

RESEARCH ARTICLE **Section:** *Literary & Cultural Studies*

# Feminism As A Tool For Social Engineering And Change In Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's Children Of The Eagle

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explicates the use of feminism as a tool for social engineering as outlined in Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle*. It examines the propagation of identified feminist tools, which results in the female characters coming out of the confines as they transform the stereotypes that surround them into liberating modes of freedom. The postcolonial feminist theory serves to underscore the way the protagonist's gender and class aided their subjugation, marginalization, and oppression. Ten excerpts were purposively sampled from our selected text. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling that is based on the aim of the study. This paper affirms that in order to achieve change, women need to create symbols for the new set of relationships they are seeking to institutionalize in a particular society. To accomplish this change, it is imperative for women to perceive and pursue the possibilities of altering their structural position, to find out the extent to which they are willing to work for changes in laws and other political structures that affect women. Furthermore, it is important for women to work towards establishing an essential feminist agenda that is all-embracing. This agenda should encourage women to explore the opportunities that abound in negotiation, dialogue, economic independence, complementarity, self-discovery, female bonding, and mentoring for overall growth and development.

**KEYWORDS:** Postcolonial, Feminism, Social Engineering, Change, Women.

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## 1.1 Introduction

The concept of the recreated female character is an important trend in Nigerian feminist literature, which reveals an ideal world for women in Nigerian society. This is mainly because female identity has been defined by so many socio-cultural misconceptions, and feminists believe that the acceptance of this identity results in self-effacement and inferiorization.

Adimora-Ezeigbo's text selected for this paper is at the forefront of identity formation and re-writing of history. This writer employs the use of fiction as a site for the emancipation of female characters from cultural, social, and psychological oppression. Thus, men and women are enjoined to articulate a positive image and work towards transcendence by pursuing social change. To achieve this change, the writer points out that the female recipient of a literary text has significant power if she exercises her freedom to reject the rhetoric previously applied to her. The instrument of data collection is qualitative research using textual analysis of the text selected for this study. The data collected from the prescribed text reiterates the attempts made by our selected writer to modify and change the limiting and stereotypical traditions of the societies depicted. Consequently, the characters take practical steps to evolve towards moving out of parochialism. The text selected for this paper is Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle*.

Adimora-Ezeigbo's trilogy is made up of *Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols*, and *Children of the Eagle*. *Children of the Eagle*, selected for this paper, wraps up the trilogy. Osita Ezenwanebe describes *Children of the Eagle* as a feminist novel of social criticism and reconstruction. Prominent among the social issues recreated in the novel is the reality of gender inequality and female oppression that exists in Nigerian society. It exposes the social conventions, cultural mores, and traditional practices that oppress and marginalize women, especially in the Eastern part of Nigeria. The novel also celebrates their struggle for freedom and survival (113). The perspective of social reconstruction is the greatest achievement of the author, for she is able to move beyond mere exposition of the social crimes against women to powerfully demonstrate through the lives of the main characters the way out of such denigration (115).

Similarly, Abugu Benjamin submits that the focus of the novel is on the Eagle women who form its central characters; they are ambitious and determined women. Like the eagle, which is seen as a bird of distinction, with an extraordinary capacity to soar into the sky, these women have distinguished themselves in their various professions and are poised to move further up the social ladder, in spite of barriers imposed by men in a society where women are treated with disdain. The author presents striking female characters referred to as 'children of the eagle' and uses them to produce strong arguments in support of equal rights and opportunities for men and women in society. The selected text presents protagonists who struggle to align their multiple identities with a view of underscoring the impact of these feminist tools on African futurism. The study emphasizes the role that both women and men have to play in order to attain liberation and social engineering. These characters have come to realize, as Butler recommends, that;

"The one place for agency in a world constrained by hierarchy is in the small opportunities we have to oppose gender roles every time they take shape" (quoted in Parker 346).

According to Adimora-Ezeigbo, positive change is creative and constructive, so women must also accept that they need a change of attitude. This agitation by women can be reached when they explore, imbibe, and use the tools of feminism outlined in this paper. The value of this study lies in its topicality

of discourse and the application of the chosen theoretical framework to Nigerian feminist texts.

The change this study makes reference to is also linked to the manner in which feminism stirs up a reaction, an assertion of being on the rights and status of women. This is because literature has been a worthy tool in interrogating the female condition. The paper points out that by deploying the major tenets of feminism, this writer advances women's cause for recognition and relevance. This corroborates Helen Chukwuma's stance that;

“A pattern of women's assertion has emerged and has impacted the canon of African literature”  
(1).

Our focus in this paper is on gender concerns, and our selection of a feminist text is based on the premise that it is appropriate for unearthing gender issues. This view is tenable from the call made by our selected author that women must be resilient in pursuing new gender ideologies and change as emerging social relations require. Previous studies, such as that of Beatrice Okechukwu, have explored the essence of social change, which refers to any significant alteration over time in behaviour patterns and cultural values and norms, but this study goes a step further to dwell on social engineering as it is more holistic and futuristic.

Social Engineering, as adopted by this study, involves the use of centralized planning in an attempt to manage social change and regulate the future development and behaviour of society. The change this study outlines is the ability of women to transcend the obstacles in their paths as they criticize and question the traditional and cultural norms that have structured gender relations in the past. This study, therefore, elucidates the deep yearning in the lives of the female characters for change and their willingness to work for changes in the structures that affect women. Thus, the women are seen searching for ideas and strategies as well as implementing them in order to achieve the alteration of these structural positions in society.

The quest to improve the place of women in society is not limited to female writers. It dates back to the efforts of male feminists such as Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and, in more recent times, to J.P. Clark's *Wives Revolt*. In both instances, we are presented with women's extraordinary resolve to engender change in certain areas of their lives and their relationships. The quest for change is often expressed in the form of protest against the various socio-cultural and traditional obstacles to the African woman's self-actualization. These obstacles include patriarchy, economic and political subjugation, various forms of ideological indoctrination, and the problems associated with intra-women conflicts. To buttress this, Iniobong Uko points out that the Nigerian feminist novel takes a new direction: a critical interrogation of not just the woman's issue but also that of the socio-political struggles in the nation. This is evident in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle*, which offers glimpses of hope and triumph.

The aim of this study is to interrogate how the emergence of the identified feminist tools can propagate social engineering and change. This paper offers an avenue for crucial re-evaluation, especially considering the fact that our society is fast changing and that most basic assumptions about women have taken a new outlook. The needed change is for the oppressive conditions working against women to cease. The woman's value in society must surpass her biological reproductive capability, as this limits her self-actualization and stifles her talents. The paper also sets out to interrogate identity politics and its various manifestations in the selected text. It furthermore reiterates the need to pursue emancipation and uphold social engineering through integration and repudiation of gendered practices.

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework

The ancestry of post-colonialism can be traced to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in French in 1961 and voicing what might be called 'cultural resistance' to France's African Empire. Fanon argues that the first step for colonized people in finding a voice and an identity is to reclaim their own past. For centuries, the colonizing power has devalued the nation's past, seeing its pre-colonial period as a pre-civilized limbo, or even as a historical void. He then adds that, if the first step towards a post-colonial perspective is to reclaim one's own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past had been devalued (Peter Barry 192). Scholars such as Edward Said, Bill Ashcroft, and Homi Bhabha, among others, played significant roles in the development of this theory.

Post-colonial feminism is a subset of feminism. It seeks the visibility of women and feminist agitators in the developing countries, emphasizing that these women's stories need to be heard. Notable postcolonial feminists include Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Mohanty, Yvonne Vera, Cherrie Moraga, and Radhika Mohammed. Post-colonial feminist theory rejects the 'universalization' of the female experience. It makes room for gender activist from "other" places and other cultures to advocate for gender equality in their own way and on their own terms.

Post-colonial feminists seek to restructure and redirect the feminist conversation to be more inclusive of previously ignored individuals. Essentially, Postcolonial feminism points out that there is no homogenized female experience; therefore, all female experiences are worth narrating. It brings to the fore the place of historical, cultural, and social differences (Moraga np). The theory aspires to bring to light the typicality of women of third-world nations, and this paper proffers ways of ameliorating these problems by downplaying the differences and engaging the use of these feminist tools to seek balance, mutual respect, and harmony in society.

Post-colonial women writers from Africa, for example, keenly textualize women's identities through their fictional narratives, drama, and poetry. Identity is a dynamic and continually changing process. It is not static, as it continues to be modified and finally becomes generally accepted with time. Some of the factors that lead people to call for change are social division based on class, gender, or ethnicity. There is a need to identify and formulate specific paradigms that respect the positive values in our different cultures, but at the same time are not blind to new experiences.

## 1.3 Feminist Tools In The Novel

Feminist tools are a range of resources that spotlight feminist realities. They go beyond resisting oppression to show us what a world without domination, oppression, and supremacy can look like. The feminist tools outlined by this study are discussed in the next part of this paper.

### 1.3.1 Negotiation

The discovery that opens up a discussion on the way to achieving true womanhood devoid of gender bias, or at the very least, a very manageable gender bias, is the business of Nego-feminism. Nnaemaka sees it as "the feminism of negotiation; no ego feminism" (360). The cornerstone of the theory is with issues of soft-peddalling in the game of antagonism with (wo) menfolk so as to recognize a more rewarding equal partnering. Nego-feminism surrounds issues of peace, conflict management and resolution, negotiation, complementarity, give and take, and collaboration (130). Negotiation is strategic because it helps to resolve an issue in a way that both parties are carried along, and it also requires the parties involved to be flexible in their demands. This is because the path to this change is fraught with tension since transitions represent points of conflict and change. The women express their desire for equitable

change through more assertive actions that will ensure gender balanced approaches. Negotiation in this context draws attention to the feminism of compromise, contending with the multiple aspects of patriarchy on the continent and dealing with this in an African-specific way. When negotiation thrives, men are not seen as enemies to be crushed but partners with whom women should join hands in order to forge a better society.

Adimora-Ezeigbo exposes the predicament in the lives of her protagonists, whose troubles are initiated by the conflict between personal ambition and sanctioned social standards of conduct. Linking this to the ability of the woman to negotiate, we see how Amara, a character in *Children of the Eagle*, negotiates motherhood as an independent choice and not an imposed institution. For Amara, motherhood should be an experience of choice, not an imposition. This refutes instances where motherhood is used as an institution to domesticate women. In like manner, Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* condemns the idealization and romanticisation of motherhood by juxtaposing the real experience of motherhood with the myth of African motherhood.

The Okwara sisters also negotiate with the elders to erect permanent boundary markers to secure their father's land through a well-worded letter, as women can't approach Ogunano Ezeala. These characters negotiate identities that are neither essential nor unified but rather multiple. African women's negotiation of motherhood, feminism, marriage, and culture forms the crux of the novels of our selected writer. Women need to negotiate a path of freedom and gender equity as they learn from history. In *Children of the Eagle*, Adimora-Ezeigbo writes that;

“Those who choose to ignore history, consigning the past to the river of forgetfulness, cannot benefit from the lessons that history teaches. Consequently, they will repeat the mistakes of the past” (337).

This means that women must learn from the mistakes of the past so that they can pave a path of growth and motivate each other to strive for a gender balanced world. When these virtues are annexed and complemented with good education, women will go places despite all the odds militating against the attainment of their full potential. The female characters in our selected work, such as *Eaglewoman*, *Ogonna*, and *Obioma*, all realize that most people treat women the way they do because their vision is clouded by misconceptions and ignorance.

Therefore, it is the duty of women to negotiate their way towards correcting this misguided view. Adimora-Ezeigbo's negotiation of the institutions of marriage, motherhood, and career can be viewed as an important part of the international dialogue on the ongoing formulation of the new place of women. Consequently, she points out that a well-guided, assertive move that negotiates through patriarchal structures and assumptions towards liberation is capable of giving women social change in their various societies.

### **1.3.2. Dialogue**

Dialogue is a necessary tool in helping feminists think through and unmask complicated systems of privilege and oppression. Indeed, it is largely through dialogue that we can challenge ourselves and others to think differently about the world. In this context, dialogue is considered a mutual exchange of knowledge based on one's experiences in the world. Andrew Hernandez opines that dialogue is;

“a mutual exchange of knowledge based on one's experiences in and of the world. Through such collaboration, people are able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge” (np).



This is because through dialogue, we can produce and reproduce social norms; achieve change and social engineering by creating a just society, and fight against oppression. Dialogue also reveals that marginalized groups can effectively struggle to make the structure of society less oppressive. Our selected writer has succinctly affirmed that privileged groups produce the prejudicial ideas and systems that benefit them while marginalizing others, and that there is a need to change this.

Effective feminist dialogue, therefore, should be a collaborative experience tasked with the rejection of anti-oppressive knowledge and practices. Through dialogue, we can reveal that systems of oppression are complicated. This complication appears to be deliberate, in order to render them less visible. This is evident in the manner in which social discourses privilege certain groups over others, and this privilege is meant to remain invisible. This helps us to explore how gender and sexuality intersect as well as how privilege strategically elevates certain groups while marginalizing others. To achieve effective dialogue, women must end the culture of silence; silence in this context represents;

“the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy, that form of social organization in which males assume power and create for females an inferior status” (D’Almeida np).

Adimora-Ezeigbo sets out to examine, among other things, how gender and sexuality intersect as well as how privilege strategically elevates certain groups while marginalizing others. Dialogue creates an avenue for people to reveal their ideological presumptions, which have been difficult to destabilize, especially in the long term. Hernandez goes further to note that dialogue encourages openness and helps us develop our thoughts. It is an important tool in social engineering because it is a call to action. It calls us to increase our mutual understanding of systems of privilege and oppression and cultivate attitudes and practices oriented towards social justice. Dialogue helps us to increase understanding of and with others. Thus, when feminists engage in dialogue, it should be vested in social justice, in revealing and destabilizing systems of oppression, and this will lead to the achievement of affirmative action and success.

Adimora-Ezeigbo’s snail-sense theory encourages women to imbibe the culture of engaging in active and productive dialogue. She believes that just like the snail, women can renegotiate their way when faced with danger. Adimora-Ezeigbo sheds more light on the yet to be well harnessed value of communication in every relationship, particularly in marriage. For marriage to succeed, it is important to keep the communication channels open. She makes reference to ‘Nkolika’—dialogue is the greatest antidote to a bruised relationship (COE 131). A vivid illustration is made with reference to Nnenna and Afam’s family. They have a shrine where dialogue is worshipped. Their relationship has reaped bountifully from it, and it has benefited immensely from it. Being able to talk to each other meaningfully at crucial periods in their life is the lifeline to their successful marriage.

This paper affirms that silence needs to be broken so that reconciliation can take place because autonomy, not control, will give us a progressive society. This can be achieved and sustained through dialogue and mutual understanding because it allows us to leverage trust, which builds massive influence and results in better communication channels. This implies that justice and equity should be maintained between men and women in society, and one way of getting this done is through engaging men and women in valuable dialogue.

### 1.3.3 Complementarity

We stated in our previous discussion on dialogue that women deserve a voice and locus as they contribute to the advancement of their families and society in general. They decry situations where gender roles and relationships are strictly circumscribed by norms and traditions that limit women. They emphasize that if women are to play a complementary role in national development, a gender friendly theory is required.

The focus of complementarity is that the same standard should be used for both males and females in order to refute patriarchy and misogyny. This is because whether misogyny is overt or subtle, it is abhorrent to the development of women as individuals and to the progress of complementarity. Catherine Acholonu's motherism emphasizes the essence of complementarity. It involves the dynamics of ordering, reordering, creating structures, building, and rebuilding in cooperation with Mother Nature at all levels of human endeavour. Complementarity is, therefore, accommodating and mutually beneficial. Adimora-Ezeigbo makes a profound feminist statement when she states that;

“By creating man and woman to live on earth, the creator intended to strike a balance between the feminine and the masculine in harmonious communion” (COE 137).

One factor that has deterred the achievement of gender complementarity in most societies is Gender Oppression. Iris Young defines Gender Oppression;

“as a pattern in the institutional organization of society in which men have some degree of unreciprocated authority or control over women, and/or men have greater control than women over the operations of institutions (73).

Gender Oppression resonates in conceptions of masculinity defined in terms of characteristics valued by society and in conceptions of femininity defined in terms of whatever is useful or pleasing to men. In response to this, Adimora-Ezeigbo sets out to define the astute assertiveness of the female characters. Her ultimate aim is to portray a society upheld by the virtue of togetherness, which recognizes the value of women. As such, she does not outrightly offer a one-sided and flat view of the male characters. It is pertinent to note that part of the change this writer achieves is in the presentation of the male characters. She has gone past the underrepresentation of male characters often seen in much of female writings in Africa as found in the works of Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, and Zaynab Alkali, to mention but a few. Instead, she portrays considerate male characters such as Obiatu, Osai, and Pa Joel, who are supportive of women, as evident in their interactions with the female characters. This culminates in the depiction of successful women who serve as role models for the female readership. This offers us a paradigm shift from the hitherto one-sided presentation of male characters in some female-authored texts. In this perspective, our selected writer joins others who are interested in the utopian dream of coalition and connection described by Susan Stanford Friedman, who opines that;

As the globe shrinks, as racially and ethnically inflected confrontations increase worldwide, as weapons become even more deadly and available, as transnational economies further polarize wealth and poverty [...] our survival as a species depends on our ability to recognize the borders between difference as fertile spaces of desire and fluid sites of syncretism, interaction, and mutual change (66).

This paper proposes new ways of critically engaging with African women's writing and their insistence that the status of women should not be shaped by gender inequality. Men and women must learn to build bridges that will conquer the disconnection and destruction seen all over the world today. Complementarity is essential because only these bridges can save humanity. The essence is to come up with new ideas that draw strength from both men and women, as our selected writer has done. It is evident that what comes out of the merger will help them to surmount the challenges of life as an entity. However, for them to attain these heights, the women must confront the past, interrogate the present, and map out the future. Nnenna observes that her people believe that things in the universe stand in pairs, that if something stands, another like it stands next to complement it (COE 371).

This means that ultimately, males are supported by females, and this is paramount for social cohesion and positive social change to take place. For social engineering to be successfully achieved in any given society, the place of complementarity cannot be overlooked, as it encourages the cross-fertilization of ideas between men and women. As Obioma rightly emphasizes, it is important that "bridges are built" and there are "no longer any boundaries or chasms of sex, gender, and ethnicity" (207). The text studied in this paper reflects prevailing social situations that should be overruled to achieve positive change.

#### **1.3.4 Self Discovery**

The topic of self has long been salient in feminist philosophy, for it is pivotal to questions about personal identity, the body, sociality, and agency that feminism must address. Simone de Beauvoir's declaration, "he is the subject, he is the Absolute - she is the other," signals the central importance of the self for feminism. Beauvoir claims that women have been overwhelmingly associated with immanence and thus have not been encouraged to claim their own freedom. Their selves are determined by situations and contexts- what biology and others claim them to be, and they have been prevented from taking up their own lives as projects. (Plato, stanford np).

This is aimed at the reconstruction of the image of womanhood in literary texts by feminist writers. Some early African male writers have stereotyped images of women as docile, passive, submissive, and completely dependent on men. Feminists reject this image, which is tailored to fit into society's construct of women as subordinate to men. Feminist writers attempt to reconstruct this negative image of women by projecting female characters who are active, strong, articulate, and independent, and can serve as role models for female readers.

Therefore, women are reminded that when they succumb only to the patriarchal standard of 'good woman' and 'good wife', they remain slaves to suffering and degradation. This study spells this out by drawing the attention of women to the instances in which they are not only weighed down by discriminatory practices in society, but they also become accomplices to their miserable state by choosing to do nothing about it. The feminist re-conceptualization of the self has not only challenged standard philosophical models for their biases, but also shifted the centre of the discipline towards multilayered models of the relational self. This paper is concerned with self-discovery and how the author creates female characters that are on a journey to map out their lives in diverse ways, move into relevance, tow the path of discovering the value of self, and are no longer restricted to limited success.

To demonstrate their self-discovery, these characters, such as Amara and Adanna, question anything that reinforces the marginalized status of women. For instance, Adanna runs a Non-Governmental Organization called Gender Equity Watch, which is involved in research on gender



related issues. Her team understands that networking can be used as a strategy for change to improve the lot of women in Africa and the world as a whole. Amara, on the other hand, disowns the 'nluikwa' tradition, which deprives the woman of her rights.

This patriarchal culture imprisons women, leading to their domination; that is why women are seeking self-recognition in more engaging roles by questioning the rationale behind some patriarchal maxims. Adimora-Ezeigbo addresses the primacy of female liberation and the creation of gender consciousness among Nigerian women. In another example reinforced by Nnenna, she remembers while growing up that there was an absence of heroines in the short stories she listened to, so she decided to fill this gap by creating a female Okorigwe. The aim is to counter the stereotypes about women, and she succeeds in re-establishing a site for women to be celebrated and given due recognition. This is important to our discussion on self-discovery as it helps women to see themselves beyond these societal limitations.

For instance, when Pa Joel comments on Eaglewoman's "daughters as men" (COE 41), Nnenna does not accept this as a compliment. This is because he acknowledged that these women are "cutting-edge children and pillars in the family" (COE 41). Instead, Nnenna tells him that: "We don't want to be men. We are women and are very proud of it" (COE 41). Pa Joel observed that these women are strong and capable of taking up numerous tasks, sometimes believed to be men's prerogative. By refusing the praises showered on them, these women seek an identity of their own instead of relying on the patriarchal identity that they have inherited. They believe that women need to appreciate themselves before they can be appreciated by others; this is because they have the capacity to excel in all that they set out to accomplish.

To emphasize their self-worth, the female characters reject the acculturation into inferiority that has been constructed by patriarchal society. Instead, we see them questioning women's inferiorization and refusing to conform to them because these cultural practices often harm women. They equally question the objectification of the female body because this has been used over the years to perpetuate the dominance of men and the subjugation of women. These heroines also challenge the norm. This is because, having discovered the potential they possess, they become reformists in their communities. In this context, self-discovery is presented in the form of assertiveness. Assertiveness is difficult for most women because they have an innate desire to be polite and to please the people around them. Coupled with this is the notion that some people have when they confuse assertiveness and self-discovery with aggression and thus see it as a negative behaviour. These characters refuse to live an empty and limiting life as dictated by her patriarchal society; consequently, they reject being defined by what Dorothy Etuk refers to as 'stereotypes of frivolities' (299). Consequently, characters such as Chiaku, Obioma, and Amara challenge the masculinist conceptualization of female identity in their relationships with the male characters. Cynthia Ward speaks of;

"the African woman struggling to assert herself against 'nearly every form of oppression-racial, sexual, colonial- that society has created'- a self that must find its voice in order to speak not only for itself, but also for all oppressed people" (89).

Amara's stand in *Children of the Eagle* suggests that, in spite of the rigid chauvinistic social structures, change is possible. Obioma in *Children of the Eagle* believes that one of women's major problems is that they are not aware of their strength and are highly reduced by their ignorance. For any meaningful development to take place, women must wake up to their responsibility for the good of humanity; they possess all it takes for the spiritual and physical restoration of humanity. In a truly just society, women

should not be expected to make changes that men are not expected to make.

Chimamanda Adichie observes that we have a world full of women who are unable to exhale because they have so long been conditioned to fold themselves into shapes that make them acceptable by their societies (31). It is thus important that women unlearn these values and reject sexism; that way, they will stop conditioning themselves to gain acceptance at the expense of personal development and fulfilment.

Adimora-Ezeigbo's female characters relentlessly forge for themselves a new identity in the face of the two-fold tyranny of colonialism and traditional patriarchy. Their action suggests that women need to work towards dismantling rigidly conceived social structures in order to create a more equitable culture for women. This study opens up the world of women by projecting female protagonists who are strong examples of ethical, independent women who provide refreshing possibilities for other women to thrive and excel.

### **1.3.5 Female Bonding**

Solidarity between women is one of the tools of feminism that facilitates social engineering and change. Women do not always have their interests protected by the patriarchal society; hence, it is important that they form a bond and hold each other up. This helps them to collaborate and support each other in the face of oppressive tendencies. The concept of female bonding as adopted by this study encourages a flow of feeling from woman to woman. Female friendships are very important in Adimora-Ezeigbo's politics of gender. This is evident in the relationship between Chaiku and Emma, who is an African American who helps her to overcome the nightmarish experiences that followed the crash of an ill-fated marriage to Mossey. This friendship revived and cushioned Chiaku because "she had a shoulder to cry on" (COE 189).

Our discussion on this feminist tool seeks to encourage women to keep their channels of communication open, so that they can talk about the issues that affect them both individually and as a group, learn from each other, and be emboldened to speak to the men on matters of individual and mutual interest. The importance of female solidarity is that as women come together to help each other, they invigorate the female subculture and the efforts to liberate themselves. The female characters form a bond in order to seek a collective healing rather than remain tied to the past.

### **1.3.6 Mentoring**

Mentoring is a system of semi-structured guidance whereby one person shares their knowledge, skills, and experience to assist others to progress in their own lives and careers. It encompasses both personal and professional development. It is a chain of 'passing on' good practice, so that the benefits can be widely spread. Mentoring is more than 'giving advice', or passing on what your experience was in a particular area or situation. It's about motivating and empowering the other person to identify their own issues and goals, and helping them to find ways of resolving or reaching them. Mentoring is extremely rewarding as it helps you to push others to succeed and develop their skills. One very important tool that women can adopt to propel social engineering is mentoring. As they develop each other, they open up spaces for both individual and collective growth and development; this will equally break down the barriers that have hindered a sustainable relationship between women. It fosters unity and teaches them the value of sharing expertise and developing each other. One way of encouraging bonding is to extol women who are sources of feminist inspiration, so that they can serve as role models to the next generation. They also remind women that they can be the best version of themselves if they are willing to try hard and work at it.

The meeting between the Okwara sisters and women of the Ummuana, where they share ideas on how to improve their productivity as women and as wives, is also worthy of note. This move is important for the development of women in particular and society at large. The group of women, after the meeting, thanked the Okwara sisters for agreeing to interact with them. They comment thus:

“You are different...you are jewels among women. We appreciate you because you value us”  
(COE 112).

Ogonna responds by telling these women that they are the hope of the extended family and that they should not scheme against each other, but find something to do so that they can be economically empowered. The portrayal of these characters indicates that women still have a long way to go to achieve their goals.

To buttress this view, Omonubi-McDonnell opines that the way forward is the exploration of the various strands of African feminism as it links racial, gender, caste, and societal forms of repression to construct a more all-encompassing classification of feminism through which women are considered supremely as individuals rather than sexual objects. This is mainly because correlative interdependence and teamwork between the genders for group preservation are the paradigms for exploring African feminism (17). This point fuses the essence of both female solidarity and complementarity as outlined in our selected tools of feminism.

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

Women need to recognize the norms and cultures that subordinate them and deny them autonomy in so many ways. They must also admit that internalized oppression moulds women's desires and alienates them from themselves. When they work as a group, they embolden each other and foster the development of those with weak skills of autonomy. This enables them to equally claim their freedom and resist any form of subjugation. This is largely because gender discrimination has been constructed into policies, programmes, and structures that make women inactive and promote the self-serving interests of men.

This paper goes further to state that when unequal social and gender relations are transformed, women will move out of poverty and deprivation, thereby attaining equity and inclusive growth. Feminism encourages women to broaden, transform, and rethink the understanding of change as it relates to gender roles, which have perpetually kept women in subservient positions over time. The paper concludes by stating that post-colonial feminist approaches and the identified feminist tools, when fully engaged, will continue to make significant advancements in rethinking and development.

## Refernce

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