

**PATRIARCHY IN LOLA SHONEYIN'S *THE SECRET LIVES OF BABA SEGI'S WIVES*
AND CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIES'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS*.**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this essay entitled: Patriarchy in Lola Shoneyin's the Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus was written by EBHOMIEN VICTORY ONOSEMARE with the matriculation number ART2004449, in the department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin.

Prof. E.B Adeleke

Date

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this work to all the women out there who are strong and courageous and, take it upon themselves to be the men of their homes, take care of their family with or without a man being present. I say a big thank you for your strength and perseverance towards this journey. God bless you

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the examination of patriarchy in the following texts: Shoneyin's *the Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. The work helps to investigate the patriarchal control in the texts and the effects it has on the women in the texts. The roles the women had to play and the identities that patriarchy gives to them. The work also shows us the resistance and the strategies that women used to survive in this text

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the various ways in which patriarchy has become a major force in the Nigerian society. And this study includes the strategies that women use to fight and resist the patriarchal structures.

1.2 Scope of Study

This work covers the following area of literature books: Lola Shoneyin's *the Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.

1.3 Methodology

The methods used to gather information for this work is qualitative. Referring to online materials, essays, literature blog sites and pdfs.

1.4 Theoretical Background

The theory to be used to analyze this work is the feminist theory. The Feminist theory is a theory that seeks to understand the nature of gender bias. This theory explores the complex relationship between gender social roles and power dynamics investigating how feminists' perspectives shape our understanding of women's and men's experiences in different aspects. Feminist theory fundamentally aims to understand and address the forces driving or supporting inequality, oppression for the purpose of achieving social justice and human equality.

It emerged from the feminist movement that advocated for women's right and interests. It covers a wide range of topics such as discrimination, objectification, oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping and epistemology. Feminist theory emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as women began to challenge the traditional gender roles and patriarchal power structure. Since then, there has been wide range of approaches, including liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist

feminism, post modern feminism, and inter sectional feminism. Feminist theory argues that patriarchal power structures exist in society which give men more power and privileges than women. Feminist theory emphasizes the importance of giving women and other marginalized groups agency a voice in the society.

Elizabeth Grosz writes in *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* that feminist theory is a theory that help to examine the bias against women and help to identify and see the dangers against women both materially and conceptually. She puts it like this “Feminist theory began as an analysis of the ways in which knowledges discriminated against women and helped to develop and perpetuate harms done to women, both conceptually and materially;” [49] She also says that feminist theory is a theory that should be able to direct itself to transformation as much as transforming the world [49]

In *American Research Journal*, Ignatius talks on the separation of different spheres for the two genders and how it started in the Victorian period. Whereby in the Victorian period women were deprived of owning properties, rumors came up that men had larger brain than women, men were advised to reduce sexual activities to save their energy while women were weak for sexual appetite [2] This caused them to bring a solution which came in various forms like the publications, events and legislation[3] This publication stressed the importance of women and how they should get access to education, right to owning properties and so on. Because of this the woman question pops up in the society. M.H Abrams et al says:

“During her age, the Woman Question was topical: The Woman Question, as it was called, was concerned with issues of sexual inequality in politics, economic life, education, and social intercourse. In the political sphere it was abundantly evident that women continued to rank as

second-class citizens. Like millions of working-class men, they could not vote or hold office except the highest office of queen (and Victoria was in general an antifeminist) (Abrams et al. 920) [6]”

The feminist theory can be interpreted in the Patriarchy and polygamy as seen in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and the secret between the women symbolize the unity between the women buttressing the feminist theme in the book. Same applies to *Purple Hibiscus*, Auntie Ifeoma serving as a feminist figure in the book standing for the women in the book and standing against her elder brother in the book who is the patriarchal figure in the book. While Mama and Kambili stands as a figure that represents women that uses silence and violence to resist patriarch structure.

There are four different types of feminism in theory, and they are: radical, Marxist, cultural and liberal. The type of feminism we will be examining here will be the radical feminism. The radical feminism occurred from the early 1960s to the 1980s. Radical feminists struggled to dismantle the patriarchal system to liberate women from oppressive domestic expectations and societal norms. They strive to end every patriarchal structure to liberate women and girls from an unjust society that treats them lower than their counterparts by challenging existing social norms that favour the men. This movement from the radical feminists involves resisting women's sexual exploitation, educating the public about violence against women such as rape, and the strong male dominance men have over women. In *Purple Hibiscus*, we see Mama being radical towards the end of the book when Eugene keeps pushing her to the wall. She plots her husband death secretly.

This work covers this feminist theory discussed above with adequate reference to *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and *Purple Hibiscus*

1.5 Review of Literature and Justification of Study

According to Lyme, the reality of most African women in Africa is “the timeless truth of women's lives.” [Lyme] African women are always known to do things specific to them like reproduction,

staying in the kitchen cooking, taking care of the children, looking after their husbands and not permitted to work or engage in things that men do. Women are always left at the mercies of men. In the sense that women are to be controlled by their husbands in decisions to make, women are not free to do what they want without a male consent thereby caging them to a box only the husband can open anytime he wants to. Women can only do procreation and household chores freely without consent.

Most women that are interested in politics, are not allowed to occupy political positions because of the claims that only men are meant to occupy those positions. Women cannot attain economic independence; they are taught to shrink themselves not to have money more than their husbands or less he gets intimidated and won't have the patriarchal control over the wife. All these unspoken rules, puts women in bondage and they become self-conscious not to outdo the man.

In a patriarchal system, authority is only exercised by the men, they are the head and the inheritance in a family is gotten by the male children. In Africa, male children are important than the female children which shouldn't be so because all humans are equal in the sight of God.

Many scholars have done some reviews on the following texts *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and *Purple Hibiscus*. The obvious contribution that they have made shows the theme of patriarchy, child abuse and women's rights. Scholars have discussed the terrible effects of patriarchy on women.

In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, Nguwasen and Onyemelukwe in the Impact Journal talks about rape being a violence against women in the texts. And they showed us how Shoneyin tells her readers through the way she writes that rape should also be part of women violence under a patriarchy system. Rape should not just be seen as a sexual thing but should be under part of the violence that women undergo. Women should learn to speak up under a system

that supports patriarchy system. Referring to the characters of Bolanle and Iya Femi. Nguwasen and Onyemelukwe shows us the excerpt of their journal:

“Shoneyin seems to ruminate, via her writing, as we her critics are equally thinking, that just as wife-battering had been taken out of privacy of home and criminalized to effect social change, rape must be taken out of the sexual realm and placed where it rightfully belongs in the domain of violence against women. She is crusading for this, especially as women and girls have been suffering in silence under the yoke of oppression by rapists in a patriarchal system.” [70]

Chioma Emelone in her journal emphasized on patriarchal rationality, whereby a woman does not have a choice of her own. Her father or a relative helps to get her married to the man coming to ask for her hand in marriage. Showing us that a woman should not have a choice of her own, whoever comes for her should go for her, as far it is agreed by her guardian or next of kin. The reason for this, is because of earning money, or for procreating children that the male counterparts want. Emelone, gives us an example of a character that is a victim of patriarchal rationality which is Iya Femi. Iya Femi is a perfect example of one person marriage that is negotiated between Baba Segi and her father.

“This often is found in a patriarchal society and the victim in most cases is the woman. The decision is made for her by her father or any other person who stands to make certain profit from the marriage. The male-dominated power structure speaks and acts for her.” [39] The example of Iya Femi is seen a bribe or gift for a poor harvest done by her father in the journal below:

“In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*, Shoneyin presents the character of Iya Tope, who is a victim of patriarchal rationality in marriage. The marriage between her and Baba Segi is a mere recompense for a poor harvest.” [39] The texts just show us how men see women as object and commodities.

Leson and Akpobari, talks on the trauma in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*, one major character that experiences trauma is that of Bolanle who is raped at a tender age of fifteen. And the impact that the rape had on her wellbeing and future decision, enabling her to get married to a polygamy home.

“Bolanle’s case appears even more sharply drawn. Her traumatic experience seems more deeply felt. She appears to be more aware of the change in her life brought about by the traumatic experience. An educated urban girl with educated parents and who holds a Bachelor’s in English to boot, it is entirely unexpected that she condescends to becoming the fourth wife of a semi-literate trader. She manifests several symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. For instance, she is repeatedly unable to attain full coital enjoyment in her marriage as orgasm constantly eludes her. Indeed, intercourse with her husband is little more than a ritual chore incapable of engendering any form of bonding between the couple.” [49]

The other text called *Purple Hibiscus*, some scholars have contributed to the review of this work and one person review to be looked at is Okuyade in the *Journal of Pan African Study*, talks on the dictatorship of Eugene, how he dictates them and the effects it has on the women of his home. “Silence in Eugene’s home is so magnified to the extent that it could be heard. The function of Kambili’s tongue is so constricted so that her struggle to express herself usually terminates with a

stutter, making her classmates observe her with familiarity laced with contempt. Because of her inability to make her tongue function in school she is labeled a backyard snob [247]

This dictatorship in his household causes a great silence that is loud. The effect it has on Kambili is no freedom to express herself, she is unable to make friends in her own school to the point her classmate called her a snob. All because of her father she does not have a say of her own.

Okuyade shows us that the woman in the book has strategies that they were able to make them survive in that patriarchal environment. Silence and bonding or unity among the women, Kambili and Mama. These tools were what they were able to use to fight Eugene.

“In *Purple Hibiscus* silencing is not only a mechanism or weapon of patriarchal control but of domestic servitude. Kambili, Jaja and their mother device ways of survival within the utilitarian calculus Eugene has created for their minds. One of the strategies is the domineering silence with which they observe situations, and the other is a filial bonding. Through bonding, mother and children can survive the domestic quagmire and the prescriptions of the religious zealotry of their father” [248]

Audrey Peters explains the character of Eugene as one who has arrogance that even his own sister sees him as one who is difficult to deal with. Aunt Ifeoma has to emphasize that he is not God, and he should relax and allow God to do his work. Typically, Eugene behaves as if he will be among the people that will judge in heaven. Peters explains in the excerpt below:

“Eugene lives his life with the arrogance of a man whose power is certain, unchallenged, and unending. His selfish arrogance is so extreme that Ifeoma considers him to be challenging the highest power that exists: "Eugene has to stop doing God's job," says Ifeoma; "God is big enough to

do his own job”. Jaja does not perceive his father as Godlike, openly defying his father by refusing to attend church and defending his sister against unjust punishment.” [1]

1.6 Thesis Statement:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and Lola Shoneyin’s *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives* reveals the effects of patriarchal control, ideas and opinions on women in the society and the strategies these women used to overcome this control.

CHAPTER TWO: PATRIARCHY, THE EFFECTS AND PERCEPTIONS.

2.1 Polygamy in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*

Polygamy is one of the central themes in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. Polygamy refers to a marital arrangement where an individual has multiple spouses. And it is the opposite of monogamy which involves a single partner. It can also be defined as a relationship that involves one person marrying multiple partners as in the case of Baba Segi. He ends up marrying multiple partners which are his four wives following the advice of “Teacher”. The women he marries includes Iya Segi, Iya Femi, Iya Tope and Bolanle; the only educated wife among them. In this chapter the causes and effects of polygamy will be examined. First, we will investigate the causes of polygamy and why people have free will to practice this kind of family system.

Religion

In African societies, there are some culture and religion that permits polygamy. For example, in the Islamic religion the men are allowed to marry more than one wife, maximum four wives. As a result of this, men of that religion tend to marry as they like. Unlike the Christian religion that does not allow men to marry more than one wife. It is not biblical for a man to do. Baba Segi religion is not really talked about in the book. Although we see later that he prays to his gods, indicating that he could be a traditional worshipper because they are the only ones that call who they serve “gods”

“When I was seventeen, I prayed that the gods would forgive me...” This statement gives a hint of what religion Baba Segi practiced. Even his mother called the medicine man to treat him while he young and terribly sick to the point of death. All this fall under the traditional worshippers’ terminologies. A traditional worshipper is also free to marry more than wife, which Baba Segi did.

Barrenness

The reason why men get married to more than one wife is because of the first wife inability to give birth to a child because of either health challenges or an issue from the man which he does not know about. Some ignorant men believe that the issues only come from the women alone which is not so. Uneducated men believe that it is only the women that have reproduction issue. Just like in the case of Baba Segi who blamed Bolanle for not reproducing a child. He even goes a long way to step out of his boundary and takes Bolanle to the hospital to check what is wrong with her. He never saw the fact or recognized that he could be the issue because she has not yet conceived.

“Yes. I am the husband” He drew his hands to his bosom. “And this is the wife who cannot conceive.” He pointed two forefingers at Bolanle as if there was a slight chance that the doctor might mistake one for the other. [146]. This here shows us how Baba Segi does not even consider himself a problem to the cause of Bolanle barrenness. As a result of Bolanle going to the hospital “the secret” that the other wives before her were keeping became exposed and this led to Baba Segi knowing that he is cause of the issue as revealed by the doctor.

“As far as he is concerned, it’s his wife who’s got serious problems.

It would have been a different matter if he had low sperm count, but there’s nothing! Not a solitary sperm swimming around!” [150].

Dr Dibia and Dr Usman’s conversation here shows us that Baba Segi has no sperm at all in his reproductive organ. Prior to this discovery, he still strongly believed that his wife is the cause of her barrenness and that women should be blamed and not men.

All these were made clear when Iya Segi confessed to the fact that none of Baba Segi children belongs to him and that the rest of his wives had to go and look for alternatives.

“If my husband did not have seed, then what harm he could it do to seek it elsewhere?” She shrugged her shoulders. “So, I found seed and planted it in my belly.” [166]. She also confessed to misleading the rest wives after her. All these shows us that a man can be the cause of barrenness but because of his act of patriarchy he believes that he should have no problem only his wives should have after all he is the man of the house.

Culture

Culture plays a significant role in men choosing more than one wife for themselves. For example, in the Igbo culture men were allowed to marry more than one wife because in the traditional Igbo culture men wealth were measured by the number of barns, wives and children they were able to marry and give birth to. Men showed their wealth by the ability to care of those number of wives and children he has married. Baba Segi also had to show his wealth by the number of wives and children that he is taking care of. Although Baba Segi is not of the Igbo culture, but we could see that he took pride in his wives and children.

“Doctors this is my first wife. No man could have a better one.” His face shone with pride. [165,] This sentence shows us that Baba Segi takes pride in having as many wives as possible to the extent that he brags about the fact that no man can have a better wife than her. And the capability of taking care of a woman that no man can have is something to boost of to anybody.

Furthermore, Baba Segi always takes the advice of “Teacher.” Teacher advises him to marry more than one wife instead of having a lot of beautiful women as concubines. According to Teacher “Two women at home are better than ten in a bush. They are Jezebels. A man whose house is full of birth will never want for mirth” [155] Baba Segi decides to take this advice from Teacher, a man in Ayikara that he truly respects. He believes that when your house is filled with women and children

happiness will not seize in his home. He makes use of this wisdom from Teacher and does everything he tells him to do. This is one of the points of view that men see, that get them engaged in polygamy because they derive joy and pleasure with pride in it.

2.2 Patriarchal Control in *Purple Hibiscus*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* shows the misuse of power by Papa Eugene within his household. His words must be done with immediate effect without questioning him or doubting his instructions of any form. His family must obey him completely like a god that is all knowing as "the man of the house". Any family member that tries doing opposite of what he says receives punishment especially a physical one. In chapter one where we see Jaja not going for communion and acting rebellious against his father for the first time. As a result of Jaja rebellious act against his father, Kambili describes the result of it as "things started to fall apart at home" [6]. All because of a single disobedience by his son all hell breaks loose and he "flung his heavy missal across the room".[8] To further discuss the patriarchal control in *Purple Hibiscus* the various aspect where he controlled will be discussed: in his household, In the religion aspect, In the social life

The first patriarchal control in *Purple Hibiscus* that is noticeable is in the religion aspect. In chapter one, Papa's facial expression when he was speaking to his son about communion who refuses to come to church to take it, shows us his harsh control in the religious aspect of his household. Papa's voice carried a low tone while telling Jaja the communion he just rejected is the body of the Lord. He could not hide his anger as it spreads across his face. His anger is already on his face and the readers could start to predict that this man could do any harmful or abusive thing now. And the next action we see is Papa picking up a missile and targeting it at Jaja which he missed. Jaja showcased this attitude being that he was tired of the patriarchal control that the father

has over the household. Jaja is not scared of his father anymore. He could rebel because he was the only man in the house.

For the women it is not possible for them to rebel against Eugene. Kambili is someone who never rebelled against her father she did all she could to obey her father and do what was pleasing in his eyes, Kambili esteemed her father. He was pure and blameless in her sight. Eugene still went ahead and punished her to the extent that she spent days in the hospital and writing her school exams on the hospital bed. All this shows us how terrible Eugene was as a father. When Papa Nnukwu died, Eugene refuses to bury his father in what he refers to as a pagan funeral and he insists on getting his father buried in a catholic church. This is part of the control he had on his own extended family' He segregates his father because his father is not a Christian thereby bringing up an argument between him and sister, sister Ifeoma. His act of dominance over what a woman is saying is seen here.

Eugene treats his father with utmost disgust because of religion. Religion causes a separation between Papa Nnukwu and his son to a point where Eugene never allows his own father coming into his house talk less of greeting his own father. He refuses to listen to his sister showing that male dominance over women that everything he says is right and it must stand over what a lady is telling him. To the point the sister gets frustrated. We can see this religious control through the following excerpts of the text:

“Our father is dying; do you hear me? Dying. He is an old man, how much longer does he have, gbo? Yet Eugene will not even greet him... Eugene has to stop doing God’s work for him... If God will judge our father for choosing to follow the way of our

ancestors, then let God do the judging, not Eugene.[62] “I cannot participate in a pagan funeral, but we can discuss with the parish priest and arrange a catholic funeral.” Aunty Ifeoma got up and started to shout. Her voice was unsteady. “I will sell Ifediora’s grave first! Was our father a catholic?... Aunty Ifeoma snapped her fingers at Papa; she was throwing a curse at him. Tears rolled down her cheeks.[135]

The second one is that of the social control. When it came to public relations or social interactions Eugene influenced his family; Mama, Kambili and Jaja. He wants them to believe everything he does is good and wants everyone of them to imitate it. He doesn’t allow his family speak Igbo in public. Kambili tells us in the novel, to show us how it has sink to her consciousness that speaking Igbo in public is a “bad sign”. Her father has controlled her to the point of deciding the kind of language that they should speak in public or in private. According to her speaking English is what will make them look civilized interpreted that way by her father. Even down to their confessions in church, Papa prefers they say it in English and not Igbo.

“Jaja have you not shared a drink with us, gbo? Have you no words in your mouth? He asked entirely in Igbo. A bad sign. He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak in public, he told us; we had to speak English.” [1]

Papa also limited their interactions with others. To the extent where they were not even free to visit their own relatives. Kambili and Jaja never had friends because of the strict movements from their father. Eventually Aunty Ifeoma initiates the conversation, which Kambili describes as

one that made her heart beat fast. Papa's reaction is one that is well expected. He does not want his children to mix with people or ungodly things. Giving an advice that anytime the "mmuo" passes by they should keep their window up [57]. Even in public Papa never allows Kambili put on trousers and all her skirts must pass her knee. Kambili describes it as a sin for a woman to be putting on trousers. All these doctrines were imposed in her by her father. Papa never allows the children to go see their grandfather Papa Nnukwu because he is a pagan.

The third one we will be examining is that of the household control. Here we will call it domestic control. Eugene has so much control over his household, he provides everything that his family needs. To the point that they cannot make any decision without him being aware. Patriarchy comes in here where he uses his male dominance to beat his wife severally making her miscarry the babies she had in her womb. Making it a norm for an African man to beat his wife to correct her or discipline her to his satisfaction to the extent of destroying a baby in her womb. Eugene broke a wooden table on his wife belly to the point that she starts bleeding.

"You know that small table where we keep the family bible nne? Your father broke it on my belly" [175]

Eugene also maltreats his only daughter in the name of teaching her a lesson from the sins of pagan worship like living and speaking to Papa Nnukwu's. He goes ahead to tell her how precious she is, and she should strive for perfection. She should not see sin and walk into it. Just because she spoke, lived and held on the painting of a pagan as described by Papa, he decides to pour hot water on her feet. What type of father will pour hot water on the feet of his daughter to cleanse her of something that is not real. Here Papa is claiming to be all righteous and all-knowing because he believes the hot water will cleanse her as if he were the Jesus Christ.

He still went ahead to beat Kambili with his sandals that had metal buckles, hitting her repeatedly to the extent that she blacks out and lost consciousness. This terrible act from Eugene is done because of Papa Nnukwu. She had to suffer because of a stoic belief that Eugene has because of his strong catholic background. Eugene is clearly a beast that needs to be dealt with in no time.

2.3 Effects of Patriarchy in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wife* and *Purple Hibiscus*

The following are the effects of patriarchy in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wife* and *Purple Hibiscus*: The damage from violence and superiority over women,

Superiority over Women

Women are being suppressed in a world where patriarchy strives in. Women have no say and are thereby forced to do what their husband is requiring of them. In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, we see the four wives completely rely on Baba Segi in all they do because they see him as one who makes the final and last decision before any move. The women of Ayikara are known for satisfying a man desire since most of them are into prostitution. This is what the men recognize them for. They could be fully appreciated if they got married and got into a home instead, they are shamed by the men because they toil like the way men do. Men believe that as far they have money they can marry and get any woman they want for themselves as seen where Baba Segi marries a graduate, Bolanle. He proves to his fellow men that money can get a woman he wants whether a graduate or not. The men insulted him for marrying a graduate and that she is only after his money, but he proves them wrong. He boasted of Bolanle about how she was taking him in on the bed during sex. "... He had boasted of his conquest: how Bolanle was tight as a bottleneck ..." [10] Here, Baba Segi proves his superiority over women through the money he has and how it can get him any type of women he wants. His money too could take care of his other wives and children, to the extent that he gave special treatments to the wives that have given him a child, meanwhile he

withdraws some treatment from Bolanle for example the armchair. Bolanle has not gained her right to an armchair because she is yet to reproduce a child for Baba Segi. All these segregations because she is yet to give birth to a child for Baba Segi. Bolanle still get maltreated by the other wives because she is educated and civilized than them. All sort of damages and maltreatment happened to Bolanle that the wives even encouraged Taju, the driver to treat her as he likes. "...if you don't want to sit next to me, you can sit at the back. Only the wind is uncomfortable cool at this time of the morning. Taju retorted." [28] This statement shows how Taju a driver can also maltreat Bolanle even with the permission of Baba Segi.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Through the intricate dynamics of the Achike family, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie illustrates the issue of male superiority and female oppression in *Purple Hibiscus*. Eugene Achike, a symbol of patriarchal power, fosters a culture of fear and deference that especially impacts the female characters. As the embodiment of male dominance, Eugene Achike exercises his power by controlling others both physically and mentally. His presence in the home produces a stifling tension in which every word and deed must meet his expectations. Mama is a perfect example, of who Eugene exercised his superiority over. To the point of silencing her that she could not even speak or respond back to Eugene, she gently obeys him and could not dare to leave his home because of his strong patriarchal control over her. Mama is always quiet and careful with her speech because of Eugene. Kambili is one of the women in the novel that Eugene had superiority over from her education because she takes second place in class, he punishes her and even down to her clothing. She believes wearing trousers is a sin because of the mental consciousness the father has placed in her. Everything she wears must be below her knee and must be a skirt. He even went as far as controlling where she goes and who she stays with giving them a

time limit for any visit. She even likes to speak the way Papa wants. She had no freedom in anything except approved by Papa.

The Damage from Violence

Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* both examine patriarchal violence in Nigerian society from various angles. In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, we see violence in a polygamous home while violence in *Purple Hibiscus* happens in a nuclear home both physically and psychologically.

In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, the violence that stands out is that of Bolanle, we see a story of how she gets raped by a stranger [a male] at age fifteen, the guy gets to rape her by poisoning her drink. This kind of abuse brings about shame and disgrace personally to Bolanle. As a child she was always the best, she wanted to marry as a virgin but due to losing it to a stranger by rape she suddenly changes her mind about marriage. When Baba Segi starts to come around, she decides to marry him because she feels that virginity here will not matter in a polygamous home. She even starts to blame herself for the reasons why she could not conceive, she thinks maybe her sins are catching up with her. Until she eventually finds out that Baba Segi is the reason behind her barrenness. As a result of the rape incident, she starts to have a bridge between her and her family until she later opens to them on what went wrong at age fifteen. Even the way Baba Segi had sex with always reminded her of how she was raped. He never touched her or romanced her in any sought of way.

Even economic wise, Baba Segi had an influence on them and his household. The effect of this was that he made the women dependent on him that they were not all to even work for themselves. He goes ahead and tells his wife that they get nothing from him if they don't prove that

they are wives. Even when Iya Segi attempts to be independent and make her own money, he stops her from doing so and tells her that she is his wife and not a trader. Baba Segi just wants his wives to be fully dependent on him even when times have changed, and women can now work the way men work. This cause them to be unemployed and naïve except Bolanle that came into the house educated.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the atmosphere that Eugene created in his household is that of tension and fear. The abuse he shows to his wife is that of a domestic one, he beats her any way he wants, with unusual objects. “Swift, heavy thuds on my parents’ hand carved bedroom door” [25] This violence causes Mama to be quiet in her movements and her speech. She had no freedom to say her mind, she just obediently follows the instructions of her husband. The violence he has over his daughter is one that is terrible. He pours hot water on her feet because of her association with a man he calls his father, he calls him a heathen. Kambili had to suffer for what she was not responsible for thereby bringing about scars to her, Eugene even beats her to unconsciousness because he finds his father picture with her. This violence makes Kambili sick that she was been rushed to the hospital where she writes her exams on the hospital bed. What sought of a father will do that to his daughter because of punishment.

2.4: Roles and Identity

In Shoneyin's novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* the character of Baba Segi embodies the patriarchal authority that dictates the lives of his wives. Each wife Iya Segi, Iya Tope, and Iya Femi represents different responses to societal expectations.

Iya Segi As the first wife, she is expected to uphold the family's honor and manage the household. Her identity is closely tied to her role as a mother and wife, reflecting the societal expectation that women derive their worth from their familial roles.

Iya Tope and Iya Femi. These characters illustrate the competition among wives for the husband's favor and the societal pressure to bear children. Their identities are shaped by their fertility and ability to fulfill their roles as wives, which highlights how societal expectations can lead to rivalry and conflict among women.

The novel critiques these expectations by revealing the inner lives of the wives, showcasing their desires, frustrations, and the ways they navigate their identities within a patriarchal framework. In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the character of Kambili is a poignant representation of a young woman grappling with the constraints of a patriarchal family. Her father, Eugene, exerts authoritarian control over the family, dictating not only their religious practices but also their daily lives. Kambili her identity is heavily influenced by her father's expectations. She is expected to be obedient, pious, and submissive, which stifles her individuality. The societal expectation for women to be demure and compliant is evident in Kambili's struggle to find her voice and assert her identity. Aunty Ifeoma and Mama, these characters provide contrasting perspectives on womanhood. Aunty Ifeoma represents a more liberated woman who challenges societal norms, while Mama embodies the traditional role of a submissive wife, suffering in silence under her husband's tyranny. Their experiences reflect the diverse ways women navigate their identities within the constraints of patriarchy.

For the impact on Women's Identities, both novels illustrate how societal expectations shape women's identities, often leading to internal conflict and a struggle for self-actualization.

Conformity versus. Rebellion, the characters in both novels often face a choice between conforming to societal expectations and rebelling against them. For instance, Kambili's journey towards self-discovery involves breaking free from her father's oppressive control, while Baba Segi's wives find ways to assert their agency within the confines of their roles.

Collective versus. Individual Identity. The societal expectation for women to prioritize family and community over individual desires creates a tension between collective identity and personal aspirations. The wives in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* often find solace in their shared experiences, while Kambili's journey emphasizes the importance of individual identity in the face of collective oppression

However, both *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and *Purple Hibiscus* provide a critical examination of how societal expectations shape women's roles and identities within patriarchal structures. Through the experiences of their female characters, Shoneyin and Adichie highlight the complexities of navigating identity in a world that often seeks to define women by their relationships to men and their roles within the family. The novels ultimately advocate for the recognition of women's individuality and the importance of challenging oppressive societal norms to foster a more equitable understanding of gender roles in the society.

CHAPTER THREE: CONTROLLING PATRIARCHY IN THE SOCIETY

Patriarchy has been a recurring issue in the Nigeria society, men have a strong dominance over women in the society. Physically, socially, materially and financially the male counterparts have strong control over the lives of women. Women are being seen as weak while the men are strong and are supposed to have control over their female counterparts. In Nigeria, it is a disgust for women to drive a car for men. For example, on the road in a typical Nigeria society, when a man finds out that the car ahead of him is being driven by a woman, his respond is always filled with disgust. You will hear something like “so na woman sef” This expression is telling us that what is she doing behind a steering wheel when her husband is supposed to take charge of it? In general, myopic men in the society believes that women are not supposed to drive. This in fact shows us how patriarchy has eaten deep into the society. “Women must rely on men” is the notion that everyone in the society have. Women have tried coming up with various ways to fight against this dominance that men have over them. In this chapter we will be examining the resistance and strategies that women use to control patriarchy in the society.

3.1 Resistance

In Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and Shoneyin’s *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*, we see the different resistance that women make use of to control the patriarchal situation in the text. Characters like Mama, Kambili, Bolanle and Iya Segi makes use of various resistance to control the dominance of men or their husband in the text.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Mama resistance is seen silently in the novel, she gradually and slowly poisons her husband to death. We call it silently because Mama never shouted or fought back at Eugene anytime, he beats her. We later got to find out that during this time when Papa was maltreating her, she was slowly poisoning him. It was discovered towards the end of the text:

“Mama tightened her wrapper, then went to the windows; she pushed the drapes aside, checking that the louvers were shut to keep the rain from splashing into the house. Her movements were calm and slow. When she spoke, her voice was just as calm and slow. “I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor.”

[202]

Mama protects her children from the hands of Eugene whenever he is done punishing their children. That is one of the resistances she uses against Papa. She reaches out to take her children from him whenever he punishes them for an act that he considers sinful. “Mama took the belt from him and laid it on the table” [75]. This was one of her resistances from patriarchy.

Kambili. Kambili resists her father patriarchal control by finding her own voice while she is being oppressed by her father. She becomes bold enough to resist her father dominance by fighting off Papa when he catches her with Papa Nnukwu’s painting. For the very first time, she finds her resisting her father. Kambili can do this because of the exposure she gets while staying with Auntie Ifeoma. An example of her voicing out against her father can be seen below:

“No!” I shrieked. I dashed to the pieces on the floor as if to save them, as if saving them would mean saving Papa-Nnukwu. I sank to the floor, lay on the pieces of paper. “What has gotten into you?” Papa asked. “What is wrong with you?” I lay on the floor, curled tight like the picture of a child.... “Get up! Get away from that painting!” I lay there, did nothing. “Get up!” Papa said again. I still did move.” [149]

Kambili resistance here is shocking to the father to the point he asks her what her problem is? because he has never seen his daughter like this before since when she has been given birth to. This act of hers still makes her father punish her to the extent she becomes unconscious. Kambili also resists her father's control over her personal life, by trying out new cloths and make up when she gets to Nsukka. Her stoic father's faith has always made her believe that her skirt must be below her knees and that wearing trousers is a sin. But all these beliefs she resisted against them when she temporarily leaves her father roof. For her it is freedom to express herself the way she wants without her father controlling her.

“I don't have shorts, Aunty,” I said. Aunty Ifeoma did not ask why, perhaps because she already knew. She asked Amaka to lend me a pair of shorts. I expected Amaka to sneer, but she gave me a pair of yellow shorts as if it were normal that I did not have any. I took my time putting on the shorts, but I did not stand in front of the mirror for too long, as Amaka did... I took Amaka's lipstick from the top of the dresser and ran it over my lips” [125]

In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, the first character we see that uses resistance against patriarchy is Bolanle. Bolanle in the text makes use of education to resist Baba Segi's dominance in a polygamous household. Baba Segi keeps blaming Bolanle for her inability to reproduce a child as if it is not two of them that is supposed to be involved in the reproduction process. He calls her all sort of names and cut out some privileges that a mother is supposed to have from her husband. Bolanle as an educated person decides to cajole her husband to ensure that they visit the hospital since she is the only wife among his wives that is yet to reproduce a child for him.

This solution came because she is a graduate and believes that the hospital should have a solution to the problems that she is having currently. Even when they get to the hospital, he still exerts his patriarchal control over her in front of the doctors and nurses. "I would have had more than ten now if this woman's womb was not hostile to my seed." [36] At the end of the day, the secret that the Alao wives have been keeping finally comes out because of the educated moves from Bolanle.

Iya Segi is one character that resisted the patriarchal control in the novel through economic and financial independence. She secretly starts her business and starts gathering money behind her husband. Right from beginning Iya Segi has been a lover of money and a businesswoman. In her husband home she owns various stores across the state. She didn't fully depend on her husband financially because she always has special places in her home where money is being kept. She handles money as if it is human taking care of it with great affection.

I dropped to my knees and told him of my wish to have a small stall where I could sell sweets wholesale, interact with other women and learn of new recipes, the best household detergents on the market, better ways to please a husband. I slipped it in when I noticed each blink weighed down his eyelids longer than the one before. "I also want to attend driving school." [63] Baba Segi usual patriarchal self begins to question her, because he is scared that his own wife will overtake him in his own home. "If I permit you to do these things, will a man be able to sleep in his own house?"

"Long and soundly, my lord." [63]

This shows us how deep patriarchy has eaten deep into the household system of the Alao's. A man fears his wife owning a business because he does not her to be richer or bigger than him. He

always wants to dominate and have that control over his wives and children, but Iya Segi is secretly building her own empire behind his back without him knowing about it.

Iya Segi second resistance in the patriarchal control is having a hand in the unknown secret of the household. To resist the patriarchal control, she is the first wife to have discovered that Baba Segi is unable to give her spermatozoa for a child. She comes up with an idea of going outside her household to look for a child since her husband can't give her. She knows that in a typical Nigerian home a woman is always blamed for not reproducing a child and she is referred to as barren. Her husband will also join to castigate her if she does not reproduce. In a Nigeria society the man is not blamed, everyone focuses on the woman. So, Iya Segi goes outside of her matrimonial home to meet a man who is called Taju, the driver of Baba Segi. She reproduces because of her affair with Taju. She leads the other wives to do the same thing to resist that patriarchal control that comes with not giving birth in an African home. Iya Segi reveals her hand in the decision in the excerpt below:

“Then, I had an idea. It was a sinful idea, but I knew it would bring my sadness to an end. In fact, it was more than an idea; it promised to be a solution. If my husband did not have seed, then what harm could it do to seek it elsewhere?” She shrugged her shoulders. “So, I found seed and planted it in my belly.” [166]

3.2 Strategies

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* the female characters make use of various strategies to live and endure in a patriarchal environment. The strategies are as follows: Stillness and strategic compliance, education and awareness, women's unity, and financial freedom.

Stillness and Strategic Compliance

The women in both novels makes use of stillness and strategic compliance to deal with the patriarchal environment in their homes. Mama, for example, responds to Papa patriarchal control through silence and calm speech. She never fights her husband or shouts back at him. Mama makes use of this to adjust living in that kind of harsh environment. Her movements were slow and calm. She lost her pregnancy several times but never blamed Papa for it till the end of the book. If she was not still towards Papa like this, he would have done more damage to her.

“Are you sure you want to stay in the car?” Papa asked. Mama was looking down; her hands were placed on her belly, to hold the wrapper from untying itself or to keep her bread and tea breakfast down. “My body does not feel right,” she mumbled” [23]

We see strategic submission in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Lives*. The wives submit to anything their husband tells them to do without objecting it. The wives find ways to submit, like looking for another man to impregnate them and place the ownership to Baba Segi so they could still get their privileges in their polygamous home. Iya Segi strategy is to call her husband names and fake emotional tears to get the husband to give her what she wants. She uses the first wife advantage to get what she wants in the home.

Education and Awareness

Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* finds awareness and uses it as a strategy to live in a patriarchal era. She becomes exposed to the life outside the one being controlled by her father. Because of this exposure from outside she finds her voice to stand against her father when he finds her with the painting of Papa Nnukwu. She even violates her father's rule when he sets a timetable for them to

work with while they were on break in Nsukka. She never makes use of the timetable because of the awareness she gathers. She even goes all the way to try out new clothes that her father forbids her to wear. Clothes he referred to as sinful is what Kambili begins to try out because of awareness. She tries putting on make up to prove patriarchal control is already losing the grip over her. Awareness brings Kambili a strategy to avoid her father control over her.

In the area of education, we see Bolanle striving to use her educated self to survive in a home where patriarchy rules. She tries to use her educated side to teach the wives and children how to read and write but the wives never appreciated her for it. They usually insulted her for doing what no one sent her to do. She is the reason why the wives secret becomes exposed because the educated part of her pushed her husband to the hospital to check in on what is going wrong with her, and why she could not reproduce. Bolanle uses education as a strategy to win Baba Segi's heart and he sees her as special because of how different she is from the wives. No matter what, Bolanle education is worn as a pride and honour in a household filled of envy.

Women's Unity

In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, we see the wives come together to strategize against the patriarchal control in the Alao's household. They come together to save themselves from Baba Segi control most especially if he finds out that the wife cannot procreate. The first wives bring them together and shows them the way forward. She encourages them that if they don't find solution to the problem at hand, they will have to prepare their way to their father's house. The three women Iya Segi, Iya Tope and Iya Femi all plans together and gets pregnant out of their matrimonial home. They use this as a strategy to live in a patriarchal home, so as not to be thrown out. Bolanle becomes a different one entirely that changes the ball game. We see when Iya Segi advises Iya Femi below:

“Get pregnant quickly or he will soon start to force-feed you bitter concoctions from medicine men until your belly rumbles in your sleep,” she said.” [69]

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Auntie Ifeoma stands with Mama and Kambili against her own senior brother Eugene. She protects Kambili from her father’s punishments and stops Mama from going back to a man that just violates her. Auntie Ifeoma brings Kambili to her home when she hears of the punishment that her brother, Eugene gives his own daughter. She always stands against her brother and does not even bother to ask him about anything financially related. She is always loud against male dominance because she raised her children herself and depends only on herself apart from Father Amadi that helps her occasionally. She stops Mama from calling Eugene when she lost her pregnancy because of the beating she receives from him. Example of Auntie Ifeoma showing support and protecting Mama and Kambili from Eugene.

“Auntie Ifeoma answered the phone and came out to tell Mama who it was. “I hung up. I told him I would not let you come to the phone.” Mama flew up from her stool. “Why? Why?” “Nwunye m, sit down right now!” Auntie Ifeoma snapped. But Mama did not sit down.” [176]

Financial Freedom

Financial freedom is one strategy that the women used in both novels to control the patriarchal environment. In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*, Iya Segi is a perfect example of a woman that make use of financial freedom to escape or live in a patriarchy home. She secretly builds a business in various areas of the community. She hides money in secret places that nobody can touch or see it. She uses this strategy to survive under a home where her husband is in control

over everything. Iya Segi does this so she can get anything her husband deprives her of. Iya Segi has always been a fan of money and doing anything for the love of money. This strategy keeps working for her because she guilts trips her husband to grant her access to having her own trade. She became the only woman who can trade in the household because she holds the key to her husband's hearts.

“I had shops in most of the major markets —Mokola, Dugbe, Eleyele, Sango—but I wanted to have one in Ojo, too. Rather than rush to the bank and endure hours in the queues, I decided to take from the stash I hid under my mattress at home, to save time” [64]

Aunty Ifeoma is not exempted from one of the women who have financial freedom in the Purple Hibiscus. Even though her brother is very rich and can provide for her, she never depended on him or allowed his patriarchal control to be instilled in her. She works as a lecturer in a federal university and feeds her children through that work. Even when she wanted gas cylinder, she never asked her brother, but Mama insisted on making sure Aunty Ifeoma gets two. She helps Aunty Ifeoma to ask Papa instead of Aunty Ifeoma to do so herself. This shows us how her financial freedom from men helps her not to be stuck to that harsh patriarchal control. Her husband is no longer alive, but she shows us through the text how she can do things herself without the help of a man. Her financial freedom helps her to speak against her brother who never wanted to bury Papa Nnukwu in a traditional way but in a catholic way. She gets all her stance against Papa because she never allows Papa to have that strong hold over her.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

This study has succeeded in showing us the problem of patriarchy, which is also known as male dominance and how deep it has gotten into the society with reference to the two-text used in this work *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and *Purple Hibiscus*. Through these texts mentioned, the work was able to show us the patriarchal control in a home, the effects of patriarchy and the roles and identities that shaped women in a society where men dominate. The work also helps us to identify the resistance and strategies that women used to strive in a patriarchal environment.

Polygamy is one of the things examined in the work that contributed to the patriarchal control we see in the society. In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* we see how the women had to totally depend on Baba Segi to provide everything they wanted. Under polygamy the different causes of it were mentioned which are: religion, culture and barrenness. The causes enable polygamy to create an atmosphere of patriarchal control. Baba Segi had a strong hand and say on the matters of his home thereby controlling the women the way he wants.

Patriarchal control in *Purple Hibiscus* in this study shows us how a man can take charge of the areas of his family without allowing them to have a free will of their own. The text shows us how men can control their wife and children in the religion aspect and can have a social control over them and have a higher say on the household control. The control is what is allowed in the society thereby making the female counterpart weak.

The effect of patriarchy is being discussed in the work and the effects were as followed: Superiority over women and the damage from violence. With reference to the text, we see how the men had a say or how they took charge over every aspect of the household to the extent that no woman could stand against them. The damage from violence made the women feel suppressed and

silenced. They could not stand for themselves. The damage from these patriarchal men left scars and unborn babies die. The women had no right of their own.

For the roles and identity, "The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives" and "Purple Hibiscus" provide a critical examination of how societal expectations shape women's roles and identities within patriarchal structures. Through the experiences of their female characters, Shoneyin and Adichie highlight the complexities of navigating identity in a world that often seeks to define women by their relationships to men and their roles within the family. The novels ultimately advocate for the recognition of women's individuality and the importance of challenging oppressive societal norms to foster a more equitable understanding of gender roles in the society.

The study also shows us the resistance and strategies that the women used in both texts to live and survive under an environment of patriarchy. The resistance and strategies used by these women are: Financial freedom, women unity, education and awareness and stillness and strategic compliance. The resistance used by the women was that voicing out when being used to silence.

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