

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: A Study from a Feminist Perspective

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Abstract

The 20th century saw the emergence of feminist theory and gender studies as literary concepts. African literature from the 1890s examines gender issues and women's identities from various perspectives. "Things Fall Apart" prompts a gender dynamics study. It examines a range of feminist concerns that represent power dynamics, femininity, and masculinity. Achebe, influenced by colonialist literature, presents an image of pre-colonial Igbo culture to refute Eurocentric myths. The research focuses on patriarchy, its substantial effects on gender, and how it limits and influences women's lives. The analysis, which takes feminist perspectives, looks at the nuances of patriarchy and the ways that female characters Ezinma, Nneka, and Ekwefi resist in anticipation of social norms. Along with scientific publications and research papers, the book serves as the main source. This study dissects patriarchy's role in dismantling gender equilibrium.

Keywords: Gender, Patriarchy, Culture, Discrimination, Feminism

Introduction

The majority of African writers' works thoroughly examine gender issues and women's identities from a variety of viewpoints. Chinua Achebe is frequently called as the father of African literature. Due to Africa's status as its origin, there is a diversity of cultural perspectives expressed in the social customs and belief systems. African literature is now acknowledged as a subject worthy of serious study in several international universities (Killam, 1973). *Things Fall Apart*, the debut book by Chinua Achebe (Tikkanen, 2024) stands as a literary testament to patriarchy within the African context. We know that a work of literature has its own implied or expressed relation between its creator and its auditors (Frye, 2020). We can examine, in history, there are two such works *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad (1902) and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939), which were influential in motivating Achebe to write *Things Fall Apart*. Africans were portrayed in both masterpieces as savage, one-dimensional horror characters devoid of any nuance (Njoku, 2024). Achebe, like other authors, combines Western literacy devices with oral tradition to create a distinctive storytelling style that transcends cultural divides (Ezeigbo, 1990).

Things Fall Apart offers a thorough examination of Nigerian Igbo civilization before colonization. In reaction to the prevalent Eurocentric narratives that frequently distorted African customs, Achebe created this book (Okonkwo, 1974). While studying at the university, Chinua Achebe experienced the formative influence of colonialist literature and its resistance to nature. Knowing Patriarchy, before analyzing the narrative from the feminist perspective, is a framework that denotes the father's authority; more broadly speaking, the head of the family is a man who leads and establishes the family's norms (Sawant, 2010). It is clear from the narrative that 'the cultural system in the novel is patriarchal, men presided over households and made decisions' (Durgesh Ravande, 2023). A barrier to achieving the goals of quality, progress, and peace is violence against women. According to the Declaration, violence against women both violates and impedes or eliminates women's ability to enjoy their fundamental freedoms and human rights (Declaration, 1995). Beijing Declaration 1995 stands as a landmark document

in the global pursuit of gender equality, outlining key principles and objectives that continue to shape policies and initiatives aimed at empowering women and promoting gender equity worldwide. Many feminist readings of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* have focused on how women are portrayed in the book and how gender dynamics function in Igbo society.

Gender inequality, which is a pertinent topic for writers, is a feature that shapes the majority of African communities and represents a relevant theme to be discussed by writers and sociologists (Alkali et al., 2015). Feminist criticism burgeoned into a sophisticated realm of scholarly discourses during the transformative era of the 1960s including within African literature, representing a pivotal juncture in the evolution of literary analysis. The discourse in the narrative can be linked with the book by Mary Wollstonecraft "*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*" and John Stuart Mill's "*The Subjugation of Women*". In the end, these authors' writing served as a fertile field for feminist analysis and gender dynamics. It enforces women's economic and sociopolitical rights.

A variety of scholars started delving deeply into the relationship between literature, society structure, and gender dynamics. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe is a great illustration of this interaction. This change promoted a feminist reading of literary texts and questioned accepted interpretations. Throughout history, several literary works portrayed women as stereotyped beings. A portion of these representations are produced, understood, and reinforced by culture (Agbo, 2022). The female gender is frequently dehumanized, placed in a subsidiary role, and seen as inferior to the generic male gender. As a result, female empowerment in Nigeria is quickly becoming a reform agenda item (Alkali et al., 2015). Inside the narrative and in the literature, women are usually portrayed as weak, sexually domesticated beings whose roles are to bear children and take care of the home. Most of the time men frequently compared to women in society's assessments of their failures, which exposes hidden prejudices against women. In the Igbo society 'No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and children (and especially his women) he was not really a man'. All aspects of pre-colonial Igbo culture are shaped by this language's gender construction, which reinforces the dominance of masculinity.

Research Significance

The significance of this research relies on the feminist analysis of Igbo society, as depicted in Achebe's work. As we started examining the roles and experiences of female characters such as Ezinma, Ekwefi, and Chielo, we struck our focus on the complexities of gender dynamics from the perspective of patriarchy. Our analysis is crucial in understanding how women navigate in their lives, resist, and sometimes subsequently subvert the rigid gender expectations that were imposed upon them. Besides the feminist perspective, our research work also explores the impact of colonialism on the under-discussion dynamics, in terms of the impact of colonialism, our study, particularly shows how the arrival of European missionaries changed the traditional roles and on top of that, they introduced their new ideologies that both challenge and reinforced the existing power structures. Nevertheless, it helped the women at some point, like keeping twins. Through this lens, we hope to contribute to a broader conversation about the clear intersections of gender, culture, and colonialism in African societies, showing the resilience and agency of women folk from within. This research is an exploration of the potential for resistance and change, making it a significant contribution to feminist literary studies.

Theoretical Framework

Gender is not something that one is, it is something one does, as an act, or more specifically, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a being. (Butler & Trouble, 1990). We have employed Feminist Theory as the main pathway to analyze the gender dynamics within Chinua Achebe's portrayal of Igbo society. We know this theory provides us

with a critical lens through which we will examine how female characters in the novel navigate and resist the patriarchal structures that seek to confine them. As Bell Hooks states, ‘Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression’ (Hooks, 2000), and through this lens, we explore how these characters assert their agency and further challenge traditional gender roles. As far as the impact of British colonialism is concerned, we have incorporated some aspects of Postcolonial Theory to consider the complications and influences of colonial encounters. Their arrival not only disrupted their structures but also introduced new forms.

Literature Review

Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* draws the attention of critical viewpoints due to its diverse layers. The novel welcomes critics’ theoretical and critical interpretations because it expects manifold explanations. We took Zohra Merabti in her work *Reconstructing Women Identity in Chinua Achebe’s Anthills of the Savannah* (Zohra Merabti, 2023) because it also deals with the African community. She argues that novels of Achebe like *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* depict women as secondary and subordinate in a patriarchal society. After analyzing this work, we conclude that it primarily focuses on the transformation of female identity in a postcolonial context.

Merabti’s analysis highlights how Achebe reshapes the so-called typical roles of women from secondary to empowered figures, reflecting on the post-colonial reconstruction of female identity. However, we believe that her analysis does not exclusively address the feminist analysis of gender dynamics within Achebe’s earlier novel, *Things Fall Apart*. Specifically, Merabti’s research does not delve deeply into how female characters like Ezinma, Ekwefi, and Chielo resist and challenge patriarchal constraints within their traditional Igbo society.

A Study of Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart in Mid-America by Josephine Leach (Leach, 1971) discusses how this novel resonated with her students, if we talk in particular about its themes of a society in transition and the generational gap between fathers and sons. She, up to the top level, praises Achebe’s “simple but forceful style and solid structure,” noting that the novel is [absolutely] effective for teaching world literature, black literature, and the modern novel. We analyzed that she also emphasizes the importance of introducing her predominantly white, middle-class students to the “parallel culture of the world” through literature by Afro-American, black Caribbean, and African authors. Her exploration focuses on the broader cultural and generational themes, without exploring the complex gender dynamics at the play within the Igbo society.

Methods

In our research, we will adopt a qualitative approach, centered on textual analysis, to explore mainly the feminist dimension of the novel. The methodology involved the following key steps:

First, we will engage in a close reading of *Things Fall Apart*, focusing on the representation of female characters and their interactions within the patriarchal Igbo society. This will include examining the language, imagery, and narrative techniques Achebe employs to portray the gender dynamics at play. Secondly, we will apply feminist theory as the primary lens for analysis. Drawing on the works of scholars such as Judith Butler and Simone de Beauvoir, our work will critically examine how characters like Ezinma, Ekwefi, and Chielo navigate, resist, or conform to the societal norms imposed upon them. This analysis will be informed by key concepts from feminist theory, such as gender performativity and the construction of female identity within a patriarchal context.

Results and Discussion

African Realities and Navigating Patriarchal Dynamics

Chinua Achebe aimed to encapsulate his community's spirit and portray his people's destiny through genuine stories that bore witness to the changing African terrain. African novels, rooted in diverse cultures and societies, explore patriarchal themes and gender dynamics, reflecting the complexities of its history and contemporary realities. These narratives navigate the intersections of traditional norms, colonial legacies, and evolving identities. African women who are starving for self-actualization do not find fulfillment in conflict or unhealthy rivalries and competitiveness with men (Ugwanyi, 2017). African women are eager to empower themselves and regain the dignity that patriarchy has stolen from them. The women in Africa are prepared to assume complete equality and not have anything taken away from them because of their sex. She is ready to be seen, heard, and fitted in all roles that have historically been held by men.

The African woman looks for her fulfillment in the milieu of multiple cultures. The typical African woman does not despise males or attempt to erect a barrier around her gender to launch ideological darts (Kolawole, 1997). She wants to be treated with dignity alongside the males, with self-respect, an active role, and energetic participation in all aspects of societal development. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie urges women to confront inaccurate male representations head-on rather than offering an apology (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). She contends that women have been obliged to apologize due to male hostility, contempt, and reaction, which has damaged the term "feminist" and its meanings." However, because of their deep empathy and perceptive understanding of women's experiences and destinies within society, these women writers' literature embodies true feminism. Nigeria, as it embodies all global communities where patriarchy predominates as a means of gender discrimination (Sawant, 2010). *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe's gender construction of male and female using grammatical categories.

The socially stratified pattern of pre-colonial Igbo society, where language used to oppress and exclude women, is reflected in it. The main character in Chinua Achebe's "*Things Fall Apart*," Okonkwo, is both a cannibal and a barbarian. Okonkwo often abuses his wives and mistreats his kids to support this belief (Purwarno, 2017). Okonkwo exerted strict control over his household. Achebe narrated that his wife, especially the youngest lived in constant fear due to his ferocious anger. Okonkwo, shown, by the narrator, as a man perfectly embodies the patriarchal norms rooted in Igbo society. How he treated women, we think that it reflects his strict devotion to ideas of masculinity and domination. His dealings with his wives, who were (so-called), expected to carry out household chores without challenging his authority, are clear examples of his mentality. Despite her intelligence and spirit, Ezinma's potential for independence was undersized by patriarchal expectations. However, we can see that her resilience and defiance against gender constraints offer glimpses of resistance within the patriarchal structure, highlighting the complexities of navigating such dynamics within African societies. Moreover, we examined that Achebe's exploration of the impact of colonialism on gender dynamics as crucial; the arrival of European missionaries introduces different ideologies that challenge most traditional norms, and gender roles, and disrupt existing power dynamics.

The character of Nwoye, who at the end clearly rejects his father's hyper-masculine ideals in favor of Christianity, which offers a more inclusive worldview, serves as an example of this disruption. Actually, he imagined Christianity as a sign of relief and a kind of umbrella, under which he felt safe. So to prove this point we have analyzed that Achebe clearly addressed the constraints of patriarchal conventions and the possibility of escape from restrictive gender hierarchies via the journey of Nwoye. Feminist analysis of '*Things Fall Apart*' resonates with broader African realities, where women continue to grapple and struggle with patriarchal

constraints while striving for so-called empowerment and autonomy. By combining personal narratives with socio-cultural critique, by our studies we can say that Achebe presents a delicate exploration of gender dynamics that reflects the complexities of African societies past and present.

Igbo Cultural Gender Roles

Through a feminist lens, this research shows that traditional gender expectations influence characters, particularly targeting the womenfolk. These deeply particular gender roles shape societal structure, hierarchies, and opportunities for participation. From my perspective, they illustrate how power creates imbalances and marginalization within the community. Chinua Achebe vividly depicted gender roles specific to Igbo culture. Men embody strength, authority, and control, like Okonkwo, who ruled his household with a firm hand. This dominance not only extends beyond the family sphere, with men being responsible for dealing with external matters but also protecting their community, in the narrative as reflected in the belief that *a man is a citizen of his fatherland in good times and prosperous times* (P-134).

Moreover, as in most of the society and family, there is a clear preference for sons over daughters. Chinua Achebe has designed the feelings of Okonkwo for his daughter with the sentiment expressed that her daughter (she) should have been a boy. This reference underscores the biases of societal representatives towards male offspring and perpetuates the idea of male superiority. We can also prove this by a proverb inside the novel such as *Looking at a king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast* (P-26). Women's responsibilities in Igbo society were primarily assigned to domestic duties and expected to embody nurturance, patience, and obedience.

Women's voices were often silenced in decision-making, as seen in the male-dominated village meetings where they were not permitted to speak. "This meeting is for men" (Achebe, Chinua). It reflects the patriarchal society where gender (women) roles are strictly defined and considers women's gender as an insult. "Agbala was not only another name for women, it could also mean a man who had taken no title" illustrates how the Igbo society associates lack of titles with femininity and weakness. Equating the term "Agbala" with both women and men without titles reinforces the idea that women are perceived as socially inferior to men in this society. It reflects the patriarchal structure where women are relegated to a lower status and even men without titles are denigrated by being linked to them.

Despite these constraints, women hold significant influence within the private sphere of the household, serving as pillars of support for their families and communities. "Anansi...looked every inch the ruler of the womenfolk in a large and prosperous family. She wore the anklet of her husband's titles, which the first wife alone could wear" (p-20). She not only carries the responsibility of overseeing the household but also holds a position of honor and authority among the other wives and female members of the family. In the novel, *The Anklet of Titles*, considered to be of high status, she (the first wife of Okonkwo) wears those anklet, which signifies her status as the primary wife. From our analysis of the novel, female characters like Ezinma and Ekwefi show remarkable defiance and endurance against the restrictions of their patriarchal society. Every first wife in the family just like "*Ekwefi was a woman of forty-five who had suffered a great deal in her time*" (P-40). While, on the other hand, Nneka always defies social expectations by persevering in her studies in spite of discouragement, Achebe also portrays Obiageli as she speaks up against injustices in her society without fear. The narrator has portrayed Ezinma as a symbol of strength, surpassing social norms with her knowledge, self-independence, and rejecting gender conventions. She inspires everyone around her with her unrelenting courage and drive in her actions.

The image adds to the narrative's overall picture of female empowerment and resistance. This depiction by Achebe illuminates the complexities of gender relations in Igbo culture and

stresses on notion of the conflicts that exist between custom and personal autonomy, especially for women. The practices of wives' counting were considered a reflection of deeply embedded sociocultural standards. The belief that more wives signify greater wealth has been narrated inside the narrative, like Nwakibie, who had nine wives and thirty children and had been considered to be a man of high status. He had taken the highest but one title, which a man could take in the clan. We witness the marginalization of Igbo women, who are limited to domestic roles and excluded from significant decision-making forums. However, even within these constraints, Igbo women still hold vital roles in the family and some other religious rituals. They are the custodians of heritage through oral tradition, passing down cultural knowledge and rituals to future generations. In family dynamics, they often display significant influence, manage household affairs, and are considered guiding role models for their children's upbringing inside the home.

Despite facing challenges and systematic marginalization, Igbo women persist as resilient pillars, finding ways to assert their agency and contribute to cultural importance in society. The Igbo communities organize ceremonies in their honor which can be exemplified by the breaking of the kola nut "As he broke the kola, Unoka prayed to their ancestors for life and health, and protection against their enemies" (p-6). Ancestors influence the gods and goddesses as they watch over family members whom they guide. This is shown by Okonkwo's behavior when he ratifies that the ancestors can influence the prosperity of his family: "He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food, and palm-whine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children" (p-14). In Igbo society, a profound sense of community exists, yet the communal order is fundamentally oriented toward ensuring individual happiness and well-being.

The custom during the week of Peace, where no man is permitted to harm a woman, signifies the reprieve from the violence against women. However, Okonkwo is called on by the goddess of the earth for beating his wife during the week of peace just because she has ignored her obligations, as a wife and not prepared meals for him on time. Which could probably have destructive outcomes for the whole tribe: We live in peace with our fellows to honor our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow. You have committed a great evil. The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish (p-30). In the Igbo society, gender roles are deeply entrenched in traditional norms and societal expectations. The delineation of male and female roles is a cornerstone of Igbo culture, shaping individual identities, familial structures, and community dynamics.

Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* represents the cultural roots of the Igbos to provide self-confidence, but at the same time, he refers them to universal principles that vitiate their destructive potential (Rhoads, 1993). When the people of Umuofia were called for a meeting in the marketplace, this shows the unity among them, and in fairness to Umuofia, it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle-the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. In Igbo society, men had a large compound enclosed by a thick wall of red earth (p-14). They expected to be the primary providers and protectors of their families. This responsibility extends beyond economic support to encompass physical and emotional protection. "Go home and sleep, said Okonkwo. I shall wait here" (p-108). This scene symbolizes Okonkwo's sense of duty and resilience to protect Ekwefi from any potential challenges or dangers.

The valor of men is often measured by their power in warfare and their ability to defend the community (El-Dessouky, 2010)... and he was not afraid of war. He was a man of action, a man of war" (p-10). Okonkwo, the central character, exemplifies the traditional male role as a skilled warrior whose honor is deeply tied to his achievements in battle. Another scene shows

the firmness and responsibility of the protagonist. “Since I survived that year ... ‘I shall survive anything” (p-24). Okonkwo reflects on challenging the belief that surviving it has fortified him against any future hardships.

Through these lines and narratives, Achebe provides insight into the complex dynamics of gender roles within Igbo culture, shedding light on the expectations and constraints placed upon individuals based on their gender.

Patriarchal Supremacy

Patriarchy is a system having the rule of a father in a family or the head of the family is a male person. The male is dominant in family and society. According to Igbo belief, a woman or female do not have any authority to lead a family or society. Igbo society considered that women should not interfere in social, political, and economic matters. Man can handle all things without the help of a woman ... Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cockcrow until the chickens went to roost (p-13), a woman is only a sharing partner to a man. In “Things Fall Apart” Chinua Achebe skillfully explores and analyzes the patriarchy. Okonkwo emerges as a symbol of patriarchal ideals, fiercely embodying the societal expectations of male dominance and control. The novel unfolds a hierarchical structure where men dictate major decisions, and women find themselves subordinated within familial and communal spheres. “Okonkwo never did things in halves. When Ekwefi protested that two goats were sufficient for the feast he told her it was not her affair” (p-165). Rituals, ceremonies, and symbolic representations, such as the male-dominated Ekwugwu society, reinforce the patriarchal norms.

Within a patriarchal framework, there is often a devaluation of traditionally feminine roles and attributes, such as nurturing and dependency. By contrasting Okonkwo's early independence with the image of infants still nursing “I began to fend for myself at an age when most people still suck at their mother’s breasts” (p-21). This shows his determination and self-reliance. Mirrors his tough upbringing and has transitioned to self-sufficiency. Patriarchal supremacy is evident in power structures, with men holding influential positions in the community. “As Okonkwo of Umuofia arrived at Mbaino as the proud and imperious emissary of war, he was treated with great honor and respect” (p-12). The author depicts Okonkwo as a character invested deeply in traditional Igbo values. Okonkwo earns respect in Umuofia through his strength and achievements. In a meeting, Okonkwo said to a man “This meeting is for men’... Okonkwo knew how to kill a man's spirit” (p-26). In this particular instance from “Things Fall Apart” Okonkwo’s statement reflects deeply ingrained patriarchal norms underscoring the significance of social status and gender in determining one’s standing within the community. Okonkwo not only reinforces the exclusivity of male participation in communal affairs but also implies that those without titles lack recognition.

Pauls, Elizabeth Prine is saying that one or more males (as in a council) have absolute control over the community as a whole and that a father or other male senior has total authority over the family group (Pauls, 2024). Okonkwo exerts strict control over his home. His wives, particularly the youngest one, were always afraid of his ferocious anger. Okonkwo wasn't a nasty person. But dread—the fear of weakness and failure ruled his existence (Achebe, 1959). Igbo society reveres the concepts of masculinity and heroism, according to Hasinur Siddique (Siddique, 2020). Consequently, Okonkwo, the main character, appears to have been guided throughout his life by the establishment's pressure and dread of failing. The protagonist Okonkwo, in consequence, seems to be directed by the fear of failure and pressure of establishment throughout his life. Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness (p-13). This introspection invites readers to question the rigid definition of masculinity prevalent in Igbo culture and the consequences of adhering blindly to traditional norms. Naturally, Okonkwo grew fond of the youngster on the inside as well. Okonkwo never publicly displayed his feelings. It was considered weak to express

affection (p-28). He does not show any sensitivity to free himself of weakness, which may lead him to give in to tenderness or affection.

Expressing any kind of emotion is viewed as feminine. Igbo society views showing off one's physical prowess as the authentic definition of manhood. Any man who deviates from the stereotypical attributes of a man would be branded as effeminate, just like Okonkwo's father Unoka. It was known by Okonkwo that the boys were too young to comprehend. However, he believed that one could not start too soon. The concept of Yams in Igbo society stood for manliness, and he who could feed their family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed (Achebe, Chinua). As seen by Okonkwo weakness or perceived effeminacy is unacceptable, and he strives to mold Nwoye into a man who embodies the qualities he values in the Igbo culture. "Do you think you are cutting up yams for cooking? He asked Nwoye. 'If you split another yam of this size, I shall break your jaw. You think you are still a child. I began to own a farm at your age'" (p-33). Father or father figures hold the authority in a patriarchy. As described by Nwoye's character clearly, "Nwoye had been attached to the new faith from the very first day... he dared not to go near the missionaries for the fear of his father" (p-18). In Umuofia's culture, it had been believed that no one would hurt any other but In a moment of rage and irritation amid the tense week of calm, Okonkwo rushed forward and beat his wife Ojiugo. Instead, he beat her wife once more, killing her if the neighbors had not entered to save her (p-92).

Influence on Gender

The influence of patriarchy on gender is a complex and pervasive aspect of societal structures that have shaped the roles, expectations, and experiences of an individual based on their gender. The patriarchy establishes a structural imbalance by favoring men in decision-making roles, political institutions, and economic systems. This systematic bias perpetuates gender inequality, limiting opportunities for women to participate equally in various spheres of life. We all know that the group of beliefs known as feminism aims to provide women with equal rights in society, politics, and the economy. Everyone wins from it; its goal is women's equality since releasing the most oppressed people also frees everyone else. Because men's rights are guaranteed and institutionally safeguarded. Helping women is the primary goal of feminism, not men. The metaphorical language used to describe Okonkwo underscores his role in upholding and enforcing traditional gender norms. "Okonkwo was popularly called the '*Roaring Flame*'... he was a flaming fire" (p-153). Conveying Okonkwo as a dominant and powerful figure. He optimizes traditional masculinity and embodies the ideals of strength, authority, and control. The imagery suggests a forceful and unyielding presence, aligning with the societal expectation of men as powerful figures in positions of control.

Okonkwo is a vengeful and [we can say] alpha male. The conversation between Okonkwo and his wife illustrates how a male family member may amass expressive power. When a kid named Ikemefuna is brought to Okonkwo's home, Okonkwo calls his oldest wife and gives the boy to her; The conversation goes like this:

He belongs to the clan', he told her, 'so look after him.' 'Is he staying long with us?' she asked, 'Do what you are told, woman; Okonkwo thundered and stammered. 'When did you become one of the niche of Umofia? Therefore, Nwoye's mother took Ikemefuna to her hut and asked no more questions (p-14).

The command to 'Do what you are told, woman' is an example of Okonkwo's authoritarian approach within the household gender norms that assign women subordinate roles. The use of the term "Woman" in the context of reprimand further amplifies the gender hierarchy, portraying women as expected to comply with male directives.

Women are not allowed to participate in The Council of Elders, a male-dominated institution, they are primarily associated with domestic tasks, such as cooking, washing, and caring for children. "In all traditions, women have always been considered inferior and incapable of any serious thinking; irrespective of religion, country, race, the period in which they live, more or less the same perception and sex-stereotyping is seen in language and literature" (Sunita Mishra N, 2017). In the novel, we see it in the Council of Elders.

'It was clear from the way crowd stood or sat that the ceremony was for men. There were many women, but they looked on from the fringe like outsiders. The titled men and the elders sat on their stools waiting for the trails to begin' (p-87).

The problem of violence against women is given particular emphasis by feminist activists (Class, 2022). In the narrative, the oppression of women folk can be seen as:

'And In his anger, he had forgotten that it was a week of peace. His first two wives ran out in great alarm pleading with him that it was a scary a week. But Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody halfway through, not even for the fear of a goddess' (p-29).

Okonkwo's disregard for the voices and well-being of women. His insistence on continuing to beat someone, even during a sacred week when violence is prohibited, displays a blatant disregard for the safety and rights of women, who are often the victims of domestic violence. Additionally, Okonkwo's refusal to heed the pleas of his wives further emphasizes the unequal power dynamics and lack of agency experienced by women in traditional Igbo society, where patriarchal norms dictate their roles and limit their autonomy. Okonkwo has a strong belief that dominance, particularly over a woman, requires having a fierce temper. In Igbo society, beating a woman is a frequent practice. Okonkwo's interactions with his wives and the portrayal of the Council of Elders in various chapters provide insights into gendered power structures. Where Feminism tends to give individual empowerment to every individual, in Igbo society women were kept marginalized and held roles that were complementary to males and focused on the home. It was required of women in Ibo society to bear boys in order to ensure the tribe's continued existence. The primary duty of a woman was to be a devoted, decent homemaker. "Women and children began to gather at Obrerika's compound to help the bride's mother in her difficult but happy task of cooking for the whole village" (p-110). This shows the typical domestic roles. The character of Okonkwo's wives, such as Ekwefi and others provides insights into the experiences of women.

Agents of Resistance

In the heart of Africa, *Things Fall Apart* subsequently, unfolds as a testament to the complexities of human existence, where tradition clashes with change and individual lives swept into the currents of history. At its core, the novel offers a profound exploration of patriarchy and gender dynamics, inviting readers into a world where societal expectations and personal aspirations intersect in power and resistance. The story of the novel begins by the lives of characters who are caught between the pressures of tradition and the need for progress. As we read, we notice that female characters stand out as symbols of courage and strength, challenging the male-dominated society that tries to limit their roles. The struggle for their independence and self-determination plays out against a backdrop rich in culture and historical significance. In the patriarchal society of the Igbo people, we see a complex exploration of gender roles. Female characters like Ezinma, Ekwefi, and Chielo stand out by resisting traditional expectations and asserting their independence. Ezinma, Okonkwo's daughter, breaks gender norms with her intelligence, independence, and strong will. "Ekwefi," she said, "is it true that when people are grown up, fire does not burn them?" Ezinma, unlike most children, called her mother by her name" (p-40). We have analyzed that Ezinma's habit of calling her mother by name instead of the customary "mother" or "mama" challenges the strict social norms

of Igbo society. In Umuofia's patriarchal society, where women's roles are strictly defined, Ezinma's refusal to use the expected language of respect shows that she challenges the traditional order. By calling her mother by an individual name, this act of defiance not only reflects Ezinma's independent spirit but also symbolizes a broader resistance against the constraints of gendered expectations. We went through Ezinma's small yet significant character and gestures and found that Chinua Achebe highlights the complexities of navigating patriarchal norms and how individuals, particularly women, assert their identities.

"Father, will you go to see the wrestling?"

"Yes," he answered. "Will you go?"

"Yes." And after a pause, she said: "Can I bring your chair for you?"

"No, that is a boy's job." (P-44).

The above conversation shows the expectations and roles. Despite Ezinma's willingness to accompany her father to the wrestling match, when she offers to bring him a chair, he responds that it is a "boy's job." This exchange underscores the patriarchal norms that assign tasks based on gender. Normally in a patriarchal society, we have imagined and seen that bringing a chair is a boy's job but Ezinma's offer challenges these norms by showing she is willing and capable, but her father's response reaffirms the societal expectations that limit her based on her gender. Okonkwo wished Ezinma were a boy because of her activeness in every task, beyond just gender-specific roles. Okonkwo has expressed his feelings by saying: *"She should have been a boy," he thought as he looked at his ten-year-old daughter.*" (P-64). In the novel, we can also see that Ekwefi offers another example of resistance. Despite facing the shame of infertility and the limitations, Ekwefi's fixed determination to protect her daughter reveals a fierce maternal instinct that goes beyond societal expectations and empowers her to assert action in her own right.

"She hurried through Okonkwo's hut and went outside. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"I am following Chielo," she replied and disappeared into the darkness. Okonkwo cleared his throat... Ekwefi hurried to the main footpath" (p-103).

It can be seen in this scene how the sense of responsibility and endurance. When she lifted the hot pot without support, the narrative shows that *Ezinma was always surprised that her mother could lift a pot from the fire with her bare hands* (P-40). We find another character such as *Chielo*, the priestess of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, we analyze that she challenges conventional gender roles by wielding significant authority and autonomy. Her actions highlight the potential for women to occupy positions of power and influence even more within a patriarchal society. Achebe wrote that *It was Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, prophesying...was possessed by the spirit of her god and she began to prophesy* (P-100). Her ability to prophesy serves as a powerful example of resistance against the rigid structure of Igbo society. As a priestess of Agbala, Chielo asserts her autonomy and challenges the patriarchal hierarchy by channeling the spirit and delivering prophecies. Being seen as her actions demonstrate that women possess wisdom, intuition, and spiritual power, *Chielo began once again to chant greetings to her god* (P-102) countering the prevailing belief that they are inherently inferior or incapable of making meaningful contributions to society. Through Chielo's defiance of societal expectations and her embodiment of spiritual authority, Chinua Achebe portrays the potential for resistance and empowerment among female characters within the confines of Igbo society. In our view along with Ekwefi, Ezinma, and Chielo's prophesying serves as a powerful symbol of female agency and resilience, challenging the oppressive structures that confine women of the society.

Through a feminist analysis of "Things Fall Apart," these instances of resistance by female characters offer a creative lens through which to explore broader themes of power, agency, and the complexities of gender relations within Igbo society. They serve as reminders of the resilience and strength inherent in women's experiences, even in the face of an oppressive patriarchal structure.

Impact of British Colonialism

Europe and the British in particular invaded Nigeria in pursuance of its interest. Jackline Wangare argues that like some other African countries, Nigeria underwent colonization by the British (Wangare, 2024). The colonizers 'had constructed a court where the District Commissioner rendered blind decisions. Court messengers sent men to him so they might stand trial. During this colonial era, the country underwent numerous changes. The intrusion of colonizers affected the traditional norms and expectations. Inside the novel, we can clearly examine the impact of colonialism, once three converts had gone into the village and boasted openly that all the gods were dead and impotent and that they were prepared to defy them by burning all their shrines (p-154). This act of defiance against traditional Igbo practices is emblematic of the broader efforts of colonial powers to impose their cultural and religious values on the colonized societies. By challenging the authority of the Igbo gods and desecrating sacred sites, the converts symbolize the erosion of the traditional belief systems and the imposition of Western ideologies.

The convert's actions reflect a power struggle wherein colonial forces seek to assert dominance over indigenous cultures, including gender roles and norms. Nigeria experienced colonialism, a momentous historical era that profoundly influenced the nation's social, political, economic, and cultural advancement. Along with religion, the white man introduced governance. They allegedly constructed a place of judgment in Umuofia to defend their religious adherents. Nigeria experienced colonialism, a momentous historical era that profoundly affected the nation's social, political, economic, and cultural advancement. Along with religion, the white man introduced governance. They allegedly constructed a place of judgment in Umuofia to defend their religious adherents. Nigeria was a colony during the duration of the late 19th century, until its independence. According to Anthony Hamilton Millard Kirk-Greene, many changes accompanied British rule: Western education, the white missionary had set up a school to teach young Christians to read and write the English language, and Christianity. Nneka had fled to join the Christians (Achebe, 1959). Because the missionaries were in favor of keeping twins and Igbo society, was not. It was true that they were rescuing twins from the bush (Achebe, 1959).

The missionaries worked hard to define a unique sort of person-hood in terms of a disposition to seek God through conformity with the European norms of civilized conduct This led to the extinction of some barbaric traditions and culture such as the killing of the twins in old Calabar' (Inyang, 2021). By trying to force Christianity on the tribe, the missionaries put themselves up against ideas that are fundamental to their faith. As a result, it caused great strife. One of them became infected, and a year later, his enthusiasm caused the church and the clan to engage in major combat when he killed the cherished python, which was the manifestation of the god of water (p-160). The arrival of European colonizers disrupts existing power structures. The narrator said, "*The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won over our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together*" (p-176). The imposition of colonial characters and their interactions challenges the authority of traditional leaders and introduces new hierarchies. The new faith was a mad dog that had come to eat it up" (p-143). Especially in later chapters, illustrates the power dynamics associated with colonization. In the novel, we observe, that "*Okonkwo was deeply grieved... he mourned for*

the clan... and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably like women” (p-183).

The colonial ideology of individualism has caused shattering impacts on the communal Igbo and their mutual relationship (Alam, 2014). Colonial Christianity affects even the father-son relationship as we see in Okonkwo and his son Nwoye. Seeing Nwoye among the missionaries in Umuofia Obierika asks him, "How is your father?" Nwoye replies, "I don't know. He is not my father." Then Obierika comes to Okonkwo who is not interested in talking about Nwoye (p-144). Nwoye's declaration reveals his disillusionment and estrangement from Okonkwo, suggesting a rejection of his father's authority and the patriarchal values he represents. This belief may come from the inability of Nwoye to obey Okonkwo's expectations for masculinity and the desire for a more nurturing and accepting parental figure. Inside the narrative, we analyze that Okonkwo's refusal to speak about Nwoye further highlights the breakdown in their relationships and this reflects the adherence of Nwoye to patriarchal norms that prioritize stoicism and emotional detachment. We can also imagine that Okonkwo's silence also signifies a failure to recognize or address the emotional needs of his son. This sort of detachment shows the limitations of patriarchal masculinity in foresting healthy parent-child relationships.

The colonial influence in "Things Fall Apart" represents a web and often-detrimental force; particularly in explaining traditional gender dynamics and contributing to the destabilization of the patriarchal structure within Igbo society.

Conclusion

Ultimately, our work contributes to the broader discourse on feminism and literature. By going deep into the complex layers of patriarchal influence and the resistance shown by female characters, this study highlights the complexities of gender relations in Igbo society. The findings of our research highlight the pervasive impact of patriarchy on women's lives and the need for continued scholarly exploration of this theme. Moving forward, future analyses could easily further investigate the intersections of patriarchy with other socio-cultural factors such as class, ethnicity, and colonial rule, contributing to a crystal understanding of gender dynamics in African literature. The findings of this study show how women folk suffered at the hands of the African patriarchal system, but at the same time, our conclusion also shows the power of women. Exemplified through their constrained agency, limited autonomy, and subordination within the familial and societal hierarchy, women were somewhat how to put into subjugation. The portrayal of characters such as Ezinma, Nneka, and Ekwefi serves as a clear reminder of the enduring struggles faced by women in navigating and resisting patriarchal society.

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