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OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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INVESTIGATING WOMANISM IN ODAFEN'S *TOMORROW I BECOME A WOMAN*, MEDIE'S *HIS ONLY WIFE*, AND MAY'S *WAHALA*

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the portrayal of womanism in three significant African novels: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* by Aiwanose Odafen, *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie, and *Wahala* by Nikki May. Womanism, a term coined by Alice Walker, serves as a critical framework through which African women challenge patriarchal structures and reclaim their autonomy, emphasising race, gender, and class. The study explores how these novels depict womanism, focusing on individual empowerment, solidarity, and resistance to traditional gender roles. Odafen's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* illustrates the protagonist's journey toward self-determination and education as a means of defying societal limitations. Medie's *His Only Wife* highlights the transformation of Afi, who gradually rejects the oppressive expectations of an arranged marriage, asserting her autonomy in a patriarchal society. In contrast, May's *Wahala* emphasises the importance of female solidarity and community strength as a form of collective resistance, offering a powerful example of mutual support among women. The research also examines how language, narrative structure, and dialogue discourse shape the representation of women in these texts. It shows how language functions both as a tool for resistance and a means of reinforcing gender norms. Through internal monologues, first- and third-person narrations, and character dialogues, the novels reveal the complexities of African womanhood and the ways women negotiate their identities amidst external pressures and internal conflicts. Furthermore, the study assesses the broader significance and implications of womanism, emphasising its role in fostering empowerment, solidarity, and independence among African women. It concludes that womanism provides a critical framework for challenging patriarchal practices and reshaping gendered identities in contemporary African societies. The findings suggest that future research should explore the evolving themes of womanism in contemporary African literature and its practical application in community-based initiatives aimed at advancing gender equality. Educators and policymakers are encouraged to incorporate these texts and womanist principles into curricula and programmes that promote women's empowerment, autonomy, and leadership in African contexts.

Declaration of original work

I, **Toini Itsuwe Amadhila**, I do hereby declare that the thesis, Investigating Womanism in Odafen 's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Medie's *His Only Wife* and May's *Wahala*, with the exception of the cited references, is a result of my own original research. It has not been submitted in whole or in part to any other university.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my God Almighty, the father who has been a pillar of strength during all seasons of my life, especially the ones during which I never thought I would survive. I dedicate this work to my lovely mother, our superwoman, Meme Fiina Nuusiku Amadhila. I also dedicate it to my siblings for being my best friends and my safe space. Thank you all.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

GBV = Gender Based Violence

LGBTQ+ = Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and more

APA = American Psychological Association

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The subject of gender and its representation in literature continues to be a critical area of study, particularly in relation to understanding the lived experiences of women and their struggles for equality. This study draws upon the concept of womanism as a lens through which the representation of black women in contemporary literature can be critically analysed. Alice Walker's womanism provides a nuanced framework that goes beyond conventional feminisms, addressing the unique challenges faced by women of African descent. By focusing on three contemporary novels—Nikki May's *Wahala*, Peace Adzo Medie's *His Only Wife*, and Aiwanose Odafen's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*—this research aims to explore how womanism is portrayed and how these narratives contribute to the broader discourse on gender, identity, and agency. The chapter introduces the background, problem statement, objectives, significance, and scope of the study, as well as definitions of key terms to establish a foundational understanding of the research.

1.2 Background to the Study

In response to the shortcomings and gaps in conventional feminisms, womanism surfaced as a theoretical framework in the latter half of the 20th century. Traditional feminisms, specifically, were found to be lacking acknowledgment of and solutions to the unique identities and conditions of women of colour, specifically women of African descent (Ann, 2015). The term "womanism" was coined by novelist and activist, Alice Walker, in an effort to recognise and celebrate black women's distinctive gifts, perspectives, and challenges within the wider realm of feminism (Gilbert, 2006). Literature has become a primary medium in the exploration and understanding of feminist ideas and telling stories over the many years. Novels, in particular, allow authors to explore the complex ideas and traditions of womanism and enable readers to imagine the daily realities of African American women in a broad array of cultural and economic milieus (He, 2010). This thesis looks at three modern literary works that consider womanism: *Wahala*, authored by Nikki May, *His Only Wife*, written by Peace Adzo Medie, and *Tomorrow I Become A Woman* written by Aiwanose Odafen. These novels are chosen because they have a broad readership and provide in-depth views of how black

women navigate identity, agency, community, and perseverance in patriarchal/oppressive societies (Kang 2015). This study aims to question how the authors complicate the traditional understanding of gender, race, and agency. This will be accomplished by conducting a thorough, feminist examination of these novels. Through close reading and textual analysis, the study seeks to elucidate the unique contributions of these narratives to the broader discourse on womanism in contemporary literature, while also highlighting the ongoing relevance and significance of womanist thought in addressing the complexities of black female identity and agency.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The presence of patriarchal practices is observable in literary texts, as well as in political and economic domains, hence continuing the representation of women as being subjected to subordination within fictional works. Despite the determined efforts of feminist activists, women's oppression continues to prevail in various African nations. The novels; Odafen's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Medie's *His Only Wife* and May's *Wahala*, demonstrate the portrayal of women in literature, focusing on themes of oppression and discrimination. To enhance awareness among future authors regarding the societal circumstances of women, and illustrate the potential of literature as medium for reflecting women's suppression, it is imperative to undertake a comprehensive investigation and research on this subject matter.

Despite the efforts made by writers and authors to refrain from employing sexist language that discriminates against, degrades, or stereotypes women, there remains scope for further enhancement to prevent any form of discrimination against women. It is within this context that the researcher posits this research to critically analyse the portrayal of womanism in these three literary works and explore possible further enhancement that future writers could examine within the contexts.

1.4 Research Objectives

Main Objective

To investigate womanism in Odafen's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Medie's *His Only Wife* and May's *Wahala*

This research was guided by the following three objectives

1. To examine how womanism is depicted in the selected novels.
2. To compare the representation of women at discourse level in the selected plays.

3. To assess the significance and implications of womanism as depicted in the selected novels.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is valuable to scholars, educators, students, and researchers with an interest in the dehumanisation of women across various literary genres, particularly in relation to the portrayal of women in the selected plays examined within this study. Moreover, it is beneficial for students pursuing a major in literature and applied linguistics, especially those who are focusing on similar or interconnected fields of study.

1.6 The delimitation of the Study

This study has a limited scope, focusing solely on three English plays having a womanist content. The analysis conducted in this study is restricted to the examination of womanism within these plays. This study focuses on the analysis of three plays: Odafe's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Medie's *His Only Wife*, and May's *Wahala*.

1.7 The definition of technical terms

Womanist: The term "Black feminist" or "feminist of colour" is used to describe an individual who self-identifies as such. The term "womanist" was introduced by Alice Walker, a prominent African-American activist and author, to describe Black women who demonstrate a deep commitment to the overall well-being and improvement of all genders in the human society (Walker, 1985).

Feminist: A person who advocates for gender equality and supports the rights of women. If an individual expresses strong opposition to the inequality in wages between women and men doing identical work roles, it is often revealing of their alignment with feminist principles. If one holds the belief that women should possess equal political, social, and economic rights as men, they can be identified as a proponent of feminism (Doyle, 1998).

Patriarchy: The term "patriarchy" etymologically refers to the governance of a household by a male figure, typically the father or patriarch. Initially, it symbolised a particular form of ancestral structure characterised by male dominance, including a large household consisting of the patriarch, women, subordinate men, children, slaves, and domestic servants, all under to the authority of the dominant man. Additionally, it might bring the occurrence of male dominance in both public and private domains within social systems characterised by the suppression and exploitation of women (Hall, 2014).

Gender roles: According to Risdaneva (2018), the concept of gender role applies to societal expectations regarding an individual's behaviour, which are determined by their biological sex. These expectations involve various aspects of life, such as personality traits, mannerisms, responsibilities, and cultural norms.

Sexism: According to He (2010), sexism can be defined as the act of making statements that contribute to, encourage, or cause the oppression of women.

1.8 Thesis outline

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the research study, outlining the background, statement of the problem, research objectives, significance of the study, delimitations, and definitions of technical terms.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews existing scholarly works and theories related to womanism, its evolution, and its application in literature. Key themes such as patriarchal oppression, gender roles, and the dehumanisation of women are discussed in the context of African literature.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research design, methods, and tools used to analyse the selected novels. The methodology includes close reading and textual analysis, emphasising the application of womanist theory.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study, examining how womanism is depicted in the selected novels. The chapter also compares the representation of women and analyses the implications of these portrayals for understanding black female identity and agency.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter provides a summary of the findings, discusses their implications, and offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Womanism, coined by Alice Walker, is a concept that underscores the experiences, challenges, and resilience of African women. It constitutes a socio-political apparatus that works to highlight how race, gender, and class intersect; a feature that this literature review addresses in the context of the application of womanism in three novels: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* by Odafe, *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie and *Wahala* by Nikki May, all of which provide us with substantive narratives in which they thoroughly delve into the complexities of womanhood, the politics and pressures that accompany cultural expectations for women of African descent.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1 Perspectives of Womanism

The emergence of womanism can be attributed to the recognition of limitations and shortcomings within the framework of classic feminism (Collins, 1996). The concept of womanism, as posited by Alice Walker (1983), serves to reinvigorate African feminism by emphasising the marginalised position of African women. It is noteworthy to mention that both womanism and African feminism adopt a complimentary position. Womanism places emphasis on the collective survival of individuals of all genders, while African feminism focuses on advocating for women's liberation from oppressive male dominance and promoting collaboration (Kiyumba, 2008). Consequently, the establishment of a conduit facilitates the reinforcement of the connection between black males and females. According to Meera (1998) womanism serves as a unifying force that encompasses the preservation and adaptation of individuals belonging to the male, female, and kid demographics, all the while prioritising the emancipation of black women. Furthermore, the conceptual framework employed by black women to convey their viewpoint on the self, the community, and society is widely acknowledged. However, the significance of this framework is based on the fundamental principles of motherhood, family, and harmonious cohabitation. The primary focus of womanism, an ideology that prioritises the survival and well-being of all individuals regardless of gender, is in line with other women-centric movements that are prominent in

the United States, Africa, and other regions where this notion is highly valued (Lobodziec, 2019).

According to Gemberling (2014), womanism is characterised as encompassing various manifestations of feminine self-expression, self-discovery, and self-aggrandisement, all of which occur within culturally favourable environments. This is in consideration of the preceding information. Womanism extends beyond personal cognition, a belief that has long been embraced by African women. This elucidates the fundamental essence of womanism, which serves to address the void created by the predominance of white women-centric feminism that emerged in Europe and America throughout the early 20th century (Ryan, 2020).

It is noteworthy to mention that the early feminists faced accusations of prioritising the interests of middle-class women in Britain and America over those of Black African women. Consequently, a considerable number of Black women, who experienced feelings of marginalisation within the context of Western feminism as a consequence of their racial background, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity, turned to womanism as a source of comfort and empowerment (Akung, 2013). Consequently, womanism may be understood as a sociopolitical ideology that seeks to address and eradicate many forms of inequality, extending beyond gender disparities to encompass a broader spectrum of social injustices affecting individuals of all genders. In contrast to the feminist movement, which has exhibited a lesser emphasis on the experiences of other marginalised groups, womanism provides a framework that enables black women to acknowledge and value their racial and cultural identities (Amouzou, 2006).

In her work, Adichie (2003) presents a case in favour of womanism as a more suitable ideology compared to feminism. She asserts that womanism is a philosophy that acknowledges and embraces the African heritage and values, while also providing a comprehensive portrayal of the experiences and perspectives of Black women. The focus of this discourse is equally dedicated to addressing the systematic oppression experienced by those of African descent, as well as the pursuit for empowerment in the realm of black sexuality. A womanist perspective encompasses an understanding that, while acknowledging matters pertaining to sexuality, one must also consider the influences of race, culture, nationality, economics, and politics in shaping their philosophical framework (Adichie, 2003).

The aforementioned submission holds significance in that it highlights the commitment of both feminism and womanism to attaining gender equality in terms of opportunities and treatment. However, womanism specifically emphasises the challenges faced by Black women and aligns with the experiences and histories of Black women, men, and families. Alternatively, it might be argued that feminism required a novel term that adequately encompasses its multifaceted nature and intricate nuances (Langellier, 1989). Walker (1985) contends, however, that womanism and Black women exhibit greater strength and capability compared to feminist and White women, with womanism being analogous to feminism as purple is to lavender. The author further asserts that by situating the presence of Black women within the framework of their community's survival, wherein the destinies of women and men are intricately interconnected, womanism offers Black women an alternative to the gender dichotomy that afflicts feminism.

Womanism is a framework that critiques the racial and class biases inherent in white feminism. In contrast to white feminism, womanism actively opposes separatist ideologies. The term "man" is employed to acknowledge the significant contribution of black males as partners, romantic companions, and members of the family in the lives of black women (Warhl & Diane, 1996). To get insight into the distinctions between the relationships of black women and white women with men, it is advantageous to examine the conceptual framework of womanism, which elucidates the ways in which black women foster empowerment and support for black men. In light of addressing a historical context of sexual assault, the objective of this work is to acknowledge and commemorate the sexual agency and empowerment of black women (Williams, 2000).

The advocacy for feminism among white individuals aligns with the perspectives and goals shared by their African and black counterparts. It might be argued that womanism, as a facet of African feminism, aims to achieve the complete inclusion of males within a framework that stands in direct contrast to radical feminism, specifically (Lemans, 2016). A significant proportion of African female writers place considerable focus on and depict resistance against various aspects of patriarchy, positing that women serve as trailblazers and guardians of their own future and way of life. To challenge the perspectives embraced by white feminists and feminism, African womanists like Alkali, Okoye, Ogunyemi, Ovbiagele, and Afolabi express their standpoint by highlighting the resilience of African society in rejecting lesbianism,

homosexuality, bisexuality, and other non-heteronormative sexual orientations (Walker, 1985).

In her work titled *Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English*, Adichie (2003) asserts that a fundamental differentiation between feminists and womanists lies in their respective perspectives on patriarchy and their proposed strategies for its transformation. Based on the concept described earlier, Adichie delineates a clear distinction between womanism and radical feminism, namely. Adichie's arguments are deemed satisfactory since they effectively differentiate between radical feminism and womanism, despite the fact that this study does not undertake a direct comparative analysis of these two ideologies. Although radical feminism holds significant influence among educated white women in the middle class, it tends to focus primarily on sexism as the sole patriarchal system that marginalises and oppresses women. However, it is important to note that this perspective often overlooks the experiences of Black and African women (Kwatsha, 2015).

According to radical feminist ideology, the issue of sexism must be effectively addressed and reformed in order to facilitate the success of women across many cultural contexts (Rahayu, 2016). Radical feminism aims to create an idealistic state of being that exists separate from the male-dominated society, despite acknowledging its inherent flaws. This involves exemplifying efforts to combat patriarchal hegemony, with the objective of addressing disparities in order to promote equality, autonomy, communal well-being, and the preservation of women's rights (Lewis, 2013).

These efforts are directed towards challenging the oppressive practises inflicted upon women within patriarchal systems, regardless of religious affiliations such as Christianity, Islam, or traditional belief systems. In accordance with the aforementioned, Adichie (2003) expresses support for womanism in Sarki's work, highlighting its black-centred nature and its inclination towards accommodation. This ideological stance elucidates the rationale behind the tendency of women writers to refrain from concluding their narratives with triumphs for the feminist cause. This perspective aligns with the core principles of feminism, emphasising the liberation and autonomy of women. However, it diverges from radical feminism by advocating for a purposeful alliance among black men, black women, and black children (Bank, 2017).

It is crucial to acknowledge the prevailing uncertainty and misinterpretation around the concept of "Womanism." It is worth noting that this framework extends beyond the discriminatory treatment experienced by black and African women. If one were to compare and contrast "Racism" with "Womanism," a sense of equilibrium would be achieved (Barr, 2020).

Womanism, as a social movement, not only confronts sexism and racism but also actively resists repressive patriarchal structures by considering several dimensions of society, including cultural, national, economic, and political factors (Ryan, 2020). The womanist's perception of the concept of patriarchy represents the oppressive social structure that womanists confront as women, particularly in comparison to their Black or African male counterparts. This struggle is further compounded by the historical and ongoing political and economic injustices inflicted upon them by the white race and patriarchal regimes (Kolowole, 1992).

According to Ann (2013) womanism offers a holistic and inclusive perspective that embraces individuals of all genders, including men, women, and children, with an emphasis on fostering unity rather than division. This implies that it exhibits less hostility towards men and a lesser inclination towards segregation compared to radical feminism.

In a similar vein, Bernard (2004) examines the progressive manifestations of patriarchal dominance and sexism within Black communities, advocating for the principles of womanism with a particular focus on racism. Sexism is a detrimental element within the Black community that necessitates a concerted political endeavour to modify consciousness, behaviour, and institutions, as asserted by individuals within the Black community that prioritise our collective preservation (Gilbert, 2006).

Womanism encompasses the complex objective of establishing a gender-neutral Pan Africanism, which seeks to unite those of African descent under the wise leadership of both men and women. The aforementioned purpose differs significantly from the white writer's fixation on a Separatist, utopian existence that is removed from the realm of human society. In contrast to Drabble, Patricia Collins (1996) draws influence from womanism, a humanist perspective that emerges from the collective experiences and resistance of black women against many manifestations of oppression. Collins (1996) argues that the womanist ideology

encompasses a dedication to the preservation and well-being of the entire black community, encompassing both genders, as a recurring motif among black women intellectuals.

Spriggs (2018) asserts that the credo of womanists also promotes the realisation of the full potentials of women, men, and children, while advocating for a reduced emphasis on the influence of Western feminists in terms of gender division and isolation. The primary focus of this discussion pertains to the eradication of detrimental stereotypes associated with women, as well as the development of a robust framework that facilitates women's self-identification and fosters the improvement of their self-esteem and sense of self, ultimately leading to their empowerment (Christopher, 1998).

Allan (1995) claims that there is a convincing argument for Womanism, which holds that African Womanism is a movement that recognises and respects the spirit of African women. It is the enhancement of motherhood and mothering as a positive, dignified experience that is distinctively empowering for women. This worldview acknowledges the specific roles of women and men which highlights the necessary interdependence between the genders (Smith, 2013).

Allan (1995) argued that one major accomplishment of womanism is that it makes it possible for African women to think of themselves as independent without feeling that they have betrayed their own culture. In writing about feminism in Africa, Someleze (1997) emphasised that womanism makes it possible for African women to declare that they are their own persons. The fact that men can be important in the life of a woman is key.

2.2.2 Review of *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a foremost concern in numerous countries, including Nigeria. Unfortunately, violence against women is frequently supported and normalised by patriarchal structures, cultural norms, and societal expectations. Williams' (2020) analysis of Aiwanose Odafen's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* allows for a greater understanding of gender-based violence in Nigeria.

Williams (2020) in her paper titled "The Dynamics of Gender-Based Violence in the Contemporary Nigerian Society: An Exploration of Aiwanose Odafen's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*" contributes to the understanding of how GBV manifests itself in the novel in terms of various forms of GBV presented, how GBV is perpetrated, and how GBV affects the

characters in the novel. Fwangyil, in her critical analysis, uses thematic analysis to delve into the implications of GBV on Nigerian women and understands GBV in its most complex form.

One of the many concerns voiced during the debate was the link between gender-based violence and other forms of oppression, such as ethnicity and class (Williams, 2020). Odafen (2020) presents examples of how identity intersections can exacerbate the issue of violence against women, particularly among women from underrepresented groups. Fwangyil's (2020) analysis focuses on how systemic disparities and power systems in Nigeria enable gender-based violence.

Williams (2020) conducts a thorough examination of how different types of gender-based violence are depicted and explored in the novel, with a focus on financial, emotional, and physical abuse. The Odafen family inquiry found that Nigerian women are commonly subjected to financial stress, marital rape, and intimate partner abuse. The study also highlights the importance of increasing social and legal accountability in the prevention and treatment of gender-based violence.

Cochran (2021) conducted a thematic analysis of *Tomorrow I Became a Woman* to study the psychological and affective consequences of gender-based violence (GBV) on women's lives. She investigated how the normalisation of violence and socially created "vulnerabilities" for women affected survivors' post-traumatic stress symptoms. Cochran (2021) criticises cultural norms that promote violence and highlights the significance of trauma-informed care and psychosocial service delivery in meeting the mental health needs of those affected by GBV.

The discussion of the novel *Tomorrow I Became a Woman* by Aiwa Nose Odafen contributes to the process of analysing gender-based violence in society in Nigeria which is consistent with the Cochran (2021) study. The goal of this concentration is to focus on how Cochran (2021) examines how the intersectionality of oppression is illustrated from the various forms of violence, the experiences of the people living with violence, and the psychological themes of violence as well as the need for a discussion of structural and cultural gender-based violence (GBV) interventions. The importance of this examination towards gender and violence in Nigeria and towards the development of a discourse and advocacy of gender based violence (GBV) with the objective to promote gender equality in Nigeria and beyond is the purpose of this dissertation literature overview.

2.2.3 Review of *His Only Wife*

The novel *His Only Wife* by Adzo Medie has attracted significant literary attention for its exploration of themes such as women's agency, love, and marriage and its attempt to reflect on modern Ghanaian society; it is subject to an extensive review in Ryan (2020), which is published by the literary journal *Ryan* (2020). Ryan (2020) appears impressed by the skill with which Medie has developed the character of Afi, a young woman navigating the trials of love and marriage in contemporary Ghana, and the further vibrant examination that transpires of familial expectations, individual agency and the vividly-expressed Ghanaian society and culture.

In Ryan's (2020) work, Afi is analysed in terms of how she is represented by Medie as an independent woman who ultimately negotiates her own autonomy and selfhood in society contrary to patriarchal norms. Foster also analyses Afi's creation of her own wants and desires, as well as her ability to step outside of social norms and expectations for women.

In addition, Medie offers significant information regarding her writing process and the key ideas underlying *His Only Wife*. She has discussed the significance of representing the lives of Ghanaian women in literature, and about what inspired the novel, in interviews and in person or virtual events. In interviews and at events designed to promote and create meaning around the novel, Medie also explains her intentions for the characters and their relationships and provides information on the context of how she arrived at the final text.

His Only Wife is far more complex than a love story as the above review and analysis make clear. It is a rich exploration of gender, power, and agency in contemporary Ghana that has engaged readers and reviewers with its nuanced characterisations and storytelling, and inspired dialogue about the ever-evolving struggles of love and marriage.

His Only Wife by Adzo Medie has sparked discussion about the state of Ghana and the conditions that are relevant to women. Critics have provided substantial analysis and praise for, stating that the story goes beyond the story of Afi and eschews commonly-used literary conventions. Previous scholarly work and reviews by Barr (2020) have helped to recognize the novel's importance in the context of conversations about gender, autonomy, and cultural expectations, as well as in terms of its overall portrayal of a fictional Ghanaian space. *His Only Wife*, it seems, will continue to influence cultural conversations around marriage, love, and

women for years to come, and it is not unreasonable to think that for many readers, Medie's text will be the avenue by which they confront the expectations and desires placed upon women.

2.2.4 Review of May 's *Wahala*

The debut novel *Wahala* by Nikki May delves into the complexity of intercultural identity, interracial relationships, and the prejudices that can destroy friendships. Boo, Ronke, and Simi are the three Anglo-Nigerian friends at the centre of the narrative. They have been friends since college and have helped one another through a variety of challenges in life. However, when Simi's childhood friend Isobel moves to London and starts manipulating the group by preying on their fears and preconceived notions about one another, their seemingly unbreakable relationship is put to the test. The novel explores the protagonists' inner conflicts, highlighting their mixed-race identity and childhood traumas. As demonstrated by Boo's internalised racism from her solitary upbringing, Ronke's use of food and cooking as a coping mechanism for her boyfriend's flakiness, and Simi's impostor syndrome in both her personal and professional life, each buddy has a distinct set of experiences and coping mechanisms. The work does not question the characters' internalised, white-centred beliefs, even while it skillfully captures the lived experiences of BIPOC characters without resorting to the white gaze.

It is possible to interpret the companions' frequent evaluation of one another's looks, weight, careers, families, and mental health as a reflection of the cultural pressures they encounter. The plot is interesting, building suspense gradually until an unexpected conclusion. The women are all wonderfully portrayed, each with a unique voice and weaknesses. Because it examines issues like love, betrayal, self-reflection, and Nigerian culture, the novel is also a captivating read for readers of women's literature and domestic intrigue. To sum up, *Wahala* is a fascinating look at the darker sides of female friendship that is both funny and unnerving. Despite not going into full detail on every concept and subject it touches on, this vibrant and exciting debut from a sharp new voice in literature is nevertheless worth reading.

2.2.5 Womanist Ideology and Its Relation to Female Bonding

According to Walker (1985), the relationship between womanist and feminist can be likened to the relationship between purple and lavender. Womanism and feminism share a connection, although womanism possesses certain characteristics that are absent in

feminism. In her book *The Womanist Idea*, Maparyan (2012) discusses a particular passage, highlighting the significance of the colour purple as a symbol of womanism. However, Maparyan (2012) also acknowledges that Alice Walker associates lavender with feminism, a colour historically linked to lesbianism. In the light of this, Maparyan (2012) suggests that Walker's sentence is often interpreted as implying that womanism embodies a more pronounced and concentrated form of focusing on women compared to lesbianism (Meera, 1998). The term "womanism" is presented by Walker in a concise manner, highlighting its novelty while acknowledging its shared characteristics with feminism.

Engaging with Walker's literary works can present a formidable task, as her books exhibit a fluidity akin to a river, with intricate plot developments and thematic explorations. This observation holds true particularly in relation to her portrayal of womanism, where the narrative takes unexpected turns and undergoes many transformations. Walker originated the concept of womanism in her non-fiction work, while her novels occasionally portray themes that seem to contradict her established definition of the term (Llyod, 2013).

Walker works depict several forms of female bonding, which can be categorised into functional and dysfunctional types. The functional bonds facilitate women's self-actualisation, while the dysfunctional bonds hinder this process. One illustrative instance of dysfunctional female bonding, which is regularly shown in the author's writings, pertains to the relationship between mothers and daughters (Razak, 2019). The mother-daughter relationship holds paramount importance as the initial and most influential tie in a woman's life. Nevertheless, the female characters shown by Walker generally do not experience advantageous outcomes from this fundamental connection between women (Kwatsha, 2015).

The narrative trajectory comprises female characters, such as Celie, Meridian, and Susannah, who initially experience a lack of success in their attempts at female bonding. However, they later seek to address this void by seeking for a surrogate mother figure in their lives (Christopher, 2018). In certain instances, the role of a surrogate mother can be fulfilled by an individual, exemplified by Shug's support for Celie in Alice Walker's novel *The Colour Purple*. Alternatively, it can manifest as a more expansive collective, as seen in the case of the Civil Rights Movement, which serves as a surrogate mother figure for Meridian, the protagonist of Walker's subsequent literary work (Allan, 1995). In her book titled *Africana Womanism*, Hudson-Weems (1993) employs the term "womanism" and presents a more pronounced

antithesis to feminism compared to Ogunyemi. According to Hudson-Weems' (1993) characterisation, it may be argued that womanism is indeed positioned as a rejection of feminism.

In contrast to white feminism, which is characterised by an enduring struggle between white women and white men about the oppression of women as possessions, African women do not perceive men as their primary adversaries. White males have historically possessed institutionalised authority to exert oppression against white women, while African-American men have not been granted such power (Gover, 2020).

In her work titled *The Womanist Idea* (1993), Layli (2003) asserts that Hudson-Weems holds the perspective that any support of white feminism or cooperation with white feminists by African women is inherently misguided and self-destructive. According to this viewpoint, such actions would not only harm the African woman herself, but also have negative consequences for the broader African community to which she belongs. This harm is believed to occur through the submersion of the African woman in a toxic consciousness, rendering her and her community susceptible to exploitation (Corrigan, 1965).

Walker's womanism encompasses the ideologies of black feminism and late 20th century feminism that emerged with her literary works. Furthermore, it extends its inclusivity to encompass individuals of all genders, colours, and ethnicities, distinguishing it from other womanist philosophers. The disparity between Walker's definition of womanism and that of Ogunyemi and Hudson-Weems is apparent, leading to a substantial scope for exploration within Walker's conceptual framework (Maparyan, 2012).

According to Kalawole (1992), the reason why black women were unable to resist their oppression in the past was due to their lack of recognition of gender as a significant component of their identity. However, the imperative to do so was driven by the prevailing sexism and racism of the 19th century. Subsequent to this recognition, black women opted to assert their entitlements from the racially discriminatory societal framework. The emergence of black feminism can be attributed to the tendency of white society, regardless of gender, to systematically erase the concept of "blackness." This phenomenon is exemplified by the case of Truth. It is important to note that black feminism arose not due to an inherent oversight of black women by feminism itself (Harris, 2010).

According to Ryan (2020), during the 19th century, black women in white public spaces were perceived as lacking the qualities that would classify them as women. Instead, they were dehumanised and treated as property, objects, or even animals. Maythee Rojas agrees and proposes that a major objective of feminism is to gain insight into the world through the lens of women, which involves prioritising women's narratives. However, historically, the term "women" has predominantly denoted white women. Consequently, there has been a historical lack of support for feminism among women of colour (Foss and Griffin, 1992).

According to Lere and Iyabode (2010) black feminism posits that the concerns of black women should be recognised as distinct from those of white women, and so should not be subsumed within the broader demands for rights made by white women. Given that both the concepts of "feminism" and "black feminism" have the underlying objective of advocating for women's empowerment and recognition, it may be argued that black feminism does not fundamentally deviate from the essence of feminism. In contrast, black feminism aims to bring about a meaningful impact on the discourse inside white feminist circles and broader white society by emphasising a more specific attention to the diverse and distinct needs of women (Foss and Griffin, 992).

Nonetheless, womanism possesses certain attributes that differentiate it from both feminism and black feminism. In revisiting the inclusiveness of Walker's conceptualisation of womanism, some scholars within the realm of black feminism adopt a more nuanced perspective, wherein they assign relatively less significance to the comprehensive exploration of hetero/homosexuality and spirituality as emphasised in Walker's formulation (Leve and Iyabode, 2010).

Walker (1985) argues that in order for women to attain personal autonomy and liberation, sexuality holds equal significance to spirituality. Walker exhibits a preference for establishing and nurturing interpersonal relationships with women as opposed to men. Based on her conceptualisation of womanism, an individual who experiences affection for other women, whether in a sexual or nonsexual manner, can be identified as a woman. This demonstrates a deep admiration and preference for the cultural contributions of women, as well as their emotional resilience and adaptability, and acknowledges the inherent strength possessed by women. According to Walker (1983), the concept of womanist refers to a woman who prioritises female bonding over heterosocial relationships. Walker does not categorically

dismiss the possibility of relationships with individuals of the opposite sex, but rather acknowledges that a womanist may have love for specific men, both in a sexual and nonsexual manner (Walker, 1985). The primary concept highlighted in the paragraph is the notion of individualism sought by a womanist, particularly in the presence of other women, while placing relatively less importance on establishing connections with males. This is evidenced by the use of the term "sometimes." Womanism does not hold an inherent opposition to heterosexuality or sociality.

According to Walker (1985), it is said that women ought to demonstrate reverence for "women's emotional flexibility" instead than attempting to imitate men. When a womanist experiences a bout of crying, she does not perceive it as indicative of her own inadequacy, but rather as a typical and expected emotional reaction. Walker's concept of womanism places significant emphasis on the historical devaluation of womanhood and underscores the significance of the emotions and thoughts that are intertwined with it. This perspective resonates with Bell Hooks' assertion that black women have been historically silent due to their perception of womanhood as a less significant facet of their identity. Walker's concept of womanism promotes the empowerment of women by encouraging them to critically examine and reassess their personal histories and societal positions based on their own perspectives. This aligns with Audre Lorde's argument in *Sister Outsider*, where she emphasises the importance of Black women defining themselves on their own terms. Lorde warns that if Black women fail to define themselves, others will define them in ways that serve external interests and harm their own well-being (Littlejohn, and Foss, 2019). Women have the capacity to provide mutual support and assistance, so empowering themselves to overcome the oppressive forces of both racial and patriarchal systems. In her work titled *Communion*, Bell Hooks asserts that the majority of women seek love with the expectation of being recognised and validated for their true selves. It is possible that individuals may harbour doubts regarding their own worth, attributing this scepticism to the perceived unreliability of their own observations (Zondi, 2013).

Womanism encourages women to value who they are and go within for love rather than seeking it outside of themselves. And engagement with other women supports this quest for the self. This is shown in *The Colour Purple*, when Shug and Celie's homosocial love enables Celie to break free from Mister's tyranny and stand on her own two feet, living for herself

instead of existing as a tool to fulfil patriarchal interests. Celie develops sexual self-awareness with the aid of Shug as she learns about her own body and sexuality (Langelier, 1989).

According to Hooks (1989), "female self-love begins with self-acceptance" (Ann, 2013). And this acceptance of the physical promotes acceptance of the cerebral and emotions. Celie begins to perceive herself as an individual entity as soon as she recognises and accepts her physique. Celie's sense of ownership over her physical body aids in her growth as a confident person. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Walker's character Tashi offers a different example of this. Tashi discovers that she cannot have the same sense of belonging as Celie because of her sexual mutilation. Tashi is unable to find peace and stability in her life because she is unable to truly embrace the female body that has been partially torn from her.

As has been mentioned, womanism encourages women to form female ties since they help women to love themselves. Beginning with her mother early on in a girl's childhood, female bonding begins. The mother-daughter bond is one of the most important relationships among Black women, according to Patricia Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thoughts: The mother/daughter relationship* (Delphy, 2019).

2.2.6 The Rise of Women Authors

Female authors in African-American literature have struggled to have their voices heard in literature. They have had to endure a long path in order to reach where they stand at the present time: ranging from authors of slave narratives such as Laura Haviland and Martha Jackson, to Zora Neale Hurston and from Hurston to Alice Walker. Hurston writes right after the Harlem Renaissance (1918-1930), when African-Americans had founded a rich culture of contemporary music and literature. Yet Hurston's (1997) writing itself is a turning point in African-American writing since she begins a new path for African-American women by writing about women who, at that time, were still suffering the pressures of patriarchy.

It was a challenge for Hurston to write about women, who did not have a voice within the American South, let alone in black communities, in general. Following this period, women authors managed to raise their voices and follow what Hurston had started almost a half century previously. The most prominent African-American female authors of this period, which extends into the present, are Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, both of whom take huge steps to communicate the voices of black women. Walker (1983) regards Hurston highly,

citing her as an inspiration to write her own works. In the aforementioned, *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker writes that "the quality I feel is most characteristic of Zora's work [is] racial health, a sense of black people as complete, complex, undiminished human beings, a sense that is lacking in so much black writing and literature" (Cartaphen, 1999). The quote demonstrates a connection between the two authors in terms of attempting to promote a wholeness in the African-American female self. And just as Hurston influenced the subsequent generation of African-American female authors, she herself had also been influenced by the female writers that preceded her – those who wrote slave narratives (Thackway, 2005).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the focus of African-American literature was mainly on the communication of slaves' narratives. African-Americans hardly had a voice within a white supremacist society of the US (Akung, 2013). In his book, *Chaotic Justice*, Ernest (2005) writes that such slave narratives "are performances devoted to representing an absent subject not only the historically and culturally isolated narrator or the narrative subject, but also and more importantly the variable dynamics of racial construction, identification, and positioning that are rendered virtually invisible in a white supremacist culture". It was at this time –the mid-19th century- when slavery was at its peak, that African-Americans were so dehumanised that they were "sold by receipt"). Even mothers were sold away from their daughters.

Northup (2009), in his *Narrative of Northup* (2009), writes: "Freeman out of patience, tore Emily [the daughter] from her mother by main force... 'Don't leave me, mama—don't leave me. Black women, in both their lives and their sexuality, were under the control of their white masters. "Under slavery, black women authors managed to raise their voices and follow what Hurston had started almost a half century previously (Barr, 2020). The most prominent African-American female authors of this period, which extends into the present, are Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, both of whom take huge steps to communicate the voices of black women. Walker regards Hurston highly, citing her as an inspiration to write her own works. In the aforementioned, *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker writes that "the quality I feel is most characteristic of Zora's work [is] racial health, a sense of black people as complete, complex, undiminished human beings, a sense that is lacking in so much black writing and literature" (Deike, 1999). The quote demonstrates a connection between the two authors in terms of attempting to promote a wholeness in the African-American female self.

By the beginning of the 20th century the situation of black women had not improved much (Phillips, 2016). Women were treated as sexual objects. For instance, 'a Negro nurse' recounts how, while working as a servant in a white man's house, she was sexually abused by the employer, only to be interrupted by her husband. Following this intervention, "the police judge fined [her] husband \$25". She writes: "I was present at the hearing, and testified on oath to the insult offered me. The white man, of course, denied the charge (Lillian, 2022). By the mid-twentieth century however, African-American literature begins to proliferate, and authors like Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright are writing about black people's civil and social rights, infusing their prose with activist sentiments. Hurston (1989), who emerged even before those male authors, further focused on the African-American woman's emancipation from sexism and racism. Innovative and prescient, her work formed a model for Walker.

2.3 Theoretical framework

Womanist theory has been actively involved in tackling structural difficulties at numerous levels since its foundation, with the overriding goal of empowering Black people of all ages and genders and emancipating the Black community as a whole. In her essay "The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness," published in 1985, Katie Geneva Cannon introduces the concept of Womanist traditions as a cognitive framework rooted in Black religious' heritage and the first hand experiences of Black women who were enslaved and subjected to white supremacy and male dominance during the era of slavery (Walker, 1985). Womanist theory is scholarly in nature, attempting to perform a critical investigation of the societal creation of African American women in the context of the community (Abdi, 2018). The major goal is to develop a critical evaluation of Black (male) philosophy in order to construct a theory that encompasses the African American community's experiences and needs. Furthermore, Womanist theory advocates for a re-evaluation of knowledge that honours and respects the contributions and perspectives of all people (Rahayu, 2016).

Womanist philosophers understand the complex and diverse elements that make up a full theoretical framework. When it comes to theoretical notions, feminist theologians use a comprehensive approach. Womanist theologians work in a variety of scholarly subjects, including ethics, anthropology, philosophical anthropology, devotional studies, and pastoral theory. Each of the aforementioned womanist theological perspectives is differentiated by its

emphasis on the recognition and comprehensive incorporation of Black women's lived experiences (Walker, 1985).

Ullen (2016) states that womanist theologians typically begin their theoretical reflections by emphasising Black women's experiences, incorporating elements such as tradition, community, and spirituality, the self, and practical application. Womanist theory emphasises the analysis of Black adolescent girls' experiences in order to foster inclusiveness. This methodology focuses on the concept of "particularity," which is commonly accepted as the holistic manifestation of a person's own experiences that form our sense of ourselves in relation to others. In the current context, the term "totality" refers to the interconnectedness of many psychological elements, such as race, class, gender, sex, and aptitude, within the context of society dynamics (Allan, 1995). In the Womanist movement, the term of particularity refers to the profound aspects of African Americans' experiences, which include a variety of societal, cultural, historical, psychological, and economic components. The idea that our distinguishing characteristics are the essential basis of our identity has had a significant impact on the evolution of Womanist ideology (Gemberling, 2014).

The specifics of womanist doctrine are marked by a great degree of specificity. Nonetheless, the singularity inherent in the experience of being a Black female is sometimes overlooked. The awareness of the distinctive traits and complexities of particularity is at the heart of Womanist theoretical discourse. This helps Womanist theologians understand the lives of Black women (Bernard, 2004). Collins (2017) argues in her paper "Black Feminist Epistemology" that Black women develop a distinct sort of knowledge as a result of their dual identities as Black and female humans. The idea that "being" is crucial implies that Black women learn understanding through physical encounters, social interactions, emotional states, cultural expectations, and how they are regarded and treated by others. This correlation demonstrates a link between Black women's epistemic capacities and their individuality. The sum of their experiences might be used to determine relevance. The roots of womanist religion can be traced back to women's extensive personal experiences (Allan, 1995).

Womanist theologians conduct scholarly analyses of religious concepts, symbolism, imagery, and rituals, attempting to understand their significance in light of African American women's special knowledge-bearing capacity (Ann, 2015). The concept of particularity becomes clearer

in the critical investigation of biblical texts, rites, traditions, and personal experiences. In her article "The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness," Allan (1995) contends that by analysing the significant and impactful elements of the social milieu encountered by Black women, one can discern the prevailing and influential oppressive systems that have shaped the structure within which Black women scrutinise and evaluate religious scriptures in an effort to grasp the divine message from a distinct perspective distinct to themselves. As evidenced by the use of feminist approaches, feminist theological thinking places a high value on the concept of particularity as a means of comprehending (Austin, 1990).

Overall, Womanist theologians have used historical research, childhood memories, and ethnographic inquiry to actively engage the concept of particularity. Katie Cannon's memoir *Moral Wisdom in the Black Women's Literary Tradition* provides a look back at her childhood, outlining her early thoughts on the relationship between faith and ethics. Similarly, Townes elaborates on her formative years spent under the mentorship of seasoned African Americans in her presidential address to the American Academy of Religion in 2008 (Abdi, 2018).

2.4 Research gaps

While prior studies have explored the intersectionality of womanism with race, there is still a lack of understanding concerning the impact of womanism on other identity markers, including religion, class, and sexual orientation. As opposed to being restricted to a single movement, womanism is a complex ideology comprising a variety of approaches and perspectives. This assemblage of ideas endures a process of development as it is influenced by the varied experiences of women worldwide.

Additional investigation is necessary to attain a comprehensive understanding of the global aspects of womanism, including its varied expressions and implementations in various settings. Womanism is commonly recognised as a fundamental element of a more extensive social justice movement that advocates for the rights of marginalised individuals, including those who identify as women, people of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with disabilities. Additional investigation is necessary to clarify the interrelationships that exist among womanism and other socio-political movements, in addition to examining the ways in which they might cooperate to promote worldwide fairness and equality.

2.5 Chapter summary

The exploration of womanism in contemporary African literature, as exemplified by Odafen's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Medie's *His Only Wife*, and May's *Wahala*, underscores the complexity and diversity of women's experiences across different cultural and social contexts. These novels engage with issues of gender, power dynamics, agency, and societal expectations, offering nuanced portrayals of women navigating traditional and modern realities.

Through the lens of womanism, these authors interrogate patriarchal structures and challenge dominant narratives, advocating for the empowerment and liberation of women. They depict female protagonists who assert their identities, challenge oppressive norms, and seek autonomy in the face of adversity. Moreover, these narratives highlight the interconnectedness of women's struggles and the importance of solidarity and collective action in effecting meaningful change.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodologies and procedures utilised in the study. It specifically addresses the following areas: Research Design, Research Paradigm, Data Analysis, and Ethical Considerations. The study employs various elements to derive information from the chosen literary works, namely Odafen's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Medie's *His Only Wife*, and May's *Wahala*.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study employed the interpretivist paradigm as its philosophical foundation, as it facilitated the understanding that multiple realities exist rather than a single absolute reality (Bryman, 2019). Interpretivism posited that probabilistic models, such as those utilised in positivist paradigms, were inadequate for capturing the complexity of human actions (Bryman, 2019).

3.3 Research Approach

The researcher employed a qualitative approach. The qualitative technique was deemed appropriate for conducting research investigations that focused on the genuine social existence of individuals or characters within real-world contexts (Creswell, 2017). It was well-suited for the current study as it utilized both primary and secondary sources of information to gain an understanding of the ideas, viewpoints, or experiences of individuals, thus justifying the choice of design.

3.4 Research Design

This study employed an exploratory desktop research design. The use of the exploratory desktop study provided advantages to the researcher due to the cost-effectiveness, versatility, and reliability of the literary text analysis method (Jupp, 2016). This approach took into serious consideration the claims and skills of ordinary individuals. Literary text analysis served the purpose of enabling readers to separate the different logics employed by various social actors. It involved a direct examination of the actors' original texts while also considering the broader context of their discourses and actions (Creswell, 2017).

Consequently, this research adopted and implemented this approach to achieve the research objectives through accurate and comprehensive information attainment.

3.5 Text Selection Criteria for Literary Analysis

This study focused on three works by African writers: May's *Wahala*, Odafen's *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, and Medie's *His Only Wife*. Examining womanism in literary works was vital for understanding the diverse roles, challenges, and experiences that women face in society. The compelling novels *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* by Odafen, *His Only Wife* by Medie, and *Wahala* by May all explore various aspects of womanhood, societal expectations, and the search for independence. Preference was given to these texts because they were authored by individuals who had a demonstrated understanding or engagement with womanist principles, and whose backgrounds enriched the exploration of womanism within their works.

3.6 Data Analysis

Through the utilisation of content analysis, the researcher conducted a comprehensive examination of the novels and relevant literature. This process involved identifying and extracting information pertinent to the topic, followed by organising this information into coherent themes (Creswell, 2017). Subsequently, the researcher employed inferential reasoning to draw conclusions based on the identified themes. In addition, the researcher utilised narrative and framework analysis methods to interpret the narratives expressed in everyday life as portrayed in novels and other literary works. The research data were organised to enhance the identification of significant themes, leading to the formulation of conclusions.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Prior to initiation, the study underwent approval by the NUST review board. Furthermore, it was incumbent upon the researcher to adhere to ethical standards in conducting and reporting research, ensuring honesty in presenting both positive and negative findings. Failure to do so could have raised ethical concerns, prompting the researcher to acknowledge this reality and take measures to prevent the distribution of inaccurate knowledge (Jupp, 2016). This study was conducted exclusively through desk research, which included the analysis of written materials; the findings supported the institution's declaration on the importance of academic honesty and integrity. All ethical clearances at NUST were requested.

To provide credit to all the sources utilised in this inquiry, the American Psychological Association (APA) reference style was adopted.

3.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter 3, outlined the methodologies and procedures employed in the study, focusing on the research design, paradigm, approach, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The study utilised an interpretivist paradigm, which allowed for a comprehensive understanding of multiple realities rather than a single objective truth. A qualitative research approach was adopted, enabling the exploration of the ideas, viewpoints, and experiences of individuals through both primary and secondary sources. The research design was an exploratory desktop study, using literary text analysis to examine the selected novels: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala*. Data analysis involved content analysis, narrative analysis, and framework analysis to identify significant themes within the texts. Ethical considerations were adhered to, with approval from the NUST review board, and all research followed ethical guidelines, including the use of APA referencing to ensure academic honesty and integrity.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of findings based on the three objectives of this research. The focus is on three novels: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* by Joy Odafe, *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie, and *Wahala* by Nikki May-all with unique insights into womanism. Careful analysis has been done using womanist theory where each novel has been reviewed in terms of how African women negotiate their respective societal expectations. Correspondingly, a number of relevant scholars and close textual reading support the discussion of various depictions of womanism, discourse-level representation of women, and greater implications of womanist thought within the narratives.

4.2. Depiction of Womanism in the Selected Novels (Objective One)

The first objective was to examine how womanism is portrayed in the selected novels: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* by Joy Odafe, *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie, and *Wahala* by Nikki May. The theoretical framework of womanism, as theorised by Alice Walker among other scholars, underlines the paradigmatic lived experiences of African women in the face of intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class. As mainstream feminism in itself is focused on the lives of white women, womanism encompasses the cultural and societal stresses experienced by each African woman in daily life. These novels of African women, read through a womanist lens, show how they navigate the interaction between a complex world and the constant workings of personal agency versus societal expectations (Gadaka, U2024; Fwangyil, 2023; Nasir, Zahra, & Fakhar Jamil, 2024).

In *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Odafe portrays womanism through the struggle of the protagonist to be an independent woman who at the same time respects the dictates of family and society. She struggles with the burden of being a woman, assigned to her by tradition, which prescribed subservience and compliance (Fwangyil, 2023). Her journey throughout the novel underscores the tension between fulfilling these societal expectations and the pursuit of self-actualisation. The tension that this causes is poignantly realised in the questioning protagonist of her assigned role within the family-she increasingly realises that her sense of worth and identity are defined by others, notably men (Fwangyil, 2023). It is in here that Odafe utilises this internal struggle to point toward one of the core precepts of

womanism: the need for African women to take back their agency and fight against the constraints put on them by patriarchal structures. As it were, the protagonist says, "I had been told all my life that my purpose was to be a good wife, but what if I wanted more?" (Odafen, 2022, p. 112).

This moment of realisation captures the struggle of the protagonist to break free from the roles assigned by society onto her. In *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, the storyline is continued with the identification of womanist motivation self-empowerment. Her struggle was presented again and again as moments of resistance against societal norms that burden her. This resistance does not stop at her family circle but ripples out to the whole society that embraces such restrictive gender roles. Odafen depicts the gradual awakening of the protagonist amidst all this, reflecting the womanist belief that African women have to find their way into achieving, even if it means breaking away from their tradition. This novel further situates this personal struggle within the broad context of African culture and how the ways of society are deeply intertwined with those of culture. In struggling with such societal expectations, she starts questioning the cultural dictates guiding her life and insists on her right to self-definition (Fwangyil, 2023).

This process of self-assertion has been running concurrently with the claim by Stratton (2020) that womanism is all about women who love themselves, love their roots, and love survival. The same resistance streak to patriarchal expectations has been shown by the protagonist Afi through her journey toward autonomy in *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie. Through societal and familial influence, Afi yields to marry a man to whom she is being fitted at the start of the novel, thus automatically setting her in a subservient role. As the story builds, Afi comes into her own and asserts her autonomy against the veracity of the roles set upon her through both family and society. Medie captures the quintessential womanist ideal of self-determination through the gradual emancipation of Afi. Agency would be an active ingredient in her story, as she had to navigate family responsibilities and still attempt to keep her personhood intact with desires and goals (Nasir et al., 2024).

That tension is encapsulated when Afi thinks, "I was chosen, but I did not choose" (Medie, 2020, p. 87), as she struggles to reconcile an understanding of her own identity with the expectations thrust upon her by others. Afi's interactions with other characters also further

illustrate the larger societal pressures placed on African women. The novel portrays marriage as an institution that reinforces gender inequality-a focal part of Afi's experience. Afi is expected to assume the traditional role of a wife, which includes unconditional service to one's husband and his family. However, in opening her mouth to question these expectations as unfair, she is discarding her value defined by her capability to play this role. The decision to eventually break away from this marriage on Afi's part, despite the stigma it might bring with it, underlines this aspect where a womanist insists on agency and self-reliance. Medie portrays Afi as a woman who would not be bound by the rules of society but carved her way out (Nasir et al., 2024).

This journey of self-discovery and independence becomes one strong case of how womanism is one way for African women to redefine their role in a manner dignifying their autonomy and personal aspiration. On the other hand, *Wahala* looks at womanism through the dynamic of female friendship and womanist solidarity. This novel delves deep into the lives of three women-Ronke, Boo, and Simi-who live in this hectic world where most times the demands of the culture somewhat clash with one's personal ambitions (Shah, Naz, & Ali, 2024). Probably the strongest difference *Wahala* offers, from those discussed by both foregoing novels, is the communal effect of womanhood as bequeathed through friendship and mutual love. May effectively develops a womanist struggle through the interaction of characters in which the women equally face the challenges experienced in balancing cultural expectations with personal desires for independence (Gadaka, U2024).

This emphasis on friendship as a source of empowerment is concordant with the concept of womanism, emphasising the value of female solidarity in surmounting the challenges issued by society (Stratton, 2020). May's description of the female characters in *Wahala* is a poignant threading through cultural identity and personal ambition in an ever-evolving world. The pressure on these characters from society is compelling to live up to expectations, especially those touching on marriage, career, and motherhood, but they also long to assert their individuality (Shah et al., 2024). As Ronke, one of the protagonists, observes, "We were taught to put others first, but how can I help others when I can't even help myself?" (May, 2021, p. 153).

The words of Ronke reveal the internal conflict many African women have while navigating expectations from their families and society. This demonstrates, even as each woman suffers singularly, the cohesion she draws from shared experience enables her to support one another on their journeys of self-empowerment (Gadaka, U2024). *Wahala* also illustrates the belief in solidarity within the womanist theory. May uses the bond between Ronke, Boo, and Simi to illustrate how African women can transcend societal pressures through combined effort. This womanist friendship allows them to express frustration, fears, and desires and thus go through their experiences with the help of one another (Shah et al., 2024).

This consciousness of community is perhaps the most important principle of womanism, as Stratton (2020) asserts, womanism embodies interconnectedness of self and others and a relative balance between self and other concerns in relationships. In this way, *Wahala* shows how African women are powerful not only because they have choices but also because they form a group. Another manifestation of cultural identity at work is found in the novel, too, and adds another layer to the theme of womanism in the case of *Wahala* by May. Characters have to work out how to live their lives as African women in a multicultural society where traditional values are supposedly in conflict with modern goals. (Shah et al., 2024).

Perhaps nowhere is this tension clearer than in the challenge of keeping cultural heritage in balance with the demands of becoming an independent, personally fulfilled, professionally successful individual (Gadaka, U2024). May reflects on this from the perspective of African womanhood in a globalised world. She talks about how demanding a balance is between the high expectations of family and culture with realities in modern life. One of the most important notions in womanism is that issues of race, culture, and gender interrelate to one another. This concept emanates from the huge problems African women have had for hundreds of years as they dealt with multiple forms of oppression (Shah et al., 2024).

4.3. Representation of Women at the Discourse Level (Objective Two)

The second objective of the study was to explore how *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala* represent women. When discussing discourse representation, we are able to show the complexity in being an African woman through language and the assembly of a story. All of these books use different types of discourse to show how the female characters deal with problems inside and outside of their relationships. It is also used to show how the

female characters fight against the male-dominated societies they live in. Thinking about the language used in the novels shows that the talk is more than just a way to tell a story. It is also one more avenue to challenge the conventional notion of gender roles in women's empowerment. The section identifies how the authors, through language and narration, have brought about the plight of being a woman in African societies by presenting their voices, thoughts, and interaction with other women (Gadaka, U2024; Fwangyil, 2023; Nasir et al., 2024; Stratton, 2020).

Tomorrow I Become a Woman is written in the first person, which lets Odafen show how the main character is struggling from the inside. Such is the kind of narrative choice that allows the reader intense immersion into the mind and view of the protagonist, making her rise from subjugation to empowerment even more real. First-person narration is important in that it places the subjective experience of the protagonist at the fore and categorically declares her resistance an essentially personal concern (Fwangyil, 2023). As the protagonist reflects upon her life and what was expected of her by society, her interior monologue becomes a site of resistance "I spoke, but my words were drowned by the expectations around me," she says, showing how her thoughts go against the grain of societal norms which try to hold her back (Odafen, 2022, p. 112). Through this interior speech, Odafen illustrates the protagonist's transformation and rise in consciousness regarding forces that determine her reality.

Her interior monologues are full of cultural references, and these have helped to drive home the sub consciousness of the expectations attending her. Odafen smoothly weaves in aspects of traditional African culture and utilises these to reveal how speech and societal expectations are intertwined in the construction of the protagonist's identity. She stands at a crossroads, reflecting on her positioning within her community as a woman (Fwangyil, 2023). It is here that she is consistently bombarded with the realisation of cultural beliefs prescribing the course of her actions "I was told a woman's place is in the home, to nourish and serve," (Odafen, 2022, p. 89). This culturally embedded discourse institutes a tension between the protagonist's yearning for autonomy and the societal drive toward conformity, underlining thereby the function of language in sustaining the patriarchal structures.

His Only Wife sees Peace Adzo Medie employ a third-person narration in an attempt to navigate through the power and agency dynamics at play in the life of the protagonist, Afi.

The third-person point of view allows Medie to jump from one character to another, bringing into the web of relationships that shape Afi's life. This structure is quite welcome in showing the external pressures that Afi will have to face from the family and community. Her interactions with these different characters reveal how language is often used as a tool to reinforce societal expectations (Nasir et al., 2024). Afi's mother, for example, reminds her time and again of her marital obligation "You must make him happy. That is a woman's job," her mother tells her-an echoed articulation of the traditional gendered expectation that Afi is supposed to play into (Medie, 2020, p. 47). Through such interchanges, Medie illustrates how this discourse of submission surrounds Afi, demonstrating through ordinary speech how societal norms are inquired into and demanded.

Once Afi starts to question these expectations, however, Medie intersperses instances of speech that certainly do contest those very roles for women. Afi's conversations with other female characters, some with her friend Mawusi, even provide views of womanhood and marriage which contest the given one (Nasir et al., 2024). These dialogues then form these points of resistance where Afi is exposed to new ways of thinking about herself as a woman. "Why does it have to be us who always make the sacrifice?" Mawusi asks, challenging this notion that women must be the ones to bear the burden of holding families together (Medie, 2020, p. 122).

Through this exchange, Medie shows how discourse can be an effective avenue to dismantle patriarchal normative assumptions, as Afi begins to question her position and assert her agency. Discourse level, *His Only Wife* discusses the negotiation of women's power within patriarchal structures. Afi's journey is interspersed with moments of dialogue where she manoeuvres her place within marriage and family. Initially, her language is reflective of submission and compliance in trying to meet the expectations set upon her (Nasir et al., 2024). However, as she becomes more aware of her own desires and needs, her language shifts to reflect her growing autonomy. "I have my own voice now," Afi declares toward the end of the novel, signalling her transformation from a passive participant in her life to an active agent of change it mean (Medie, 2020, p. 203).

The centrality of language in this transformation, through the use of dialogue, befits Medie's novel. It also perhaps underscores that Afi's empowerment is shaped by the abilities of

articulation of her mind and desires. In *Wahala*, Nikki May employs a conversational tone; the female characters are represented majorly through dialogue. This tension in the novel's discourse is reflected in two preoccupations: tradition versus modernity. Characters have to perform a balancing act between the demands imposed by culture and tradition and personal ambition (Gadaka, 2024). This is further intensified by the relationships that exist amongst the three main characters, Ronke, Boo, and Simi. They continually remind one another of just how difficult it is for them to balance their being African women with an independent and successful role in today's modern multicultural world. May utilises dialogue, nonetheless, that can provide excellent depth for these competing forces. The frustrations and desires of the characters emerge through honest, at times hilarious, conversations (Shah et al., 2024; Stratton, 2020).

Boo was of the opinion that, African women are held to impossible standards and adds that we are always expected to be perfect wife, perfect mother, and perfect daughter. *Wahala* by May does an equally good job in chronicling female solidarity through dialogue. Through the book's conversational tone, it creates closeness and friendship with the women reading the novel (Gadaka, 2024). In sharing with each other, the women are helping their friends get through life's challenges. Typical of womanism, this emphasises how community and helping each other are important in dealing with societal pressures. It is during these conversations that the characters in *Wahala* step out of their traditional roles and leave stronger from sharing their stories (Shah et al., 2024).

"We may not have it all figured out, but at least we have each other," Ronke reflects, underscoring the importance of friendship in navigating the complexities of womanhood (May, 2021, p. 217). Moreover, the discourse in *Wahala* can be said to be that of the resistance against the societal expectations of the characters when this is applied to their interactions with male characters (Shah et al., 2024).

May uses dialogue in order to point out the power dynamics at play in women's relationships with men and shows how language was used to establish control or undermine authority (Gadaka, 2024). For example, Ronke, upon confrontation of her boyfriend's affair, uses no periphery speech, but instead is straightforward in her allegations and corrective actions-one that does not clamour for the usual subjugated girlfriend role she tells him-a clear departure

from the more passive roles that put women in subordinate positions that "I am not here to serve you or to be treated as less," (May, 2021, p98). In these confrontational moments, May gives evidence of how language can be a tool of resistance, enabling these female characters to resist subjugation and sidestep norms that attempt to bind them (Shah et al., 2024).

4.4. The Significance and Implications of Womanism (Objective Three)

The last objective of the research was to learn what womanism meant in relation to three novels: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* by Joy Odafe, *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie, and *Wahala* by Nikki May. Alice Walker coined the term womanism, and it has provided a conceptual framework through which changing roles of race, gender, and class determine and shape the lives of African women. While womanism combats patriarchy, it does provide space for African women to voice their opinions and claim their rights (Gadaka, 2024; Fwangyil, 2023; Nasir et al., 2024; Stratton, 2020).

Within the novel *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Joy Odafe captures the essence of womanism through the journey which her protagonist embarks upon and completes with a far more empowered protagonist. The novel shows just how important an education and self-awareness are in changing the manner in which women fight against the roles assigned to them by tradition. In this way, the protagonist's journey of being dominated to independent can be understood as a metaphor that explains how African women must fight against societal norms that ultimately prohibit their free will (Fwangyil, 2023). Odafe accentuated through the struggles and eventual freedom of her protagonist an extremely important feminist idea the right to choose for one's self "This perfect wife had been shaped into me, but who was I without the shape?" One scene shows the lead protagonist talking to her inner self and exclaiming, "Tomorrow I'm going to be someone else, a woman." (Odafe, 2022, p. 89).

In *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, the beauty of womanism is that it defies deeply engraved cultural beliefs which say that a woman's worth depends on how well she fits into a traditional role. Odafe emphasises that African women must be freed from such limiting structures by proposing education as a path to self-realisation. The novel also points out how the attainment of an education exposes her to a world in which she has every right to challenge the status quo and dream for herself beyond what her family and society have chosen for her (Fwangyil, 2023). This is in line with Hudson-Weems (2019), view of womanism, which is

essentially about women taking back their identities and challenging the structures that oppress them.

Hence, a womanist idea, as presented in *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, is seen not just as a refutation to patriarchy but as a means for African women to be able to arrive at self-realisation and independence (Fwangyil, 2023; Stratton, 2020). *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie continues to develop implications of womanism, thus centring on the personal autonomy of the protagonist Afi and her resistance to the oppression brought by cultural practices. This transformation in Afi-from an obedient little woman into an authoritative and independent human being-contains the very core of the womanist principle of self-determination. While Afi was put into an arranged marriage, with expectations to enact the traditional role of a wife, it was through these storylines she began to question societal expectations. In fact, Afi's refusal of the traditional gendered roles assigned to her shows the powerful way womanism fosters autonomy and personal growth (Nasir et al., 2024).

Afi says, attesting to her acknowledgement of womanist principles "I knew I had a right to expect something for myself, even if it involved breaking the customs that had shaped my life,"(Medie, 2020, p176). Through the voice of the protagonist in this novel, Medie makes an urgent call to the importance of womanism in giving African women the latitude they need to fight against patriarchal structures. Afi's journey reflects the wider womanist endeavour of enabling women to reclaim their agency in a society that seeks to limit their independence. The novel identifies choice and autonomy, while designating a focus on women-who often hear from society to 'be', or 'act', in a manner often designed by others. In making a conscious decision to forge her way apart from the arranged marriage, Afi epitomises her womanism through belief in personal empowerment and the ability to self-direct one's life (Nasir et al., 2024).

The renunciation of cultural practices that oppress women adheres to what Ogunyemi has described as a concept-womanism-that not only contests sexism but also addresses the cultural and societal dimensions of women's subordination. In *Wahala*, Nikki May tries to address the wider implications of womanism through the relationship shared between her female characters (Gadaka, 2024). The novel largely underscores the importance of community and solidarity-one of the key tenets in womanist theory-as three main characters,

Ronke, Boo, and Simi, navigate their way through African womanhood. By showing what happened to them in common, May points out how womanism encourages empowerment through collective action or mutual support. This support is found in the friendship of these women, wherein they gain strength with and through whom they can stand up against those forces that have instilled pressure into their minds, seriously threatening to strangle and bury their ambitions (Shah et al., 2024).

The world may try to divide us, but we'll keep lifting each other up, where it shows that their bond is an important way out. The female solidarity depicted in *Wahala* reflects this greater womanist principle of empowerment-not as an individual pursuit but communal. That is where the strength is derived from the relations to resist societal expectations defining their womanhood (Hudson-Weems, 2019; Gadaka, 2024).

The social pressures each one of them has to bear in *Wahala* can be faced and overcome with their bond of friendship. This allows the key womanist premise of in-difference and collective empowerment to unfurl. Additionally, *Wahala* also highlights the intersectionality of womanism in tussling with the struggles of the characters in balancing cultural identity and their personal ambitions (Gadaka, 2024). May drew a picture of how the lives of the characters being African women in a multicultural society depicted the peculiar nature of living amidst battles for both cultural and modern societies' demands. This novel explains the tension between these two worlds-the drive for freedom pitched against the retention of their cultural identities. That has been well represented in the reflection of Simi, "I want to honour my heritage, but I also want to live on my own terms. Can I have both?" (May, 2021, 103).

In this way, May uses the investigation into identity as a lens through which to reveal the wider ramifications of womanism in helping African women negotiate race, culture, and gender. What is important about womanism in *Wahala* is that it unravels modern African womanhood to make room for depictions of its many complexities. The novel epitomises the way in which African women navigate through multi-layered oppressions-from cultural expectation to gender norms-in addition to striving for the expression of their individuality (Shah et al., 2024).

May has shown how these characters struggle with identity and ambition, and how womanism is a vital framework that allows African women to resist such limiting cultural and societal dictates. Centring the relationships between the female characters, *Wahala* signals the sense of collectivity in empowerment, showing how, indeed, African women can help each other towards the goal of independence and self-determination (Shah et al., 2024).

4.5. Discussions

4.5.1. Depiction of Womanism in the Selected Novels

The first objective of the research was to analyse how womanism is represented in the following three novels: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala*. The findings reveal that these three novels represent womanism as a frame of resistance to traditional gender roles; for African women, it provides a multi-layered focus on their experiences. These novels chronicle the journeys of their protagonists as womanism uninhibitedly impacts their roles in society: how African women negotiate, resist, and consequently redefine their assigned positions in a patriarchal society (Hudson-Weems, 2019;

On the other hand, *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* is a story by Joy Odafe that explores how womanism can transform people based on the struggles of the protagonist. One of the major themes of womanism is that African women should begin to question and thereby alter society's expectations of them. The journey taken by the protagonist from a subdued nature to one of self-realization demonstrates it. In Odafe, she indicates how patriarchal cultural expectations have relegated women to their traditional roles of wife and mother. The protagonist struggles with the psychological burden of societal expectations placed upon her both by her family and society as a whole (Fwangyil, 2023). As events unfold, though, she begins questioning such expectations en route to another identity. Her education is a significant part of this change because it helps her to view herself as something more than what society has defined her to be. Knowledge and working toward self-autonomy are ways in which the protagonist denies the roles bestowed upon her. She regains her identity through gaining a clearer picture of her goals and desires (Fwangyil, 2023).

Tomorrow I Become a Woman has much to say about education, which is great because it falls in line with feminist ideas that state that knowledge is important for self-awareness and the path towards becoming more powerful. Odafe drew upon the main character's schooling

as evidence showing how learning endowed African women with the tools needed to successfully battle against the social pressures in their path and to create a future for themselves other than one constrained by male-dominated expectations (Fwangyil, 2023). Therefore, she became more assertive and confident in her intellectual abilities and began to question how cultural expectations were perhaps too tight, which had been holding her back. The origin of womanist theory finds its root in questioning and negation of societal expectations. It offers a platform for women to be independent and to speak for themselves often against the exact same expectations that cast doubt on their roles. Thus, the journey taken by the protagonist depicts, or rather explains, the larger goal of womanism, which empowers African women to take control of their life decisions (Fwangyil, 2023).

In the same regard, one sees womanism through the growth of the main character from a shy young woman to a strong-willed, independent woman in *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie. At the beginning of this novel, Afi is being forced into an arranged marriage; this reflects the kind of traditional gender roles and cultural expectations which have been placed upon women in many African societies. The expectation upon her is to follow these roles and to be a wife and daughter-in-law without question. As the novel progresses, however, Afi grows in a way that allows her to resist such expectations and realise she has the right to make choices that suit her own desires and aspirations. This transformation crescendo into the Womanist ideals of self-determination as Afi claims her agency in a society that works to constrain her (Nasir et al., 2024).

Medie brings out the thought of personal autonomy within the womanist framework through Afi's rejection of oppressive cultural practices that come along with her arranged marriage. The novel builds a premium on choice and self-determination as Afi progresses toward realising that her destiny is her own to fashion. By shunning the role that her family and community have assumed for her, Afi takes responsibility for her life because she does what she wants instead of what is expected from her (Nasir et al., 2024). This interpretation of womanism agrees with Hudson-Weems, (2019) contention that womanism is a certain way of black women loving themselves that makes them create spaces in which this self-love can be both possible and safe through which they are capable of challenging structures within which their oppression is located. Afi's journey toward self-awareness and independence thus finds a broader resonance with the womanist objective of enthroning self-standing African

women amid patriarchal demands for submission and surrender (Nasir et al., 2024; Stratton, 2020).

Besides, *His Only Wife* puts into perspective the cultural meaning of marriage and its impact on women's lives throughout much of Africa. Her initial acquiescence to the arranged marriage reflects a societal expectation that places a woman's worth on her ability to fulfil ascribed roles already, primarily those of wife and mother. As Afi surfaces as more individualistic with a sense of her needs and wants, she begins to question these roles for herself and later rejects them for a life she designs. Such abandonment of cultural practices that oppress women points to the belief at the heart of womanism: personal empowerment and autonomy are fundamental. The way Medie structures Afi's story testifies to womanism's emancipatory power for African women to struggle against patriarchal bases and create other openings for self-expression and autonomous being (Nasir et al., 2024).

Whereas *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* and *His Only Wife* are singularly individualistic interests, Nikki May's *Wahala* approaches womanism from an angle of friendship and female solidarity. The novel underlines the need for community as an aspect through which African women draw on their points of strength and empowerment. May shows, through the relations of the three main characters-Ronke, Boo, and Simi-how African women can help one another to deal with the problems modern life throws their way. Characters share experiences and also the ability to help each other as an example of how womanists value group action and solidarity. In this case, one sees that sometimes empowering one is not an individual task but a group one (Nasir et al., 2024; Fwangyil, 2023).

For instance, the aspect of communality in womanism, the friendships in *Wahala* help in getting by personal and cultural problems. May has shown how these character relationships help to deal with problematic parts of their lives in both the traditional and modern settings (Gadaka, 2024). The novel illustrates that they obtain strength from each other because they support, help and understand one another through the stresses that society places on marriage, career, and family. This is an expression of the womanist proposition that African women can be empowered through connections with other women and the establishment of support networks that enable them to rise against what society states they ought to be and be themselves (Shah et al., 2024).

Wahala also poignantly emphasises womanism through the deliberation of the imperfectness of the characters and the balancing of their cultural selves with their own personal ambitions. There are several tensions between tradition and modernity that are found within this story. Each character faces the brutal reality of the expectations set by their families and communities against the desire to be independent in a modern multicultural world (Shah et al., 2024). This tension occurs most strongly when the characters discuss marriage and motherhood, for they are angry with the cultural expectations that define, at least seemingly, their social role. May frames these internal and external conflicts through the intersectionality of womanism-the multiple layers of oppression African women face, struggling with issues of race, gender, and class (Gadaka, 2024).

This framing of friendship and solidarity in *Wahala* further reiterates the important meaning of community within the womanist framework. May uses the characters' connections to show just how those connections between African women can create the spaces of resistance and empowerment via one another (Gadaka, 2024). The novel epitomises that female solidarity is one of the strongest tools for the advancement of pressurised demands from society and personal growth, since the mutual support in exerted ways helps them journey through identities and aspirations in all their complexity. This aspect of communalism in womanism blends with Walker's vision of womanist thought, which emphasises collective action and mutual support in their struggle for empowerment (Shah et al., 2024).

4.5.2. Representation of Women at the Discourse Level

The second aim of this research was to analyse how women are presented at the discourse level in the three novels under consideration: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala*. Results indicated that language, narrative structure, and dialogue all played a pivotal role in the determination of the presentation of women in each of these three novels. Discourse is not just a vehicle to tell a story, but it is a means through which power dynamics, gender roles, and social expectations are negotiated, resisted, or reinforced. By employing first-person and third-person narratives, internal monologues, and conversational dialogue, these novels represent the diverse faces of African womanhood while revealing how women's experiences are mediated and shaped by language (Shah et al., 2024; Hudson-Weems, 2019).

In *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Joy Odafe uses first-person narration to allow her the privilege to express the inner struggle of the protagonist explicitly. The reader is thrown head-on into the main character's thoughts and feelings, embarking on a very personal tour of her experiences of subjugation and finally her self-realisation. The narrative style brings one close to the protagonist and the reader, making such movement by the protagonist from compliance to resistance all that more immediate and powerful. The first-person point of view makes poignantly effective the internal speeches of the main character, a strong means of reflection and resistance. Besides trying to question her family and society-ordained roles, the interior voice becomes, in this case, an area of rebellion against the patriarchy that would want her held back (Fwangyil, 2023).

All those internal monologues in *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* are filled with cultural references that bring into view traditional gender roles expected from the protagonist. These references support the expected societal roles imposed on women but at the same time allow the protagonist to resist those roles (Fwangyil, 2023). Odafe's language in these soliloquies discloses the development of the protagonist's awareness regarding the boundaries that her very own culture has placed upon her. "I was told all my life what I must be, but now I question whether this is who I truly am," the protagonist thinks to herself, signalling her increased drive to abandon the expectations which defined her identity thus far (Odafe, 2022, p.143).

Where the use of language by the protagonist is for passive acceptance, it gradually turns to active questioning of reality, an evident reflection of the development of her self-awareness and resistance to the societal norms which have so far defined her. In *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, even the structure of the narrative reflects the protagonist's journey toward empowerment. As the story progresses, the internal discourse of the protagonist goes on to become firm, standing tall as a reflection of growing confidence in self-defined identity (Fwangyil, 2023). This shift in discourse follows the broader themes of womanism, emphasising self-determination and refusals to act under traditional understanding and constructs of gender. By allowing the internal voice of the protagonist to evolve from one of compliance into one of resistance, Odafe shows how language could be one of the major tools for African women to take back their autonomy and assert their own independence (Hudson-Weems, 2019).

In *His Only Wife*, Peace Adzo Medie uses the third-person narration to explain the levels of power that exist in the relationship involving Afi and other characters, primarily her family and husband. The third-person perspective enables Medie to give an overall view of the broader demands of society that mould the experiences of Afi; at the same time, it narrows down to show how language is used in reinforcing or challenging this pressure (Nasir et al., 2024). The exchange between Afi and her family members exposes the expectations society has put upon her as a female, especially in regard to marriage. Afi must be attentive to her obligations with respect to marrying and the phrasing of her family members reflects the cultural dictations that would have her act a certain way. "You must be a good wife. That is your duty," Afi's mother reminds her, echoing the gender roles that Afi is bound by convention to perform (Medie, 2020, p. 50).

But during the course of the novel, Afi's language moves from one of submission to one of assertion with a growing autonomy and pushing back against the roles prescribed for her. It is this discourse that turns and illustrates how language facilitates possibilities for women to negotiate their positions within the patriarchy. In the discussions Afi holds with other female characters, such as her friend Mawusi, she avails herself of space to reflect on other ways in which she may choose to think of her position as a woman (Nasir et al., 2024). These discussion moments are very empowering in the sense that Afi starts challenging expectations placed upon her and asserts her desires. "Why should I sacrifice my happiness for someone else's expectations?" Afi asks, signalling her growing resistance to the traditional roles that have been assigned to her (Medie, 2020, p. 118).

This is the change in the use of language, which signals Afi on the path of self-determination, using discourse as a means to affirm her free will against societal norms that would reduce her independent spirit. One would also notice in *His Only Wife* how Medie uses dialogue to bring to the fore the power play between Afi and her associates, mostly her husband. At first, Afi is deferential and submissive in her early interactions with her husband and his family as she tries to fill this role handed to her. However, as Afi begins to assert her voice more confidently, her language takes on a much more assertive quality; this is mirrored in the desire to assert her own independence within the marriage (Nasir et al., 2024). This again is most evident in the discourse of the latter end of the novel with regard to Afi's speech towards her husband in which she refuses to accept the terms of their relationship, placing demands to

be treated as his equal "I am not just your wife, but I am an individual and have something to say too" (Medie, 2020, p203).

This change in Afi's speech is testimony that discourse plays an important role in the lives of women in affording them a voice with which to make claims of autonomous agency and selfhood against patriarchal mechanisms of control (Nasir et al., 2024). On the other hand, *Wahala* by Nikki May uses a more colloquial tone; even the conversations carry much weight in portraying the female characters. The novel's discourse reflects tension between tradition and modernity because it deals with how the characters negotiate their identities in this world where cultural expectations often clash with personal aspiration (Gadaka, 2024). The talk shared between characters gives voice, in this light, to frustrations, desires, and ambitions- that space where resistance and empowerment can be voiced. May's *Wahala* draws, importantly, on the role of language and dialogue in shaping women's experiences of their lives and, certainly, their resistance to societal expectations (Shah et al., 2024).

The conversations between three main characters, Ronke, Boo, and Simi, bring up complexities in the tussle of African womanhood in a modern, multicultural world. The frequent discussion of marriage, career, and motherhood is a frequent topic that highlights the societal expectations African women face (Gadaka, 2024). However, such discussions also allow the novel to stage a site for resistance and contestation of these expectations. "We are always expected to be perfect, that is, perfect wives, perfect mothers, perfect everything, but what about what we want?" asks Boo at one time, lamenting how the tension between societal expectations and personal aspiration pulls (May, 2021, p. 152).

The conversational tone in *Wahala* could, therefore, be located as a certain kind of female solidarity which resists expectations from society. May uses the dialogue of the characters to show how their relationships with each other are sources of strength and empowerment. Conjointly, they share their experiences, give advice, and support each other in their struggles through conversations they have with each other (Gadaka, 2024). The focus on female solidarity is exemplary of the following: through womanism, there is a belief in the importance of community and mutual support to overcome societal pressures. In this sense, the conversation between the characters in *Wahala* gradually becomes a space of resistance,

resisting those binding patriarchal norms of defining one's identity, which guarantees self-determination within cultural and personal contexts (Shah et al., 2024).

4.5.3. The Significance and Implications of Womanism

The final aim of the study was to outline the significance and implications of womanism as narrated in *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala*. The findings paint a picture that Womanism has been significant in offering African women a space to rebel against patriarchal expectations about gender, demanding autonomy and even offering and developing bonds of solidarity with other women. These novels, through the voyages of female protagonists amidst their relations with the society surrounding them, serve to highlight ways in which womanism furnishes African women with ways in which they might navigate and resist such societal pressures that come to restrain their potentials. (Shah et al., 2024).

In *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, the meaning of womanism is brought out in its potential to challenge deeply entrenched cultural norms that define women's worth by their ability to conform to traditional roles. Odafe uses the protagonist's journey from subjugation to self-realisation as a strong metaphor for change brought about by womanism (Fwangyil, 2023). The novel identifies education and self-awareness as primary tools that can empower women with the potential to question and resist the ways of society that stand in the way of their autonomy. This helps her become a symbol of the struggles by all African women in reclaiming their identities outside the restrictive limits of patriarchal expectation mark her growth into questioning and challenging the roles that are placed upon her by her family and the community. In line with the womanist theory, it goes to reiterate how much effort African women put into finding places where they can redefine and make independent decisions despite the traditional judgement by the society (Fwangyil, 2023).

Resistance to societal norms in *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* brings out the salient experiences of women to address injustices they face. It is in this budding consciousness about her place within society that she starts to question the societal expectations that have so far defined her identity and will eventually discard those expectations for her ambitions. This transformation constitutes the very heart of womanism's emphasis on self-determination and the denial of gender roles which would compress women into subservient

positions (Fwangyil, 2023). Odafen's development of the protagonist's journey brings out the power of womanism in empowering African women not only to question such norms but also to rise up against them in a spirited fight which redefined their position in society. That is a lot similar to Walker's idea of womanism it encourages African women to be proud of their strength, to stand up for their independence, and to cast away cultural expectations that hold them back from achieving their full potential (Fwangyil, 2023).

Similarly, in Peace Adzo Medie's *His Only Wife*, the meaning of womanism is elaborated through the journey of its main character, Afi, toward her independence (Nasir et al., 2024). The life of Afi was patterned after traditional gender roles up to the beginning of the book-an arranged marriage she was forced to accept. Afi acts in ways that first let her give in to cultural expectations, societal pressures many African women face, and to follow the roles which society gives them with no question. However, over time, the character of Afi builds herself up and then starts speaking for what she wants and refutes those structures that bring her down. This serves but as one example of the changes which prove that womanism imparts strength upon women to fight against patriarchal structures and shout for their independence (Nasir et al., 2024; Hudson-Weems, 2019).

The idea of personal choice and self-determination is one of the most integral in womanism, which Medie writes about in *His Only Wife*. A key founding block of womanism rests on the idea that a woman should have the right of self-naming without fear of what others may think. Saying no to the arranged marriage and choosing her own path, she says, I should be entitled to choice and decision according to my ideals and life objectives, rather than giving in to pressures exerted by social influences (Nasir et al., 2024). Such portrayal of womanism is in line with Hudson-Weems (2019) conceptualization of the framework, relating to both the gendered and cultural dimensions of women's oppression. Afi's denial of typical traditional gender roles represents a direct attack on the cultural ways seeking to confine her; thus, it represents the broader implication of womanism in empowering African women in taking back their autonomous power.

Apart from challenging gender roles, *His Only Wife* addresses the cultural relevance of marriage in African societies and the pressures that weigh upon women to comply. This change of Afi holds much significance because it, to a great extent, symbolises a form of

commentary on the parameters that women may have to manoeuvre in order to fit within cultural constructs while mobilising their individual independence. Such a rendition by Medie of Afi shows that womanism is not only about the negation of patriarchal norms but also about imbuing women with the power to challenge such cultural practices that justify these very norms. This is in line with the intersectional approach that womanism tries to bring into play with the multi-layered oppression-seasoned life that African women go through: gendered, cultural, and societal (Nasir et al., 2024).

In *Wahala*, Nikki May furthers the broader implication of womanism through the female characters' relationships to one another. The novel strongly underlines community and solidarity between and amongst women. The characters-Ronke, Boo, and Simi-face the challenges of African womanhood in a modern, multicultural society where the pressures of marriage, career, and cultural identity can weigh on them all (Gadaka, 2024). In the company of each other, the women find strength and empowerment through shared experiences-a function of womanism that fosters collective action and mutual support. May's representation of female solidarity befits the womanist idea that one's struggle for liberation shares concerns with other women, emerging from shared burdens derived from society (Shah et al., 2024).

Where mutual support and collective action could advance womanism to easily spark empowerment within these relationships, as represented in *Wahala*. May uses the source of the characters' friendships as their strength and resilience, enabling them to challenge the societal pressures that are placed on them in efforts to narrow their ambitions. This notion of community and solidarity reflects the womanist emphasis on collective action as a means of resisting the societal norms that confine women (Gadaka, 2024). May shows how relationships between characters can serve as a means of overcoming personal and cultural adversities. This emphasis on female solidarity becomes all the more important in the African context, where women are often plagued by various layers of oppression based on race, gender, and class (Shah et al., 2024).

Other meanings of womanism in *Wahala* relate to the fact that it is capable of responding to specific challenges African women face every day in balancing cultural expectations and personal desire. Common experiences shared by the characters showed the intersectionality

of womanism in negotiating life issues like marriage, family, and career between traditional and modern settings (Shah et al., 2024). This dramatisation by May reflects the wider womanist objective of establishing support networks wherein women can help one another negotiate such complexities. In emphasising community, *Wahala* shows that womanism is not only a form of individual resistance but also one of nurturing solidarity between and among women, creating spaces wherein women can support each other through their journeys of self-emancipation (Gadaka, 2024).

4.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter summarises the findings and discussions for this study, which have been summarised into three key objectives: the portrayal of womanism, the representation of women at the discourse level, and what womanism means and implies as represented in *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala*. Analysis through the three novels demonstrated how womanism was constructed as an influential framework that questions traditional gender roles, advances personal autonomy, and builds networks of solidarity among African women.

In *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, Odafen uses the protagonist's voyage from subjugation to self-realisation as a metaphor to depict the transformative potential of womanism. This was underlined through the development of the importance of education and self-awareness as tools of resistance against societal norms, which reflected the larger womanist mission of taking active responsibility in empowering African women to take up new roles and assert their own independence. Her struggle against the deep-seated traditional expectations demonstrates the womanist potential in making African women question and rebel against all expectations of society.

His Only Wife by Peace Adzo Medie unravelled womanism through the prism of personal autonomy, whereby the transformation of Afi meant the renegation of oppressive cultural practices. The novel identifies choice and self-determination as basic rights, within which womanism helps provide African women with the tools to resist patriarchal structures and assert their independence. This representation is in line with womanist agency and the rejection of restrictive gender roles, showing how women can resist both cultural and gendered modes of oppression.

Nikki May's *Wahala* accentuated the communal aspect of womanism, emphasising the relationship that existed between the female characters in the novel. Community and solidarity, according to what was related in the novel, are key in dealing with the pressures which society puts on individuals. This mutual support among women is enough to see them sail through the intricacies that are characteristic of African womanhood in a modern, multicultural society. In this capture of female solidarity, May continued to reiterate the womanist belief in collective action as a mode of resistance and empowerment.

Overall, this chapter demonstrated how womanism, as represented in these novels, plays a critical role in the empowerment of African women to resist traditional gender roles, claim their autonomy, and forge solidarity with each other. The findings and discussions truly reflected the intersectional nature of womanism: the challenges that African women face at the junctures of race, sex, and culture were addressed, while pathways were illuminated toward empowerment through individual and collective agency.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RCOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion based on the findings and discussion in Chapter 4 of the study, taking into consideration three key objectives that were stated. The findings highlight how womanism is expressed in the three novels: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala*. The expanded meaning of womanism in the abilities of African women to question traditional expectations about their gender through the expression of autonomy and the promotion of solidarities. It also gives recommendations that might help further research, critical literary analysis, and practical applications that foster the empowerment of African women. Each of the subtopics deals with one specific objective of the study, and based on these conclusions, recommendations can be drawn that might be of use to practitioners.

5.2. Conclusions

5.2.1. Subtopic One: Depiction of Womanism in the Selected Novels (Objective One)

The first objective of this research was to establish the portrayal of womanism within the novels *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala*. The findings of this study established that all these novels have expressed womanism as a framework through which deep-seated traditional gender roles are challenged in the advancement of African womanist empowerment. Through the stories of their female protagonists, the authors show how women work around patriarchal systems and defy societal norms that stunt their growth. Womanism, with regard to this theory, is not a backlash against patriarchy but an avenue through which African women take back their power and begin to grapple with their lives in their cultural and social contexts. The novels span between a focus on the journey toward self-discovery as individualist womanist resistance to a focus on the strength of female solidarity as a group form of resistance.

Joy Odafe's protagonist navigated her way through a journey of finding herself amidst this struggle in the book *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*. She learned how to realise her identity through education and self-awareness in order to fight against patriarchal norms. These are one's problems with herself put on her by life, family, and community. She sees this more as an awakening-an awakening in which education opens new worlds for her and gives her the

wherewithal to rise above the old rules imposed on her. This is in line with one of the most important principles of womanism, a philosophy based on self-determination, or a concept wherein the woman can define herself without the constraints of society. Odafe's story illustrates how personal transformation and empowerment are never individual accomplishments but mirror a larger denial of gendered oppression, which has been perpetrated through cultural behaviours.

One may say the same with *His Only Wife*, as Peace Adzo Medie does underline in it the imperative of personal autonomy and self-determination in order for the individual to resist oppressive cultural practices. Her protagonist, Afi, starts off her life as a compliant figure, compelled by family and society into an arranged marriage. However, Afi gradually but surely rejects the roles imposed upon her as she grows even more confident in herself, her desires, and her aspirations; therefore, she portrays how womanism can empower a woman to assert her autonomy. Medie focuses on the transformation within Afi that increases, little by little, to heighten how womanism gives women an avenue for autonomy and at the same time puts them on the road of struggling against patriarchal structures.

While other novels have created the impression that an individualist quest for freedom and strength is the goal, Nikki May's *Wahala* underlines community and solidarity as sources of strength for African women. The female relationships in *Wahala* bring in an example of how women can give one another strength to combat societal pressures, indicating thereby that empowerment is not only an individual but a collectively shared pursuit. Put together, these novels reveal the multi-dimensionalities of womanism through individual resistances, personal growth, and female bonding for gender equality and challenging the patriarchal notion.

5.2.2. Subtopic Two: Representation of Women at the Discourse Level (Objective Two)

The second objective of the paper was to analyse the level of discourse in which women are represented in novels such as *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala*. Indeed, the findings have proved that the ability of language, narrative structure, and dialogue plays a decisive role in shaping the representation of womanhood and struggle against their conventional role in society. While both novels do this through different techniques, their attempts are to show the complexity of African womanhood for readers to

negotiate how women navigate around external pressures and internal conflicts. Discourse, in this context, becomes a tool of oppression and resistance as it arms the character with some sort of means to resist the conventional role assigned to them by society. Through carefully constructed dialogues, internal monologues, and shifts in narrative voice, the novels realise a nuanced picture of how language configures women's experiences and through which women may enforce submission to or resist patriarchal normativity.

Tomorrow I Become a Woman by Odafen employs first-person narration in order to illustrate the way the protagonist fights against the stereotype of society. In internal speeches throughout the book, the main character becomes highly self-conscious from reflecting on how cultural standards turn her into the stereotypical female. First-person narration puts the reader in a position of believing that he or she is traveling alongside the character of the novel. It underlines her growing resistance against the imposed limitation. The novel is illustrative of the tension between submission and resistance through discourses whereby the main character had to navigate her yearning for independence amidst family and societal pressures. Odafen illustrates through these internal dialogues how language is a means to self-reflection and eventually self-empowerment.

Through the third-person narration and dialogue in *His Only Wife*, Peace Adzo Medie is able to point out the power relations that go on in Afi's life. The languages of Afi's conversations with her family and husband at first are submissive because she is trying to live up to the expectation that a wife is supposed to be. Once Afi is able to start asserting her autonomy, the text and she change as her sense of self as an independent agent increases. The conversations with Afi and the other women, particularly her friend Mawusi, become a discursive space in which she attempts to try on different ways of thinking about being a woman. These exchanges only enumerate ways in which dialogism has been inscribing Afi's resistance to the cultural logic that has controlled her life hitherto. Medie's use of language becomes a function of discourse, reinforcing but simultaneously subverting the patriarchal structures and delimiting women like Afi to reclaim their voices and their autonomy.

In *Wahala*, Nikki May employs a conversational tone and dialogues to show the complexities of modern African womanhood, which has been torn between cultural expectations and personal aspirations. Such dialogues in the novel are a space for articulation and expression

of frustration and desires of the female characters, resisting much societal pressure. Their discussions of marriage, career, and identity demonstrate tensions between tradition and modernity as they negotiate their roles as African women in a multicultural society. May's portrayal of discourse points to language as central in the shaping of women's experiences, providing them with the means to contest norms in society. The struggle that emanates from the character's voice is, at the same time, a tool for collective empowerment, cementing the womanist belief in community power and women in solidarity. In the three novels discussed here, discourse is portrayed as a space where women can negotiate their roles, resist oppression, and, finally, demand their independence.

5.2.3. Subtopic Three: Significance and Implications of Womanism (Objective Three)

The third objective of this research was to assess the meaning and implication of womanism as represented in the three novels: *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala*. It has been deduced that womanism constitutes an important platform on which African women challenge the hegemony of traditional gender relations, demand their independence, and forge solidarity with other women. Each novel herein represents womanism as a tool through which women navigate through complicated pressures from society for survival, while reclaiming their identity. Through the journeys of the female protagonists in these works, womanism shows its transformation in challenging and rejecting patriarchal strictures for self-empowerment at personal and collective levels.

In *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, the protagonist's journey is in furtherance of the general womanist objective of self-determination, particularly in contexts that put very strong limits on the choices of women. The novel reveals that education and self-awareness are powerful weapons against traditional expectations of female gender roles. The gradual development of self-worth and personal agency in the protagonist essentially proves womanism's relevance to African women for deconstructing the societal prescriptions that confine them. Her journey of compliance to self-realisation underlines the central tenet of womanism—the right of African women to determine their own life courses in spite of cultural and family pressures to fall into the traditional roles of wife and mother. This is how *Tomorrow I Become a Woman* illustrates how womanism gives African women the tools with which they can reclaim their independence and fight against patriarchal structures.

The fact that Afi refuses to participate in an oppressive cultural practice in *His Only Wife* efficaciously shows how womanism is one tool which can very well equip women with the ability to fight back against patriarchal structures and demand their autonomy. An early part of the book shows how Afi is being forced into marriage, and this shows how the social expectations placed on her ultimately cut down her options over the longer term. As the novella progresses, however, Afi becomes more confident, and she thus begins to make some personal decisions toward her future rather than being in control of her family and society. The change fits with the womanist view of freedom and choice for each person. The fact that she struggled to get herself out of an arranged marriage which her parents had forced upon her without asking her opinion, projects how womanism gives power to African women to fight against cultural practices, which stand as obstacles toward women's equality. It also goes to show from Afi's story how womanism gives women the power to challenge patriarchal structures.

In *Wahala*, female relationships denote that community and solidarity are very essential, showing that mutual support empowers women to manoeuvre through societal pressures. May has dramatised the friendships between Ronke, Boo, and Simi as a source of strength and empowerment that enables them to face the trials they have to go through as African women in a modern, multicultural society. The womanist belief in collective action and mutual support is perhaps the underpinning of this novel, which plays out in the characters' navigations through the ways in which balances must be continually struck between cultural expectations and personal aspirations. It is through their shared experiences, mutual encouragement, and character development that women find these relationships as a means to empowerment in *Wahala*. This depiction of female solidarity underlines the collective nature of womanist empowerment, reinforcing the thought that women can uplift and empower one another in their struggle for independence and equality.

As such, womanism generally applies to these novels as a way in which women recover themselves through the use of premises, such as about a woman's autonomy, to rally collective empowerment. It is in the respective journeys of the protagonists through *Tomorrow I Become a Woman*, *His Only Wife*, and *Wahala* that womanism aids the women of Africa in challenging patriarchal structures, rejecting oppressive cultural practices, and building bonds among themselves. By illustrating how womanism can be both personal and

collective tool of empowerment, these novels illustrate the full potential of womanism as a revolution that might successfully confront the challenges facing African women at traditional and modern levels.

5.3. Recommendations

5.3.1. Subtopic One: Depiction of Womanism in the Selected Novels (Objective One)

Based on the findings of this research about the portrayal of womanism, it would be prudent for future works in critical analysis to go on to closely analyse how womanism is portrayed in contemporary African literature. Scholars should track up-and-coming themes and trends in the usage of literature by African women writers to subdue prior standards of gender roles and in furthering their causes toward empowerment.

Educators and literary critics can use these novels to supplement curricula to help further students in their understanding of the intersectional challenges faced by African women, as well as the means by which womanism opens up an avenue for resistance and self-empowerment. This would expand the discussion on African feminism and deepen the readership concerning womanist theory.

5.3.2. Subtopic Two: Representation of Women at the Discourse Level (Objective Two)

Further research is needed at the discourse level in terms of the use of language, narrative structure, and dialogue to investigate intricacies and nuances of African womanhood. Other works of African literature could be analysed for the very same use of those elements to portray women's push-backs against societal norms.

Educators and policymakers could also emphasise how important the role of language is as a tool in shaping gender perception and in advancing female empowerment. Encouraging African women to speak their voices, both in literary and social contexts, would reinforce the primacy of discourse in changing patriarchy into an assertion of individual agency.

5.3.3. Subtopic Three: Significance and Implications of Womanism (Objective Three)

Considering womanism is an important aspect in ensuring empowerment and solidarity amongst African women, it is vital that community-based initiatives and organisations aimed at ensuring gender equality consider adopting principles of womanism. Programmes meant to further help African women assert themselves through autonomy, education, and

leadership positions would greatly benefit from this womanist approach that emulates self-determination and mutual support.

Moreover, future research should also continue to explore, in depth, the implications of womanism for addressing the challenges at the intersection that African women face, especially regarding balancing cultural expectations with personal aspirations.

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Appendices

ECA



NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES

RESEARCHER/SUPERVISOR DETAILS
Title (Prof/Dr/Mr/Ms/Other): Ms Full names/surname of researcher: Toini Itsuwe Amadhila NUST staff or student number: 2231115606 Contact details Work: +264812889626 Mobile: 0813843514 E-mail address: toinii@amadhila.gmail.com University: Namibia University of science and Technology Faculty: Faculty of Commerce, Human Sciences and Education Department: Department of Communication and Languages
Title of research project: Investigating womanism in Odafen's Tomorrow I Become a Woman, Medie's His only wife and May 's Wahala
NUST students (indicate degree programme): Master of English and Applied Linguistics
Supervisor (Title, name and surname): Prof Max Mhene

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	Yes	NS*	No	ACTION REQUIRED
1. Familiarity with Ethical codes of conduct				
As researcher, I have familiarised myself with the professional code(s) of ethics and guidelines for Ethically responsible research relevant to my field of study as specified in the list herewith attached, AND the policy for the assurance and promotion of Ethically accountable research at NUST	yes			If YES: Continue with the checklist. If NS/NO: Researcher must do so before proceeding.
2. The proposed research: (Proceed with the whole of Section 2)				
a) Involves gathering information directly from human subjects (individuals or groups) (e.g. by means of questionnaires, interviews, observation of subjects or working with personal data)				If YES: Continue with the checklist. If NO: This checklist process does not apply to the proposed research, except if 2 (b) applies.
b) Involves gathering information directly from companies, corporations, organisations, NGOs, government departments etc. that is not available in the public domain				If YES: Continue with the checklist. If NO: This checklist process does not apply to the proposed research.

DESKTOP STUDIES

DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER

I hereby declare that I will conduct my research in compliance with the professional code(s) of ethics and guidelines for Ethically responsible research relevant to my field of study as specified in the list herewith attached, and the 'Framework policy for the assurance and promotion of Ethically accountable research at the Namibia University of Science and Technology,' even if my research poses minimal or low Ethical risk.

<u>Toini Itsuwe Amadhila</u> Name of Researcher	<u>tamadhila</u> Signature	<u>16/07/2024</u> Date
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SUPERVISORS

<u>Prof MAX MHENE</u> Name of Supervisor (if applicable)	 Signature	<u>16/07/2024</u> Date
 Name of co-supervisor (if applicable)	 Signature	 Date

Confirmation letter



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Faculty of Commerce, Human
Sciences and Education**

Department of Communication
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09 August 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Namibia University of Science and Technology offers its compliments to your esteemed organisation and would like to avail the following to your kind attention:

Toini Itsuwe Amadhila, student number **2231115606**, is a Masters of English and Applied Linguistics student studying at Namibia University of Science and Technology. The student is required to undertake a research project as partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master's degree programme. She intends to carry out research on the following topic under the supervision of **Prof. Max Mhene**.

Investigating Womanism in Odafen's Tomorrow I Become a Woman, Medie's His Only Wife and May 's Wahala

On behalf of the Department of Communication and Languages, I humbly request your good offices to assist the bearer in enhancing her academic endeavours. I wish to assure you that the information/data provided by your offices will only be for academic purposes and in strict confidence.

I thank you in advance for your usual cooperation. Please be assured of my highest consideration.

Scholarly yours,

Dr Aletta M. Hautemo
Masters of English and Applied Linguistics Programme Coordinator
Department of Communication and Languages