when she had a reason to smile, she was not allowed to fully express herself due to the fear of her husband losing his job. Due to his job as a washerman for the white couple, Mr. and Mrs. Meers, Nnaife practices Christianity, and it dictates that one should be married in church. However, Nnaife and Nnu Ego did not marry in church. Bride price was paid for Nnu Ego who is later brought to Lagos to meet her new husband, Nnaife. Every Sunday, Nnaife visits Lagos island where people from his Igbo community holds their prayers. Nnu Ego follows him every Sunday, although she does not understand the new religion as she hails from a traditional environment. She does this in obedience to her husband.

When Mr. and Mrs. Meers depart for their country leaving Nnaife without a job, he denounces Christianity and reverts back to his traditional religion, which allows him to practice polygamy by inheriting his late brother's wives. Nnu Ego on the other hand learns to have faith in God at the time of her worries and disappointments in life. The Christian belief that Jesus was coming soon serves as a "protective mechanism devised to save them from realities too painful to accept" (p. 162). Nnu Ego's belief in God gives her the strength to face the challenges that she goes through when her husband inherits his brother's wife and gives her little attention.

After slavery in Haiti, the society consisted of freed blacks, mulattoes and Europeans which contributes to the cultural hybridity of the people of Haiti. The Africans in Haiti practiced a traditional aspect of religion called the voodoo while the Europeans brought Christianity. The two religions are mixed and practiced in the novel. According to Catholicism, sexual purity is regarded highly and this obsession with

sexual purity affects the experience of motherhood in the novel because the society brings up the aspect of testing for virginity, which affects the relationships between the mothers and their daughters. For instance, when Sophi Caco migrates to New York to live with her mother Martine, she falls in love with a musician called Joseph, her mother notices this and decides to test her purity. The author says:

She tapped the belt against her palm, her lifelines becoming more and more red. She took my hand with surprised gentleness, and led me upstairs to my bedroom. There, she made me lie on my bed and she tested me. I mouthed the words to the Virgin Mother of God... (p. 159).

The practice of testing creates a big gap between the mothers and their daughters and breaks their relationships. Sophi understands why her Tante Atie screamed when her mother had tested her. It was a traumatic experience. Also, the aspect of religion is seen in the way Sophi recites a pray as a way of coping with the pain of being tested by her mother. Evidently Christianity influences motherhood in both novels under study as analyzed above.

4.4 The Context of Gender Roles

The study of gender and gender roles has dominated literary studies especially from the first half of the twentieth century. Beauvoir (1949) argues that gender is a social construct and that the expectations of society impose the roles of womanhood on a woman and that men oppress women by categorizing them as the “other.” Humanity is also viewed as male and the world defines women as relative to men and the latter define their world and women are supposed to fit in it. Eagly (1987) also defines gender as the meanings that societies and individuals ascribe to male and female categories while Blumer (1984) describes gender roles as prescribed behaviors that are deemed appropriate for women and men.

The representation of motherhood in Africa and the Caribbean is linked innately with gender relations and societal expectations. In *The Joys*, Emecheta demarcates the gender-based line of responsibilities between wives and husbands: “you are to give her children and food, she is to bear children and look after you and them” (p.70). Nnaife’s other roles are outlined: “But now you have to make Nnu Ego pregnant very soon” (p. 71). The roles of Nnaife and Nnu Ego are outlined as stipulated by the dictates of the society. The author further remarks: “Nnu Ego realized that part of that

pride of motherhood was to look a little unfashionable and so can drawl with joy. Nnu Ego says: I can't afford another outfit, because I am nursing him, so I can't go anywhere to sell anything" (p.80). The author implies that the onus to bear children and raise them is the responsibility of the mother. This assertion portrays black mothers as people who have to sacrifice their desires and even profitable ventures in order to nurture their children.

Umeh (2008) argues that the shift in traditions, customs, gender roles and values under the colonial influence forced the African females to challenge the accepted notions about African women, mothers, daughters and wives. When Nnu Ego migrates to Lagos, she encounters the change in gender roles assigned to her in her local Ibuza village. In Lagos, she is forced to marry Nnaife, an English Lord's servant who washes clothes including the under garments of his English master's wife. In Nnu's village, he did not even qualify to be called a man. The author says:

She had first rejected his way of earning a living and had asked him why he could not find a more respectable job. Nnaife had scoffed and told her that in a town people never minded what they did to get money, as long as it was honest... (p. 51).

The changing perspectives in gender roles are revealed, where people are no longer confined to the traditionally set roles. Men like Nnaife are working in jobs that are traditionally deemed for women. Consequently, mothers are also fending for the family, a duty traditionally pegged on men. Mothers like Mama Abby and Adaku are examples of the change in gender roles in *The Joys*. When Adaku realizes that she is being discriminated against because she does not have male children and that Nnaife is not able to adequately provide for the needs of all the children in the family, she leaves her house to go and live with her daughters. She sells Agbadas and practices prostitution to earn a living. Adaku is seen to live a better life on her own, unlike her cowife Nnu Ego who is reluctant to leave as she feels bound by traditions to remain in her husband's house despite the many challenges. Adaku's action is evidence that there is a shift in gender roles. Emecheta also presents Mama Abby who educates her son Abby using her savings. Eventually, Abby succeeds and takes care of his mother. Collins (1990) states that the redefinition of traditionally set gender roles due to social or economic challenges forces black mothers to adapt to new roles that were

previously a preserve for men. Adaku and Mama Abby adapt to their roles and are able to raise their children well, which attests to their great mothering abilities.

Powell (1984) asserts that women are seen in the roles of mothers and regarded as “housewives” while men are regarded as “workers” and main supporters of their households. However, Powell shows that colonialism upset these traditional sexual divisions of labour as women took both roles of motherhood and “workers” because the men were absent and were not able to provide for their families. Colonialism gave rise to matrifocal families in the Caribbean. (Brown, 2023) describes the Anglo Caribbean family organization that has contributed to the construction and development of society, and adds that at the base of this social organization is marital instability and maternal headed homesteads consisting of a woman and her children with or without her grandchildren. The change in family structure has resulted to overburdened mothers who have to assume the responsibility of both parents in order to provide and nurture their children. For instance, in *BEM*, (1994) we find grandma Ife whose husband died in the sugar cane fields as they were working. Hence, she had to take care of the children and to educate them on her own which destabilizes the gender roles thus affecting the extent to which Granma Ife could play a role as a mother. The author notes:

Whenever she was sad, Tante Atie would talk about the sugar cane fields where she and my mother practically lived when they were children. They saw people die from sunstroke there every day. Tante Atie said that, one day while they were all working together, her father-my grandfather, stopped to wipe his forehead, leaned forward and died... (p. 10).

The death of Sophi’s grandfather leaves a gap that grandma Ife has to fill, despite the pain of losing her husband. Further, Martine takes up the role of providing for her family, after she relocates to New York city.

Sophi narrates about her mother’s two jobs:

On her day job at the nursing home, she cleaned up after bedridden old people. Some of the people were my grandmother’s age but could neither eat nor clean themselves alone. My mother removed their bed pads and washed their underarms and legs, then fed them at lunchtime...the night job was much better...Most nights, she slept on the floor in the old lady’s room in case something happened in the middle of the night...I felt so sorry for her. She looked very sad. Her face was cloudy with fatigue even though she kept reapplying the cream she had bought to lighten her skin... (p.55).

Martine's sacrifices towards ensuring that her family is taken care of is a role that should have been taken up by a male figure, which presents a shift in gender roles. This implies that the set up in the Caribbean context did not allow mothers to play their motherhood roles satisfactorily as they had to play both roles of fatherhood and motherhood thus ending up overburdened.

The shift in gender roles as a result of colonialism is evident in *The Joys* (1979) as seen when Nnu Ego, Adaku and even Mama Abby work to support their families. Change is evident also in *BEM* (1994) as Martine labors to provide for her daughter and even her sister and mother. There is evidence of a departure from the societal expectations towards a different approach that does not tie any gender to a specific role. Mothers in the novels take up their new roles with diligence to provide for their families.

4.5 Summary

Through the discussion in this chapter, it is evident that factors such as family structure, economic aspects, morality, gender roles, tradition, modernity, religion, migration and identity define black motherhood.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOTHER CHARACTERIZATION IN THE *JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD* AND EDWIDGE DANCTICAT'S *BREATH, EYES, MEMORY*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with analysis of mother characters in *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. The main argument of the study is that mother characters in the two novels are shaped by sociocultural factors that determine the kind of mothers they are or the kind of mothers they ought to be. An analysis of the following mother characters in *The Joys* has been done; Nnu Ego, Adaku, Mama Abby and Ona and in *BEM*, Sophi, Tante Atie, Martine and Granma Ife have been analyzed with an aim of analyzing their motherhood experiences and the circumstances that shape them. Thereafter, conclusions have been made based on the analysis. The mothers in the two novels under study have been found to be loving, caring, strong, determined, resigned, resilient, rebellious, dutiful, loving, peaceful, committed, responsible, hardworking and even progressive.

The chapter examines mother characters from the two novels under study to show the interconnectedness of various factors such as culture, gender, sexuality, identity and even economic aspects and how these contexts are essential in the formation of the mother characters in the two novels. Black feminism theory has been used to guide the discussion on motherhood and the conclusion of this chapter is that mother characters in the two novels are shaped by sociocultural factors such as education, religion, gender, morality and even gender roles.

5.2 Mothers in the Domestic Sphere

Nnu Ego is the protagonist in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979). An analysis of Nnu Ego's attitudes, behavior, perception towards life and even her experiences as a mother will lead to an understanding of the circumstances that shape the mother that she is. Nnu Ego has been married twice, first by Amatokwu and secondly by Nnaife. Her first marriage fails because she is not able to bear any children for her husband, who goes ahead to marry a second wife to bear him children which shows the importance of children in the Igbo community. Nnu Ego is labelled

as a failed woman for failing to bear her husband children, to prove his manhood and she blames herself for this:

I am sure the fault is on my side. You do everything right. How can I tell him that I failed? I do not like going there these days because his wives always rush out to greet me hoping that I am carrying a child. You can see the disappointment on their faces. (p. 15)

The discomfort that a woman goes through after marriage due to the expectations of her family, like in Nnu Ego's case where she finds it hard to visit her father's home because of the constant looks of despair on his wives' faces is evident. As expected in Igbo community, she does not put the blame on her husband Amatokwu as it is unheard of for a man to be barren. It is a woman's responsibility to get pregnant for her husband. When she gets married by Nnaife who works for the white man in Lagos, she gets children, and hopes that motherhood will be fulfilling for her due to the emphasis laid on motherhood by Igbo society. However, her hopes are dashed as she dies alone by the roadside with no one to hold her hand. Her sons that she sacrifices so much for neglect her during her lifetime, but when she dies, they conduct a big funeral for her and build a shrine in her name. She is mocked even in her death by people that consider her sacrifices unfruitful: "...and her reward? Did she not have the greatest funeral Ibuza had ever seen?" (p. 224). Nnu Ego's acceptance of the blame for not having a child can be understood clearly through Attanga (2013) who argues that African women have internalized patriarchy and accepted it as part of their culture and therefore struggle to live by the expectations of the society. This assertion shows that Nnu Ego is not ready to fight the system of patriarchy, rather, she accepts the societal expectations and struggles to abide by the Igbo traditions.

Nnu Ego is portrayed as a strong woman because she is able to educate her son Oshia and to take him abroad for further studies: "Everybody referred to Nnu Ego as she proudly carried her backbreaking firewood up from the waterside as a mother of very clever children (p. 212)." This is because, despite having several children and not having a stable job, she is able to provide for her children and even to educate them, without putting into mind the struggles that she goes through to ensure that her children are well catered for. Nnu Ego's ability to take care of Oshia and to educate him portrays the aspect of motherism as discussed by Ode (2011) who contends that it

is the role of the mother to nurture children in accordance to societal expectations. Evidently, Nnu Ego works in strict adherence to societal expectations.

Despite the fact that Nnu Ego's father was a wealthy chief and Nnu Ego had grown in abundance, she is able to cope with life in Lagos where there was food scarcity and small houses. Her strength is evident in the way she defies all these challenges and is able to adjust to the life in Lagos. However, it is noteworthy that she is in search of the joys of motherhood; this is her driving force. She seeks to be a mother of many children, evidently to cover for the years she suffered as a barren woman at Amatokwu's home (her first husband). Emecheta narrates: "they bought many matches and cigarettes from her. Then she would come home to feed her child and lay him down to sleep as she hurried through her housework...she later would 'back' her baby again in time for the evening rush of workers" (p. 59). This is a portrayal of her strength as a mother which she derives from the fulfillment that she gets from her son. Nnu Ego is comforted that when she dies there will be somebody left behind to preserve her legacy. It is evident that mothers get their strength from the knowledge that they have children who will remember them later. In this context, Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) agrees with Emecheta's characterization through the argument that:

When women writers, as knowers, speak from the position of women's lives, identities of fictional characters are infused with various and varying positional perspectives. These characters do not present an essential, unified identity, but rather multiple and contradictory identities and subjectivities that are constantly changing, within specific social locations (p.18).

The assertion implies that characters have multiple identities; they can be loving, caring, hardworking or even inquisitive. Their traits are not static, as they change depending on their contexts. Therefore, in *The Joys*, the lives of black mothers and their expectations are deeply ingrained in their traditions thus their experiences are controlled by specific cultural aspects in their environments. This explains Nnu Ego's state of fulfillment with being referred to as 'mother.'

The sacrificial role that Nnu Ego assumes in *The Joys* (1979) is also illustrated in the novel. She provides for her children and supports her husband's meagre earnings. Even when her husband is conscripted into the war, she steps in and sells paraffin, firewood and cigarettes to get money to feed her children. However, she feels like a

prisoner in all this. For instance, Nnu Ego picks a quarrel with her husband Nnaife over housekeeping money as they are not given enough together with her cowife Adaku. She comes to a realization that she has become a prisoner due to the love that she has for her children. (p. 153) Further, Nnu Ego feels imprisoned by her culture as it demands for her to get children. The desire for motherhood so as to fulfill the dictates of the society imprison her. She speaks of her experience:

I am a prisoner of my own flesh and blood. Is it such an enviable position? The men make it look as if we must aspire for children or die. That is why when I lost my first son I wanted to die because I failed to live up to the standard expected of me by the males in my life... (p. 210).

The male dominated society uses motherhood as a way of undermining women by measuring one's womanhood by whether she is a mother. The feelings of the character can be felt through her decision to commit suicide when her son passes away as she feels hopeless. Similarly, the trauma that her first husband exposes her to because she is childless affects her and leads her to marry a man, she does not love in the search of the name "mother." Eventually she becomes a mother but this does not give her the extreme joy she hoped for. The challenges that Nnu Ego faces are a representation of many black women globally. Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) observes that a woman writer must tell us about being a woman; what the facts of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause contribute to the woman's personality and the way she feels and knows her world. For instance, do women's bodies affect their senses and their use of imagery? This is evidently shown by Nnu Ego in the way she expresses her pain when her son passes away. The irony of the expected joys of motherhood that she earlier anticipates befalls her.

Nnu Ego's resilience is exposed in her ability to fend for her children in the absence of her husband. According to Stratton (1994), Nnu Ego's character is a clear representation of the sacrifices and struggles of women are confined to their roles as mothers and wives and further argues that Emecheta uses Nnu Ego's story to criticize the idealization of motherhood and the societal pressures that dictate a woman's worth based on her ability to bear children. When Nnaife is forcefully conscripted into the army, she assumes the sole responsibility of feeding the children and taking them to

school through her petty trade. Initially, she worries as to whether she will manage the task ahead of her:

Nnu Ego gave in to all the suppressed emotion that was inside her. Nnu Ego's desperate situation makes her confide to her son Ubani as she rhetorically discloses; "How are we going to manage? what are we going to do with all these children? I can't afford to feed us all as well as paying the rent (p. 165).

However, she is able to shoulder all the responsibilities and to educate her children. The resilience of Nnu Ego as a mother is unbeaten by the hard conditions that she faces, sometimes even extreme hunger that almost kills her son.

The peaceful nature of Nnu Ego is also explored when Nnaife inherits his brother's wife Adaku. Nnu Ego decides to create a peaceful atmosphere at home instead of acting out madly due to the presence of another woman in her house. She welcomes Adaku as is expected of the senior wife and leaves her matrimonial bed for her to sleep with her husband Nnaife. One would expect that she should react annoyingly, but she manages to calm herself down and suffers silently for the sake of peace in her family. This is a great trait as a mother because the tranquility in her home will ensure the happiness of her children. The society has taught her as a mother that it is her duty to ensure that her family runs well, and she executes that well. The narrator reiterates: "a happy senior wife makes a happy household" (p. 133). Nnu Ego's acceptance of this aspect of patriarchy is in accordance with Attanga (2013) where the scholar argues that African women no longer challenge the patriarchy as they have accepted the seniority of men over them. Therefore, despite her pain, she does not complain but willingly steps aside for the new wife to sleep with Nnaife on their matrimonial bed.

Nnu Ego's love and commitment to her children is also evident when her son Oshia gets sick. She pleadingly tells him:

Oshia, do you want to die and leave me? "She called softly to him. The poor boy would shake his head. "Then stop this sickness. I have nothing else to give you. Please stay and be my joy, be my father, and my husband-no. I have a husband though I don't know whether he is alive or dead. Please don't die and go away too (p. 104).

The amount of love Nnu Ego dedicates to her children and how it pains her to see her son sick is clearly shown. This shows the nurturing aspect in Nnu Ego as is expected of an African woman.

Nnu Ego is a wise mother, who knows how to deal with tough situations well in order to succeed according to her plans. After the burial of her father Agbadi, Nnu Ego goes back to Lagos through Adankwo's insistence. She is shocked to realize that a lot had changed in the few months she had been away at Ibuza "...there were four other kiosks where hers had been alone" (p. 201). She realizes that she cannot compete with her neighbors, who already have established their businesses and further realizes that getting a market stall would be very costly. She makes a decision to sell firewood as it does not require much starting capital and since other women find it tiring, she would have many clients.

Therefore, Nnu Ego goes through a difficult period since her business is new and as she struggles to bring up her children, she realizes that she no longer fits in with Adaku and the rest of her friends in Lagos. Out of wisdom, she decides to keep her distance from them, and lives in solace that: "one day her boys would be men" (p. 202). This shows that her comfort is encompassed in the growth of her children, specifically her sons. The preference of the male gender stems from the traditions of the Igbo community which appreciates the male children over female children. It is evident that black mothers also perpetuate gender discrimination on their children and this is a concern for black feminists, as they fight against sexism.

Nnu Ego's wisdom is also evident in the way she advises her son Oshia. She talks to him gently regarding her lack of money to pay for his school fees and that of Adim, his brother because their father had gone to war and the money she had is finished. She tells him: "you remember what I have been telling you, that you are handsome? Now I know that you are clever as well...you did well on the farm and when you came here, you caught up with your education as if you had not missed a day. I know you will make it" (p. 219). She employs a nice and motherly approach to convince her son to start private lessons as they are cheaper than going to a real school. Although Oshia agrees unwillingly, he obeys his mother as there is nothing he can do about it.

Additionally, Nnu Ego's wisdom is evident in the way she addresses Adim's poor performance. She tells him:

Look Adim, it seems I am alone with you in this game of living...Ibuza people blame me: they say I did not bring you all up well because I spent most of my time selling things in the market...so far you and your sister Taiwo are my only hope...wipe the tears of shame from my eyes. Face your schoolwork, it is your salvation (p. 272).

The words of a mother, filled with love touch Adim's heart, especially when he looks at her and realizes how old she looked because of her constant worries about her children. The society blames black mothers for every failure that happens to one's children despite their efforts to nurture them. Mothers can only hope that their children will work hard to protect their mothers from shame and humiliation. On realizing this, Adim thanks his mother and is determined to do well in his forthcoming examination. Nnu Ego's actions point at the wisdom of black mothers in handling tough situations that require a mother's gentility. This trait reveals the agency of black women, which black feminists champion for in overcoming the challenges that their children face and it is centered on the need to foster resilience and perseverance in them.

Nnu Ego is determined to give her children a good life despite the challenges she faces in Lagos. From the monthly meetings on the island with her fellow Ibuza wives, Nnu Ego learns how to start her own business and the women even allow her to borrow five shillings from the women's fund and advise her to buy tins of cigarettes and packets of matches and how to sell them in order to get profit (p. 56). Armed with this knowledge, Nnu Ego carries out her trade skillfully and is able to supplement Nnaife's income so her family is well provided for. It is also evident that motherhood pushes her determination higher, because despite being a nursing mother, she ties her son Ngozi on her back and goes to sell cigarettes and matches to the early workers on their way to work (p.59). She hopes to provide a good life for her son.

Nnu Ego's determination to give her children a good life is also evident in the way she uses her daughter's dowry to give her son Adim good education. In Igbo tradition, a daughter's dowry was supposed to be given to one's father. Since Nnaife was in jail, Nnu Ego ensures that Adim picks the bride price as his father's representative. She

advises him: “hurry before the palm wine drinkers start paying us any visits. Pay the whole year’s school fees for yourself” (p. 284). Nnu Ego does all this due to her determination to see Adim get the life that he aspires and this can only happen through education. It is evident that when mothers come together, they create good ideas and support each other to grow economically, which is advocated for by black feminists in order to deal with marginalization of black mothers as a result of poverty.

Another mother character in *The Joys is Adaku*, Nnaife’s wife that he inherits from his dead brother. The author portrays her as an assertive character, who does not bend due to the challenges that life presents to her. For instance, she acts with boldness and decides to leave Nnaife’s house when she realizes that Nnaife does not appreciate her and her two girls. Andrade (1990) argues that Adaku’s character challenges the traditional norms by seeking economic self-sufficiency and personal independence and explores her character as one who is resistance to the oppressive social structures in Ibuza. Kolawole (1997) agrees with this assertion through his contention that Adaku’s character is a symbol of feminist resistance within the novel, by choosing her own wellness and that of her children over the social expectations of the society. This is in line with identity politics in Black Feminist theory that deals with the voices of the marginalized in the community and their attempts to challenge the oppressors. The expectation of the patriarchal society that Adaku lives in is that she should remain in her husband’s home despite the many struggles that she goes through to bring up her children. However, she decides to go and live as a single mother so she can fend for her children and give them good education. The culture only allows for boys to acquire proper western education, but that is the dream Adaku has for her daughters, not early marriage and household chores as were the dictates of Ibuza culture. She states:

Everybody accuses me of making money all the time. What else is there for me to do? I will spend the money I have in giving my girls a good start in life. They shall stop going to the market with me. I shall see that they get enrolled in a good school. I think that will benefit them in the future...Nnaife is not going to send them away to any husband before they are ready. I will see to that. (p. 188)

The author presents Adaku as a character who resists the stereotypical representation of women as only suited for marriage and redefines the meaning of motherhood.

More importantly, Adaku is also sacrificing. As a mother, she is ready to face backlash from people just to ensure that her children acquire good education. Nnaemeka (1997) criticizes the broader structure of patriarchy that shapes the lives of its female characters and further contends that the author's depiction of Adaku serves as an indictment of the systemic inequalities that confine them to limited roles and denies them agency.

Adaku's hardworking nature is evident in that when she leaves her husband's house to start life on her own, she does better financially than before. When Nnu Ego visits her at her market stall, Adaku tells her of her plan to abandon selling of beans and pepper so she can begin selling lappas, a business that is more lucrative than selling beans. Further, she tells her cowife of the plan to lease the place so she can use the money to pay for her rent. She confirms to Nnu Ego of her decision to be a dignified single mother but also that she will need a male companion because men have their uses too. It is not lost on Nnu Ego that Adaku is now better dressed and has a good sense of humor. When Adaku says she has a room of her own, Nnu Ego is even tempted to request to visit her and see her new home. However, she is afraid of what people would say. Nnu Ego realizes the amount of sacrifice that her cowife has done to ensure that her children have food and a good home. This sets her thinking of the society that speaks ill of mothers and their struggles but do put food on the table. It is through Adaku's desire to provide a better life for her family and her decisive nature that all this change happens in her life.

Adaku presents a type of character that Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) writes about when she observes that sexuality, like identity, is not a static site of oppression and that women characters in novels by women writers contest and reject the subjugation and commodification of women's bodies by men and sometimes, by other women. The scholar further shows how women's bodies can be written into the cultural text for mass consumption, and brings out how women's bodies and sexuality then, become sites of power struggles where multiple discourses of pleasure, domination and exploitation converge. This is evident in the manner in which Adaku embraces her sexuality and resists oppression by the societal expectations of how a married woman should act. She chooses not to be stifled by a marriage that is not working, because her husband Nnaife does not appreciate her as she does not have a male child.

Adaku is also brought out as a progressive mother in that she ensures that her daughters acquire good education despite the financial hardships in her family. She defies culture and its expectation that once girls are of age, they should get married and have children for their husbands for the continuity of their lineage. She is a pace setter for other mothers in the novel through her resistance of socially constructed oppressions. She tells Nnu Ego and their friend Mama Abby: “Oh, they are in a convent school. They live there and come home only during the holidays” (p. 241). Nnu Ego also tells them that she now thinks there is a future for educated women as she had seen many young women teaching in schools and that it would be really something for a woman to be able to earn money like a man (p.241). As she says this, Nnu Ego stares into the distance perhaps in remembrance of her daughters Taiwo and Kehinde who dropped out of school so that her sons Oshia and Adim would get education. The three women agree that education is important for girls too and Mama Abby applauds Adaku’s efforts telling her that her daughters would eventually join college.

The rebellious trait in Adaku is evident in her refusal to be limited by the Igbo society on how she should live her life as a woman and as a mother of two daughters. When she decides to leave Nnaife’s house to go and live with her daughters, the society talks ill about her. Hooks (1984) argues that to be oppressed means to be deprived your ability to choose, and choice is an essential example of oppression which means that by choosing to live a better life for herself and her daughters, Adaku defies the Igbo tradition which advocates for married women to remain in their husband’s homes as seen in the novel through characters like Nnu Ego. Adaku’s rebelliousness is further seen when she says: “I am a woman... I have a right to live. If my life would be better lived by breaking away from you and your useless ideas of tradition, then let it be so” (p.170). Adaku is not cowed by what the tradition dictates, all she seeks is a better life for her daughters. The desire to be a good mother pushes Adaku beyond societal expectations, a testimony of the extent mothers go for their children.

Adaku’s resilience is seen in the way she adapts easily to the way the Igbo society mocks her inability to bear male children. She gets into trading to provide for her two daughters. Emecheta narrates: “she had taken stock of her position, weighed the

disadvantages and advantages and decided that the former far outweighed the latter. So, she traded on (p. 172). Adaku's resilience portrays what Lorde (1984) contends, that women should avoid falling into the limiting situations imposed on them by the society and find empowerment for themselves. Her resilience gives Adaku and her children a better life as seen when she tells Nnu Ego and Mama Abby that her daughters were now in boarding school, a situation that was not common because education was not a priority for girls as they were meant to be prepared for marriage. Adaku's resilience is shaped by the hardships that she faces under the Igbo traditions but she overcomes them through her desire to be a good mother to her daughters.

Ona is Agbadi's mistress and Nnu Ego's mother. Emecheta portrays her as a loving mother to Nnu Ego. This is evident when she decides to move to Ogboli to live with Agbadi her lover although her late father had been against it, so she can save her daughter's life. At her birth, it was noticed that Nnu Ego had a lump on her head, which made the baby to suffer from a strange headache days later. The *Dibia* advises Ona to appease the spirit of the slave woman who was buried with Agunwa, Agbadi's first wife as she was the cause of the headache. Ona loved her father very much, but that love cannot be equated with her daughter's life and that is why she decides to go against the wishes of her father (p. 27). Ona is also loving because at her death bed, she pleads with Agbadi to allow their daughter Nnu Ego to live the life of her choice. She says: "...and see that however much you love our daughter Nnu Ego you allow her to have a life of her own, a husband if she wants one. Allow her to be a woman" (p. 28). This is proof of Ona's love for her daughter and her struggle against traditions to ensure Nnu Ego lives a fulfilling life. This is an indication of resistance of specific aspects of culture that place women in situations that not allow them to thrive, just like Ona, whose father had warned not to get married as he had no sons, thus reducing her to a mistress. Hooks (1981) discusses the expectation that the society has on black mothers to nurture and protect life in a patriarchal society as an indicator of mothers' love and commitment for their children. Motherhood is regarded highly especially in Ona's case because it changes her world and her belief system. Previously, she had not been eager to leave her father's house, but now as a mother, she is ready to sacrifice for Nnu Ego's wellbeing.

Ona's protective nature is seen when she decides to go against her father's wishes in order to save the life of her daughter Nnu Ego. This happens when the *Dibia* tells Ona and Agbadi that the slave woman who was buried with Agunwa was angry and that is why Nnu Ego was sick. The only remedy was for Ona to go and live in Ogboli although her late father had warned her against it. However, out of the desire to protect and preserve her daughter's life, she agrees to relocate to Ogboli. Hooks (1981) reiterates this maternal desire for protectiveness: "to be a good mother, a black woman must be willing to give up a lot and to sacrifice her own needs for those of her children" (p. 156). Ona's concern for her daughter's wellbeing surpasses her regard for obedience to her father's orders.

Emecheta brings out another mother character, Mama Abby as Nnu Ego's friend. She is a single mother of one son, named Abby. Mama Abby is portrayed as a wise woman in the fact that she uses her savings to educate her son Abby with the hope of living a good old age. Her wisdom is further evident because despite having enough money to live an affluent life, she chooses to live a simple life so that she can afford her son's education. Eventually, her son Abby relocates his mother to a better place after he completes his education. Emecheta says: "her son Abby had really put his mother in wealth" (p. 223). Nnu Ego even prays that one day God would bless some of her children so that she would not suffer in old age. The affluent life that Mama Abby enjoys now shows that motherhood had rewarded her; despite being a single mother, she had raised a responsible son to take care of her as she had hoped. Collins (1990) observes that this solidarity among black mothers is essential for their survival in their oppressive environments. The unity between these mothers makes their motherhood experience easier especially for Nnu Ego who required help in reading the note from the barracks.

Additionally, Mama Abby is helpful in that she assists Nnu Ego in reading the note she receives from the army barracks in Yaba notifying Nnu Ego to go and collect a package at the barracks. She even accompanies Nnu Ego to the barracks to pick her package. This helpful nature shows solidarity among black mothers in fighting forces that hinder their growth and happiness, such as the lack of education in Nnu Ego's case.

In *BEM* by Edwidge Danticat, mother characters have been explored to bring out what defines them. Sophi Caco is daughter to Martine. She is born out of the rape by a Macoute. Sophi is brought out as an obedient child to her aunt Atie, which attests to the great mothering attributes of her aunt. She sweeps the compound before going to school so as to help out her aunt in house chores. Similarly, she writes a poem every year on Mothers' day for her aunt Atie as a show of love and appreciation to her. When she notices that her aunt is sad, she inquires from her the cause of her sadness and even ponders as to whether she really appreciates her aunt enough for being a mother to her. She narrates: "I appreciated Tante Atie, but maybe I did not show it enough. Maybe she wanted to be a real mother, have a real daughter to wear matching clothes with, hold hands and learn to read with" (p.12). This is evident of the kind of child that Tante Atie had raised, a caring and loving child who is concerned with the welfare of other people. All this is evidence of what a good mother Tante Atie has been to Sophi. Tante Atie is another mother character in Danticat's *BEM*. Tante Atie is Martine's sister and therefore Sophi's aunt. After Sophi's mother migrated to New York, Martine was left in charge of the young baby to take care of her and she took up the role of a mother figure to Sophi. Atie is portrayed as a loving 'mother' to Sophi. She greets Sophi after her arrival from school and chats with her while she holds her on her lap. She cooks for Sophi and prepares her for school every day, as well as sharing stories with her, which Sophi treasures even in her adult life:

There was magic in the images that she had made out of the night. She would rock my body on her lap as she told me of fishermen and mermaids bravely falling in love. The mermaids would leave stars for the fishermen to pick out of the sand (p. 110).

Atie also uses gentle words while addressing Sophi, calling her "my angel" and endearing words, in an effort to fully express her love for Sophi: "I would like to know that by words or by example I have taught you love. I must tell you that I do love your mother. Everything I love about you; I loved in her first" (p. 20). Although Atie expresses her love for Sophi, the child still does not understand why her aunt cannot accompany her to New York so they can all be together. This shows Sophi's love for her aunt and is also an evidence of Tante Atie's great mothering abilities. Although she is not Sophi's biological mother, she ensures that the child does not feel any gap and feels all the love. The aspect of motherism as advocated for by Ode (2011) is evident in how Tante Atie cares for Sophi despite being an aunt, not her

biological mother. Atie treats Sophi in accordance with the principles of motherism, whereby the work of a mother is to nurture children.

Tante Atie's love is further felt through her expression to Sophi as she accompanies her to the airport: "Do not worry yourself about me...I am not going to be lonely. I will be with your grandmother. Just you always remember how much your Tante Atie loves and cherishes you" (p. 36). It is painful for Tante Atie to be separated from Sophi, but she has to accept the situation as Martine is Sophi's biological mother. However, Tante Atie's actions reveal how motherhood had made her life fulfilling and the emptiness that she now feels. The intersectionality of factors of oppression such as colonialism, slavery and economic aspects had granted Tante Atie a chance to be a mother to Sophi and Dancticat shows that motherhood made her life fulfilling, because later, when Sophi returns to Haiti, now as a mother, she meets a different Tante Atie who has even learnt how to read but she is not happy with the way her life turns out. She feels that her time has run out because at her age she is not married and has no child despite the cultural expectations that a man is for two things: marriage and childbearing. She expresses her frustrations to Sophi:

They train you to find a husband...They poke at your panties in the middle of the night; to see if you are still whole. They listen when you pee, to find out if you are peeing too loud. If you pee too loud it means you have got big spaces between your legs. They make you burn your fingers learning to cook. Then you still have nothing (p. 137).

This cultural expectation becomes overwhelming for Tante Atie and leads to a lot of bitterness and she turns to drinking so as to try and alleviate the pain of having no family and no children of her own. She feels like a failure in the society as she has not acted in accordance with the dictates of the Haitian culture, that places great importance to family and eventually motherhood.

In *BEM*, Granma Ife is brought out as mother to Martine and Tante Atie, and Sophi's grandmother. She is a wise woman, who does her best to take care of her family after the death of her husband in the cane fields. She shoulders all the responsibilities of motherhood and fatherhood at the same time. Her wisdom is also evident in how she advises Sophi when she visits her before she leaves for New York to be with her mother. Granma Ife tells her granddaughter that a horse has four legs but it can fall

anyway, to show her that she should tread carefully even when she relocates to New York so she can succeed. She exhibits motherly love to Sophi through her advice.

Dancticat portrays Granma Ife as a loving woman who adores her children, especially her granddaughter Sophi. When Martine sends for Sophi to join her in New York, Atie decides to take Sophi to La Nouvelle Dame Marie to visit Granma Ife before her flight to New York. Sophi anticipates this trip as she loves her grandmother. The love between the two is evident in the way Ife reacts when she sees Sophi. Sophi says: “Granma Ife wrapped her arms around my body. Her head came up to my chin, her mop of shrubby white hair tickling my lips” (p. 26). She later prepares rice and beans with sun-dried mushrooms and they eat at the porch while listening to stories from Granma Ife, who also advises Sophi that her mother her first friend. The wisdom and love of Granma Ife is seen through this advice and is an attribute to her good mothering role. Further, when Sophi confesses to her grandmother about her hatred for the testing for virginity ritual, Granma Ife says: Now you have a child of your own. You must know that everything a mother does, she does for her child’s own good” (p.137). She also reminds Sophi the importance of liberating herself to avoid carrying the pain inflicted on her by her mother always. The intersection of slavery and colonization is felt through Granma Ife’s experiences as a mother. As advocated by Crenshaw (2015), the universality of the lived experiences of black women is important in order to understand what has shaped their motherhood experiences. For Granma Ife, factors like slavery and colonialism have made her a matriarch, who has single handedly raised her children.

Granma Ife is also responsible. She ensures that all the Caco women own land in La Nouvelle Dame Marie, she tells Martine: “We are now land owners...the land is equally divided between Atie and me and you and your daughter” (p.146). This is a show of responsibility for her family and as a mother she takes concern to ensure they have a place to call home. In Haitian traditions, the role of ensuring that there is ownership of land is a preserve for men, but Ife goes against this to ensure her family’s land is secure. Her role in her matrifocal family is seen through this act of ensuring the safety of their family land. Ife overcomes the challenges in her life and is portrayed as a wonderful mother and grandmother to Sophi.

5.3 Mothers in Diasporic Spaces

Martine Caco, Sophi Caco's biological mother lives in Brooklyn, New York where she works in order to provide for her daughter Sophi as well as for her sister Tante Atie and her mother Granma Ife. She is raped by the Macoutes at a tender age and gives birth to a baby girl called Sophi. Sophi narrates:

My father might have been a Macoute. He was a stranger who, when my mother was sixteen years old, grabbed her on her way back from school. He dragged her into the cane fields and pinned her down on the ground. He had a black bandana over his face so she never saw anything but his hair, which was the color of eggplants. He kept pounding her until she was too stunned to make a sound. When he was done, he made her keep her face in the dirt, threatening to shoot her if she looked up (pg. 139).

The trauma in Sophi is understood as she narrates the violence meted on her mother by the macoutes. Martine lives with the trauma of the rape but she struggles to give her daughter a good life, in accordance to Akung (2013) who argues that the African female has risen from a state of ignorance to being experienced and loving themselves and working to achieve their goals despite the numerous challenges on their paths in life. However, Sophi appreciates her mother's efforts in ensuring that she has a good life. The hardworking aspect in Martine is evident in the way she provides for her family:

My mother had sent money for the reconstruction of her old home. The house stood out from all the others in La Nouvelle Dame Marie. It was a flat red brick house with wide windows and a shingled roof. A barbed wire fence bordered my grandmother's pumpkin vines and tuberoses stems... (p. 25).

Sophi appreciates and is proud of her mother's effort in ensuring that they have a good home in Dame Marie where her Granma Ife resides. This attests to Martine's hardworking spirit as a mother, as she does this to ensure her daughter has a place to call home. Sophi also appreciates her mother's efforts when she narrates how her mother sends two cassettes with their regular money allowance; one cassette for her and Tante Atie, the other for her grandmother.

Tante Atie also attests to the hardworking nature of her sister Martine when she tells Sophi that they are lucky to live in a house that is as big as theirs, with a living room to receive guests, plus room for the two of them to live in because only people living

on New York money or people with professions like Monsieur Augustin could afford to live in a house where they did not share a yard with anyone. Other people live in shacks, or one room houses that they have built themselves. Were it not for Martine's effort to provide for her child, all this would not have been possible. Despite Dancticat's portrayal of Martine as an absent mother, Martine spends the rest of her life working to ensure that Sophi is well cared for. Her ability to provide is evident of Martine's hardworking nature, but more importantly her commitment to Sophi as a mother.

Martine is brought out as a responsible mother to Sophi despite being away in New York. She sends money frequently for Sophi's upkeep and education. Later when Sophi joins her in New York, she realizes that her mother has to work two jobs to be able to provide for her daughter. The aspect of providing shows that Martine is a good mother to Sophi. Collins (2000) argues that black mothers face double oppression of racism and sexism and often face the burden of providing, like in Martine's case. However, Martine's commitment to providing for Sophi is a show of her responsibility towards Sophi and a proof that she is a good mother despite the challenges that she faces in New York.

Dancticat also portrays Martine as a concerned mother. When she is notified by Joseph that Sophi had left for Haiti, she travels to check on her and to ensure that both Sophi and her granddaughter Brigitte are fine. Sophi says: "three days later my mother came... (p. 139). Martine's journey to Haiti is an indicator of her concern for her daughter's wellbeing, which is a show of good mothering skills.

When she gets married, Sophi is portrayed as a dutiful wife to her husband Joseph. She even sleeps with him despite nursing stitches to fulfill her marital duty to her husband. Sophi states:

...even though it occurred weeks later, our wedding night was painful. It was like the tearing all over again; the ache and soreness had not disappeared. Joseph asked me several times if I still wanted to go through with it. He probably would have understood if I had said no. However, I felt it was my duty as a wife. Something I owed to him, now that he was the only person in the world watching over me... (p. 114).

Since she was a young girl, the Haitian society had instilled in Sophi the importance of marriage to a girl and this leads her to ignore her pain and put her husband's needs before her own. Deep down, the trauma of being tested and the pain from the pestle disturb her, but she seeks to sexually satisfy her husband Joseph first. Sophi acts in obedience to her culture as it is through marriage that she hopes to enjoy motherhood. Eventually, she gives birth to a daughter named Brigitte, whom she adores.

Sophi is a protective mother to Brigitte. She struggles to heal from her traumatic experiences in life so she can provide a good environment for her daughter to grow in. She joins a sexual phobia group so she can share experiences with other women with similar experiences so she can recover "...God grant us the courage to change those things we can, the serenity to accept the things we can't and the wisdom to know the difference..." (p. 175). All the ladies would also pray the serenity prayer and believe that they had received healing from their past. Sophi takes all these steps for the sake of her daughter, to ensure she gets a better life. She also beats the cane fields during her mother's burial in Haiti as a last attempt to liberate herself and eventually her daughter from the pain and trauma inflicted on her and her mother over the years.

When Martine passes away through suicide, Sophi runs to the cane fields during her mother's burial ceremony. She cannot bear the pain of seeing them throwing dirt on her casket. Her determination to end the cycle of pain in her Caco lineage is evident in the symbolic beating of cane in the fields that represented areas of oppression for both her and her mother. Both the mourners and the men in the fields stare at her as if she has gone crazy, and the priests try to stop her but her grandmother stops them: "Ou Libere? Are you free? Ou Libere." (p. 203) This means that Sophi is free at last. This act is a struggle to free herself and her daughter from the oppressive bonds of Haitian culture. The symbolic act of beating the cane is a show of her great devotion to Brigitte as she does not want her to suffer like she did.

The resilience of Sophi is seen in her ability to cope with her traumatic experiences in life such as the test for virginity that she hated, her marriage to Joseph that was faced with many challenges and the shock she gets when she relocates to New York to be with her mother and realizes that Martine was not as wealthy as she had thought. The need for resilience for black women, particularly black mothers is underscored by Collins (2000); Black mothers face many systemic oppressions but they have to strive

to overcome for the sake of their children. Sophi's resilience makes her a better mother to her daughter Brigitte. She is able to enjoy the experience of motherhood despite the numerous challenges that she faces.

5.4 Summary

In the chapter, the analysis reveals that factors like religion, education, relocation to the diaspora, slavery, colonialism and gender roles define mother characters in the two novels under study.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of Findings

The two objectives that guided this study were to explore the contexts that shape Black Motherhood in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) and Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) and to analyze black mother characters in the two novels. These were handled in chapters four and five. Literature review exposed a gap in the exploration of aspects of black motherhood focusing on specific contexts, feelings of characters, attitudes and personal ambitions, in that scholars who have studied motherhood have directed their attention to viewpoints of men towards mothers, how women make sense of their experiences as mothers and even on the role of patriarchy in silencing accounts of womanhood instead of on contexts that shape black mothers in literature. The study reveals the idea of motherhood in a black people's context in addition to patriarchy. Black feminism theory whose proponent is Kimberle Crenshaw has been used in this study to examine how social structures, culture and economic aspects intersect to shape the lives of black mothers and how this helps in character formation.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study and it entails the research design which was qualitative, the data collection procedure which entailed a close reading of the two novels under study, the sampling procedure which was purposive sampling of two novels and sample size which included six novels from America, Africa and the Caribbean. The data analysis procedure is the content analysis method in relation with the objectives of the study and the black feminist theory. Ethical considerations in the study involved getting a research permit from Chuka University Research and Ethics Committee and thereafter a permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation and also, ensuring that all sources used are acknowledged to ensure there is no plagiarism.

The findings in chapter four show that the two writers explore conditions that shape motherhood in Africa and the Caribbean, and the conclusion is that belief systems influence motherhood. For instance, in the Igbo society, a woman was expected to bear male children for her husband as prove of his manhood and for the continuity of

his lineage. Failure to bear sons was treated with disdain, like in Adaku's case: "...I know you have children but they are girls, who in few years' time will go to build another man's immortality" (p.24). In *BEM*, the Haitian belief that girls should maintain sexual purity before marriage results to a bad relationship between Sophi and Martine. Their relationship is damaged when Sophi's mother tests her for virginity. In both novels therefore, belief systems which are aspects of traditions have an impact on the experience of motherhood.

The effect of polygamy in the family structure is another aspect that this chapter reveals as having an effect in shaping motherhood experiences in *The Joys*. The men are at liberty to marry as many wives as they can and also to keep concubines; this results to loneliness and sexual starvation of the wives. When Nnu Ego's husband marries another wife to bear him children, she feels that he neglects her sexual needs in favor of the new wife. When a woman is pregnant or nursing, the men marry other women or keep more concubines. This reveals how motherhood is used as a tool of oppression for mothers in the novel. Instead of motherhood bringing the intended joy, it brings the pain of being alone and having to share a husband with other women.

Chapter four also shows the effects of polygamy on the resources available for use within the families. When Nnaife's brother dies, Adaku comes to live with Nnaife and his family in the city. They live in a small house where Nnu Ego has to excuse herself from her matrimonial bed so Adaku can sleep with her husband, on her bed. She wonders how they are going to manage the growing family with Nnaife's meagre earnings and at one time they even deny their husband food when they realize that whatever amount he leaves for food is not enough for the family. The solidarity of Nnu Ego and Adaku expresses what black feminists insist on, that black women should come together to fight marginalization. However, the act of denying their husband food as punishment for his failure to provide goes against their principles as mothers because Nnu Ego's son Oshia questions her as to why she does not cook for his father. Although this does not bring Nnu Ego to her senses, the pain of seeing her children hungry makes her to plead with Nnaife who later softens up and promises to increase the money for food. Motherhood has been seen to rid mothers of their dignity as long as their children get what they need like in the case of Adaku and Nnu Ego.

The study exposes in chapter four the fallacy that motherhood marks the end of sexuality for black mothers. The pain felt by Nnu Ego when her husband Nnaife sleeps with his new wife on their matrimonial bed is an example as well as the desire felt by Agbadi's wives when he deserts them for new wives and concubines when they either become pregnant or are nursing babies. Thus, sexual relations in *The Joys* are revealed as a way of procreation, and once the women become mothers, it seems that their value as desirable sexual beings gets lowered. Men like Agbadi seem to enjoy taunting the women when they are at the peak of motherhood, at their most vulnerable times to bring in mistresses and concubines. Nnu Ego's first husband Amatokuwu refuses to have any sexual relations with her and tells her that it is a waste of his precious seed as she cannot bear children for him. This study reveals that being a mother or the failure to be a mother has been used as a form of abuse for black mothers.

In chapter five, the study finds that mothers require economic stability in order to resist systemic oppressions in the society. Women such as Nnu Ego support their husbands in running the homes both in their absence and even when they are present. Nnu Ego educates and feeds her children through carrying out petty trade of cigarettes and even firewood. The society recognizes her efforts and calls her mother of clever children. She is however, not able to fight the forces in the society that subject her to suffering as a mother, as she wants to live within the expectations of the society. The study reveals her inability to change with the changing times as her cause of suffering as a mother. She wants to remain in her husband's house for the sake of her children and even allows Adaku and her child into her home without questioning her husband as she must behave like a proper senior wife. Her cowife Adaku struggles for economic stability and despite people talking ill about her, she overcomes and provides a good life for her children.

In *BEM*, *Martine* migrates to New York where she does multiple jobs so as to provide for and educate her daughter Sophi. She advises and encourages Sophi when she joins her in the United States to study so that she can have a better life for her family. Sophi attends her classes and though she does not join college as her mother hoped, she works as a secretary in a clinic, a position that accords her an opportunity

to depart from the traditionally set roles for women and also enables her to provide for her child Brigitte. Martine is a mother that defies her trauma to rise up and be there for her child. Despite leaving her daughter to her sister Tante Atie, she works two jobs in New York as a way of providing economic stability for her daughter Sophi and she does this by ensuring she gets an education by sending money to Tante Atie monthly for Sophi's upkeep. For Martine, education is the only way to resist hardship that mothers go through in Haiti.

The study manifests the importance of education for black women. Martine and Atie encourage Sophi to acquire good education as it will open doors for her and relieve her of the oppressive social structures that confine women to the kitchen and on motherhood only. Atie remembers her dreams and aspirations as a young girl and how she and her sister hoped to become doctors; the first doctors in their mother's village. However, she feels that some factors such as slavery and colonialism were beyond them and that is why they do not have access to education. Tante Atie tells Sophi that she and her family used to work in the cane fields and although they desired to get education, it was not possible. She urges her to get an education so she does not have to work in the fields. For Martine, education is a way of attaining liberation and achieving financial independence and that is why she works hard to ensure Sophi lives a better life than her.

Chapter five also reveals that specific mother characters are defined by their specific environments and that mothers have begun resistance on systemic aspects of oppression and how they intersect to marginalize them. For instance, Adaku defies the traditional expectation that a woman should remain in her husband's house and leaves to become a single mother in order to provide for her daughters away from the people that maltreat them because of their gender.

6.2 Conclusion

From the study of Buchi Emecheta's and Edwidge Danticat's works, the study draws a number of conclusions. Both authors understand the intersectionality of various factors such as gender, culture, religion, education, morality, identity and class in shaping motherhood in the two regions. They clearly demonstrate this by presenting

narratives that challenge the existing ones that dwell on oppressive structures and have paved a way for oppressed mothers to be heard through resistance by characters such as Adaku and through Sophi who challenges the traditional dynamics by getting education and getting a job.

The study also draws the conclusion that black mothers resist oppressive structures in the society and they struggle for their identities as evident in Adaku's departure from her marriage to Nnaife to become a single mother and Sophi's desire to end oppression through the symbolic beating of the canes in the cane fields during her mother's burial ceremony. It is also evident from the study that black mothers pursue social justice so that their needs can be met, for instance, when Adaku and Nnu Ego come together to confront their husband Nnaife for failing to provide enough food for the family. The two authors therefore suggests that black mothers can achieve more success by coming together to fight for what they desire.

Additionally, black mothers go through emotional and physical strain in their struggle to create a good life for their children, through the authors' portrayal of Adaku who is taunted for leaving Nnaife's house for a better life and Martine who leaves her home country in order to provide for her daughter Sophi. Through the depiction of black mother characters in the two novels under study, it is clear that the society has clearly defined the role of black mothers as to cook and take care of their husbands and children. The study however, uncovers that with modernity, gender roles have changed and mothers are able to get education and to work outside the home setting in order to provide for their children.

Religion also has an influence on black motherhood. It is evident that happenings in the mother's lives are attributed to religious beliefs within the community. There are some like Nnu Ego who believe in traditional aspects of religion such as the presence of a personal god, her *chi* and others like Adaku who do not mind ignoring retrogressive aspects of religion. The coming of Christianity has also affected motherhood experiences because of its demands. For instance, Nnu Ego is not able to announce that she is pregnant because she and her husband Nnaife have not been prayed for in church.

Mothers go against cultural expectations to be the mothers they hope to be for their children and some are found to delegate their duties to other people in order to work for a better life for their children. For instance, Martine has to travel to New York in order to give her daughter Sophi a good life. The study also draws a conclusion that mothers perpetuate traumatic acts to reinforce discipline in their children to prevent them from bringing shame to the family. Dancticat addresses this issue by presenting mother characters who traumatize their daughters to ensure they remain chaste until they are married and this edges out from the socio-cultural factors in the society.

Finally, mothers are not viewed as sexual beings once they get pregnant or are nursing babies and that sex has been used as a tool of oppression for mothers. Emecheta creates male characters that deny their wives sex for failure to have children and also those that deny their wives sex because they are either pregnant or nursing as a way to show the extent that black mothers suffer emotionally even with matters regarded by the society as private. This influences the mothers' experiences of motherhood as they feel that the society does not value them beyond their reproductive roles.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

This study has demonstrated the socio-cultural contexts that shape motherhood and analyzed specific mother characters in the two novels under study and the circumstances that shape them. The current research sampled one novel from Africa and one from the Caribbean. The Caribbean novel used in this study is a semi autobiography and reflects on the life of its author, Edwidge Dancticat. Further research should be carried out:

- i. To explore the pattern of female Caribbean authors in expressing their experiences of motherhood both in their home countries and in the countries they relocate to.
- ii. In Africa, research should be carried out on the aspect of 'othermothers' in literary works by black women writers.

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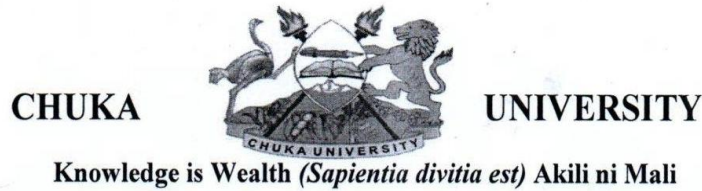
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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Ethics Review Approval



CHUKA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Telephones: 020-2310512/18

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka

Direct Line: 0772894438

Email: info@chuka.ac.ke,

Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

25th July, 2024

REF: CUIERC/ NACOSTI/595

TO: Nelly Gatuti Kamankura

RE: Motherhood in Black Women's Literature: An Analysis of Selected Novels from Africa and the Caribbean

This is to inform you that *Chuka University IERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812*. The approval period is 25th July, 2024 – 25th July, 2025.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Chuka University IERC*.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Chuka University IERC*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Benjamin Kanga
SECRETARY

Appendix II: Chuka University Ethics Approval



Knowledge is Wealth (*Sapientia divitia est*) Akili ni Mali

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

Telephones: 020-2310512/18
Direct Line: 020-268 7625

postgraduate@chuka.ac.ke

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka
Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

REF: AM10/57637/22

29th July, 2024

Director
National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete
P O Box 30623, 00100
Nairobi.

Dear Sir / Madam,

NELLY GATUTI KAMANKURA

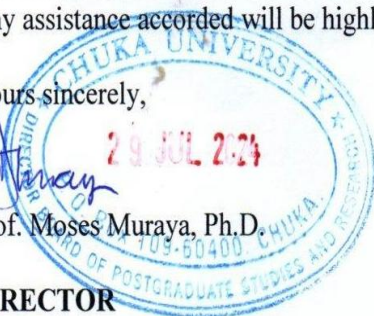
The above-named person is a *bona fide* student of Chuka University pursuing MA in English Literature proposal titled: **Motherhood in Black Women's Literature: An Analysis of Selected Novels from Africa and Caribbean.**

Ms. Gatuti has defended at the Faculty level and is now expected to conduct research. Any assistance accorded will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,


Prof. Moses Muraya, Ph.D.

DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES



Appendix III: NACOSTI Permit

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 945446	Date of Issue: 12/August/2024
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Ms.. NELLY GATUTI KAMANKURA of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Tharaka-Nithi on the topic: MOTHERHOOD IN BLACK WOMEN'S LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NOVELS FROM AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN for the period ending : 12/August/2025.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/24/38644	
945446 Applicant Identification Number	 Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Verification QR Code	
	
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