

**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE, SOCIAL STIGMA, AND
CHILD BEARING IN THE NETFLIX NIGERIAN SERIES *BABY FARM***

BY

**Precious OSASUYI (Miss)
ART2100325**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

NOVEMBER, 2025

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to GOD ALMIGHTY and to my dear Dad Mr. Louis Ogbebor.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this project entitled; “Language, Social stigma and Childbearing in *Baby Farm* by Ebony Studio” was carried out by Precious OSASUYI (Miss) in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City.

Dr. Omovumi Bode Ekundayo
Project Supervisor

Date

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian Netflix series *Baby Farm* interrogates the commodification of the female gender, exposes institutional complicity in sustaining social stigma, and represents insecurity, illuminating entrenched gendered inequalities in Nigerian society. The experiences of characters such as Adanna, Emem, and Cherry, reveals how language, religion, media, and state power intersect to police women's bodies, moral conduct, and reproductive roles. Through the use of qualitative approach, with data gathered through repeated viewings in the absence of an official script, the research was carried out. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) highlights how metaphors frame women's reproductive capacity as moral value, economic labor, and social identity, while Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) demonstrates how institutional language and symbolic actions reproduce power, control, and systemic oppression. *Baby Farm* thus critique not only individual corruption but structural hierarchies, illustrating how words, imagery, and narrative strategies operate to maintain, negotiate, or subvert social stigma. The series underscores the role of discourse in shaping social realities, revealing that visibility, coalition, and counter-narratives remain essential tools for resisting oppression.

Keywords: *Language, Commodification, Social Stigma, Institutional Complicity, Resistance, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to look at how language in the Netflix mini-series *Baby Farm* works to control, resist, and show the exploitation of women and children through child trafficking. It focuses on how language reflects gender oppression, the objectification of women, institutional support of stigma, and infertility. Using Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory and van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, the study examines words, metaphors, and patterns to show both inequality and how characters resist.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This study is delimited to the Netflix mini-series *Baby Farm*, a Nigerian production, and concentrates on its linguistic and metaphorical portrayals of the illicit trade in women and children. The choice of *Baby Farm* is justified by its thematic relevance, as the series not only foregrounds the intersection of gendered vulnerability, institutional complicity in sociocultural stigmatization, and the representation of infertility, but also mirrors broader societal ills in Nigeria that are rooted in gender-based inequalities. However the investigation does not extend to other films or cultural contexts and is grounded in selected scenes that most effectively illustrate the study's objectives, with its depth shaped by practical constraints such as time limitations and the unavailability of production materials.

1.3 Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to the Netflix mini-series *Baby Farm*, with data gathered through repeated viewings in the absence of an official script. Key words, statements, and conversations were carefully transcribed, and significant scenes were documented using a timestamp system (e.g., “E:1:23:01” for Episode 1, 23 minutes and 1 second) to ensure accuracy and traceability. All Episode, from Episode 1 to 5 of the movies where used and attention was directed not only to the language choices, tone, and contextual use of language but also to scenes marked by emotional conflict, social judgment, or personal struggle, which were selected for closer analysis. Visual elements such as facial expressions, gestures, and settings were also considered to capture the implicit meanings conveyed beyond spoken dialogue. By combining verbal and non-verbal cues, the study identifies discursive patterns that reflect and contest issues of fertility, stigma, and gendered expectations in Nigerian society. The secondary data for the work includes scholarly research previously carried out on human trafficking in journals and online materials, along with information drawn from the mean stream news media and internet groups on the subject matter.

The analyses and discussions are grounded in the application of the conceptual metaphor and CDA theories following direct observation, systematic note-taking, and scene-by-scene interpretation of the movie, while the researcher’s familiarity with local

sociocultural contexts provides valuable insider insight, balanced with caution against overgeneralization.

1.4 Theoretical Background

This research is anchored on two pivotal theoretical frameworks: *Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)* and *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)*. These theories provide the intellectual scaffolding for examining how language and metaphor function as tools for shaping ideology, constructing social realities, and exposing systems of dominance within the narrative space of the Netflix mini-series *Baby Farm*. The series, a Nigerian production, dramatizes the exploitation of women and children through illicit baby trafficking, while simultaneously exposing the sociocultural stigmatization of infertility and the complicity of institutions such as the police, media, and family structures. By applying CMT and CDA, this study interrogates how linguistic and metaphorical choices in the series both reflect and challenge entrenched gendered inequalities.

1.4.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT): Origins and Core Assumptions

The foundation of Conceptual Metaphor Theory was laid by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their groundbreaking work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). They redefined metaphor not merely as a literary ornament or linguistic flourish, but as a cognitive mechanism through which individuals interpret and experience the world. According to Lakoff and Johnson, human beings understand one conceptual domain in terms of another. For instance, everyday expressions such as “time is money” or “argument is war” reflect deep metaphorical structures that govern thought and action

(Lakoff and Johnson 5). They further argue that the conceptual system underpinning our thoughts, language, and behaviour is inherently metaphorical. This means that metaphors silently shape not only how we communicate but also how we reason, feel, and interact with our social world (Lakoff and Johnson 3). In this sense, metaphor is not peripheral but central to cognition.

The major tenets of CMT are as follows:

- 1. Metaphor as Conceptual, Not Merely Linguistic:** Metaphors are primarily conceptual structures that shape thought, with language serving as their surface expression.
- 2. Systematic Mappings:** Metaphors involve systematic correspondences between a source domain (concrete, familiar) and a target domain (abstract, complex).
- 3. Embodiment:** Metaphors are grounded in bodily experience, meaning that human cognition is shaped by physical and cultural interactions with the world.
- 4. Cultural Variability and Universality:** While some metaphors are universal (e.g., life is a journey), others are culturally specific, reflecting local values and social realities.
- 5. Metaphors as Ideological Tools:** Metaphors can reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies by framing social issues in particular ways.

Extensions of CMT

Building on this foundational theory, Charles Forceville extended CMT into the domain of visual and multimodal communication. In his influential work *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising* (1996), Forceville explores how metaphor is not confined to

verbal expressions but can also be instantiated visually, through images, symbols, spatial arrangements, and design elements. According to Forceville, a pictorial metaphor occurs when two visual domains are combined such that the properties of one (the source domain) are projected onto another (the target domain), thereby shaping perception and meaning (Forceville 57).

Forceville's notion of multimodal metaphors is especially relevant to this study. He defines these as metaphors conveyed through the integration of two or more modes—such as visual imagery, textual language, sound, and gesture. This expanded perspective allows for a richer, more complex interpretation of meaning, especially within visual media like *Baby Farm*, where metaphor is embedded not only in language but in cinematic techniques, character representation, set design, and soundtrack.

In *Baby Farm*, metaphors are central to how the narrative frames issues of fertility, stigma, and exploitation. For instance, the commodification of children is often represented through economic metaphors, where babies are treated as “products,” “goods,” or “currency.” Such metaphors map the source domain of commerce onto the target domain of human life, thereby exposing the dehumanizing logic of trafficking. Similarly, infertility is metaphorically constructed as “emptiness,” “failure,” or “deficiency,” reflecting cultural stigmas that equate womanhood with reproductive capacity.

By applying CMT, this study identifies how these metaphors shape audience perceptions of gendered oppression and institutional complicity. For example, when

characters describe women as “machines” or “vessels,” the metaphor *WOMEN ARE OBJECTS* becomes evident, reducing female identity to reproductive function. Conversely, counter-metaphors of resilience—such as framing survival as “a battle” or resistance as “a voice”—highlight the agency of marginalized characters. Thus, CMT provides a lens for uncovering the cognitive and cultural structures that underlie the film’s discourse on exploitation and stigma.

1.4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): Origins and Core Assumptions

Alongside metaphor theory, this study draws strength from the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, particularly as developed by Norman Fairclough and Teun A. Van Dijk. CDA investigates the intricate relationship between language and power, focusing on how discourse both reflects and perpetuates social inequality.

Fairclough conceptualises CDA as “discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony “ (Fairclough 132). He also saw it as politically engaged form of discourse analysis that interrogates the ways in which language contributes to the domination of one group over another. He frames discourse not merely as a means of describing reality, but as a constitutive force that helps to shape and

construct social reality itself (Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* 3). In a later work, he characterises CDA as analysis “with an attitude,” specifically a critical stance toward the ways in which discourse facilitates power and dominance (Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* 1).

Similarly, Van Dijk defines CDA as a form of research that concentrates on how discourse—both spoken and written—is implicated in the reproduction and resistance of social power structures. According to Van Dijk, CDA aims to unveil how power abuse, inequality, and dominance are encoded and enacted through language within specific socio-political contexts (Van Dijk 352).

The major tenets of Critical discourse analysis(CDA) are as follows:

- 1. Discourse as Social Practice:** Language use is not isolated but embedded in social practices that reflect and reproduce power relations.
- 2. Power and Ideology:** Discourse is a medium through which ideologies are communicated, legitimized, and challenged.
- 3. Text and Context:** CDA analyzes both the micro-level of textual features (lexical choices, syntax, rhetoric) and the macro-level of social, political, and cultural contexts.
- 4. Critical Stance:** CDA is explicitly normative, aiming not only to describe but also to critique and expose social inequalities.
- 5. Interdisciplinarity:** CDA draws on insights from linguistics, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies to provide a holistic analysis of discourse.

In the movie *Baby Farm*, CDA is crucial for examining how institutional complicity and societal stigma are discursively constructed. For example, the language of the police and media often minimizes or obscures the severity of trafficking, reflecting institutional failures. Lexical choices such as “wayward girls” or “unfit mothers” stigmatize women while absolving systemic structures of responsibility. By analyzing these discursive patterns, CDA reveals how language legitimizes exploitation and shifts blame onto the vulnerable.

Moreover, CDA highlights the counter-discourses articulated by marginalized characters. When women in the series resist being labeled or reclaim their narratives, they disrupt dominant ideologies. For instance, a character’s insistence on naming her child, despite institutional pressures to erase identity, functions as a discursive act of resistance. CDA thus illuminates how *Baby Farm* dramatizes the struggle between oppressive discourses and emancipatory voices.

In a way of blending CMT and CDA, CMT focuses on the cognitive structures underlying metaphorical language, CDA emphasizes the socio-political functions of discourse. Together, they provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing *Baby Farm*. Metaphors reveal how abstract issues like infertility or trafficking are conceptualized, while discourse analysis uncovers how these conceptualizations are embedded in power relations and institutional practices. For example, the metaphor of babies as “commodities” in CMT, is not merely a linguistic flourish but part of a broader discourse that normalizes exploitation as in CDA. Similarly, metaphors of infertility as “emptiness”

intersect with discourses of stigma that marginalize women. By triangulating these approaches, this study demonstrates how language both reflects and shapes the lived realities of gendered oppression in Nigeria.

The Nigerian setting of *Baby Farm* is significant because it situates the narrative within a cultural context where fertility is highly valued and infertility is stigmatized. Metaphors of “fruitfulness” and “barrenness” are deeply embedded in Nigerian discourse, reflecting cultural and religious ideologies. CDA reveals how these metaphors are mobilized by institutions such as the media, police, and family structures—to reinforce gender hierarchies. At the same time, the series.

1.5 Review of Related Literature

African cinema and gendered narratives has increasingly focused on how films represent exploitation, trafficking, and reproductive stigma. One notable example is Mitterand M. Okorie’s chapter “Violence and Sex Trafficking in the Film *Òlòtūrè*,” which analyzes sex trafficking as a gendered phenomenon. Drawing on Deshpande and Nour, Okorie defines sex trafficking as the coercive recruitment, transportation, and exploitation of individuals for commercial sex acts, emphasizing that consent is invalidated when deception and control are involved. Using the sociological concept of “doing gender,” he examines how the 2019 Nigerian film *Òlòtūrè* portrays the recruitment and movement of victims, arguing that trafficking is more complex than the binary framing of men as exploiters and women as victims. Okorie contrasts this with

radical feminist perspectives (Samarasinghe; Alam and Rahman; Spanger), which interpret trafficking primarily as male-driven sexual exploitation of women.

While Okorie's analysis centers on sex trafficking, the present study of *Baby Farm* extends this discourse by examining human trafficking through the commodification of women and children, particularly in the sale of babies to wealthy buyers. The film critiques societal complicity in these practices, using language, visual metaphor, and character dynamics to expose the intersections of gender, power, and institutional failure. As part of Ebony Life Studios' growing portfolio of socially conscious productions, *Baby Farm* continues the studio's tradition of interrogating Nigerian society through cinematic storytelling and semiotic depth.

In exploring the representation of childbearing and societal stigma, existing literature highlights how language and cultural expectations shape the experience of womanhood in African contexts. Childbearing is frequently portrayed not merely as a biological function but as a social imperative that defines a woman's value, identity, and acceptance. Failure to conceive, or doing so outside socially sanctioned frameworks, often results in stigma, emotional trauma, and social exclusion. These themes are recurrent in both sociological studies and cultural narratives.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her essay *We Should All Be Feminists*. "Because I am female, I am expected to aspire to marriage. I am expected to make my life choices always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important." (Adichie). She observes that in many African societies, women are expected not only to marry but to validate their

worth through fertility. This observation aligns with findings by Omololu and Omololu, who argue that childbearing is traditionally viewed as a rite of passage into womanhood in Nigeria. Their research documents widespread beliefs that women who are childless are often perceived as incomplete or cursed. Similarly, Akinyemi and Isiugo-Abanihe, drawing on data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), found that women who do not bear children within the first two years of marriage face heightened pressure from in-laws and society, sometimes resulting in divorce or ostracism.

In the realm of Nigerian cinema, scholars such as Jonathan Haynes and Hyginus Ekwuazi have examined how Nollywood reflects and reinforces societal norms. Haynes contends that Nollywood often mirrors the moral anxieties and expectations of Nigerian society, particularly around family, gender roles, and reproductive obligations. Films centered on domestic life frequently uphold traditional values, portraying childbearing as central to female identity. However, newer productions especially those from studios like *Ebony Life* have begun to challenge these narratives. These films deploy drama, visual metaphor, and linguistic nuance to critique patriarchy, question the sanctity of fertility as a measure of worth, and expose the commodification of women's bodies.

The portrayal of infertility and societal judgment in Nollywood has also been critically examined. "Embedded in the texts of Nollywood video films are the cultural and political debates of the day." (Okome 26). Okome argues that female characters who are unable to bear children are often depicted as desperate, morally compromised, or socially deviant. In her review of twenty Nollywood films, she notes that childless

women are frequently cast as witches, overly career-driven, or sexually transgressive suggesting that infertility is a form of punishment for violating cultural norms. This narrative trope reflects broader societal suspicions and prejudices against women who do not conform to reproductive expectations.

Media representation plays a significant role in both perpetuating and challenging these stigmas. Nwabueze asserts that the Nigerian press often sensationalizes stories of infertility, framing women's reproductive challenges in ways that violate privacy and reinforce shame. This dynamic is reflected in *Baby Farm*, where the character *JoyToTheWorld.com* a media personality more invested in gossip than truth symbolizes the role of modern media in policing women's bodies and amplifying stigma. The connection between media narratives and public perception is further explored by Ogundipe-Leslie, who argues that African cultural expression frequently constructs female identity around marriage and fertility, leaving little room for alternative life paths or definitions of womanhood.

Further studies have examined the intersection of gender, trauma, and cinematic representation. Nwosu explores how Nollywood increasingly engages with themes of reproductive injustice, gender-based violence, and institutional failure. Films such as *Dry*, directed by Stephanie Linus, foreground issues like vesicovaginal fistula and forced marriage, offering a counter-narrative to traditional portrayals of womanhood. Similarly, Ugochukwu analyzes *Wives on Strike*, directed by Omoni Oboli, as a feminist

intervention that uses humor and protest to critique patriarchal control over women's bodies.

In a broader African context, Amadiume critiques the colonial and patriarchal construction of gender roles, arguing that precolonial African societies often had more fluid understandings of gender and power. Her work provides a historical lens through which to interpret the rigid reproductive expectations depicted in contemporary Nigerian media. Likewise, Mama emphasizes the role of state institutions in reinforcing gender hierarchies, noting that legal and policy frameworks often fail to protect women from reproductive discrimination and exploitation.

From a linguistic perspective, Odebunmi investigates how pragmatic strategies in Nigerian film dialogue reflect power dynamics and social hierarchies. His analysis reveals that lexical choices and speech acts often encode cultural attitudes toward gender, authority, and morality. This insight is particularly relevant to *Baby Farm*, where language is used not only to narrate events but to signal ideological positions and emotional tensions.

Eze examines the commodification of children in African media, arguing that narratives involving child trafficking often blur the lines between victimhood and agency. His study highlights the ethical complexities of representing vulnerable populations in entertainment media and calls for more nuanced portrayals that avoid sensationalism.

In addition to these thematic and cultural studies, the present research draws on two major theoretical frameworks: *Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)* and *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)*.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors are not merely linguistic flourishes but cognitive structures that shape how individuals perceive and engage with abstract concepts. Their theory has been extended by Forceville, who explores how metaphors operate visually and multimodal in media texts. These insights are particularly relevant to *Baby Farm*, where metaphors of fertility, emptiness, and commodification are embedded in both language and visual storytelling.

Critical Discourse Analysis, as developed by Fairclough and van Dijk, provides tools for examining how language reflects and reproduces power relations. CDA emphasizes the role of discourse in legitimizing institutional dominance and social inequality. In *Baby Farm*, CDA enables an analysis of how characters' speech, media framing, and institutional language contribute to the stigmatization of infertility and the normalization of exploitation. Together, CMT and CDA offer a solid framework for understanding how metaphor and discourse construct, reinforce, and challenge gendered ideologies in Nigerian society.

1.6 Thesis Statement

A CMT and CDA analysis of the Netflix series *Baby Farm*, shows that the narrative uses language to interrogate the commodification of the female gender, expose

institutional complicity in sustaining social stigma, and represent infertility to mirror and challenge entrenched gender inequalities in the Nigerian society.

CHAPTER TWO

THE COMMODIFICATION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND THE DYNAMICS OF POWER AND RESISTANCE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter interrogates the commodification of the female gender in *Baby Farm* by analyzing how language, metaphor, and performance construct women as objects of exchange and control. It explores how institutional discourse dehumanizes female characters, how resistance emerges through subversive speech, and how the politics of voice and silence reflect broader gendered inequalities in Nigerian society.

2.2 Commodification of Female Gender (Language and Control)

In the Netflix mini-series *Baby Farm*, language functions not merely as a medium of communication but as a mechanism for constructing, enforcing, and challenging the commodification of the female gender. Through dialogue, gestures, and symbolic exchanges, the series exposes how women particularly young, vulnerable girls are objectified, reduced to reproductive instruments, and positioned within transactional frameworks that strip them of agency and humanity. Lexical choices such as “makers” and “clients” (E1:21:54 – 25:38) reflect a commercial logic that transforms motherhood into a marketable service and children into commodities, echoing Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power and Michel Foucault’s theory of disciplinary discourse. These linguistic patterns are not neutral; they reproduce social hierarchies and institutional dominance, reinforcing gendered exploitation under the guise of care and charity.

At the same time, *Baby Farm* dramatizes resistance through informal speech, code-switching, and embodied defiance. Emem’s use of Pidgin English “Wetin you de do for here? Carry yourself and your pikin commot for here” (E1:38:12) functions as a rejection of institutional control and a reclamation of voice, aligning with Paulo Freire’s view of language as a tool for liberation and bell hooks’ argument that the language of the oppressed can subvert dominant narratives. Gestures and tone further reinforce these dynamics; Dr Evans’s authoritative command. “You do not question my authority at this hour” (E2:00:04) is not only a verbal assertion but a performance of power that silences dissent and enacts control.

In *Baby Farm*, language isn't just a tool for communication it's a weapon. Those in authority, especially Dr Evans, Sis Barb, and their associates, use words to control, manipulate, and silence the girls in their care. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, this aligns with Foucault's idea that discourse is never neutral; it's a form of discipline that shapes how people behave and think.

One of the first clear examples of this power play happens when Sis Barb meets Adanna, a vulnerable pregnant teenager. In Episode 1 (21:54–25:38), Barb introduces her to Dr Evans by saying, "This is Adanna, she's considering being one of our guests" (E:1:24:59–25:02). The word "guest" is no accident it's carefully chosen to make Adanna's situation seem voluntary and comfortable. But in reality, Adanna has very little choice. Evans and Barb are the ones setting the terms. This is what Bourdieu refers to as symbolic violence: language that convinces someone to see their oppression as an opportunity.

Sis Barb takes this even further. In Episode 1 (23:29–23:34), he says, "We offer free food, free accommodation, and free healthcare." Then he adds, "We want to help women in your position and we want to give babies the best chance at a better life. Have you considered the future of your baby out there on the streets?" (E:1:23:3647). On the surface, it sounds generous. But the repeated use of "free" hides the real cost Adanna's freedom, her motherhood, and her dignity. The phrase "best chance at a better life" practically shifts the burden onto her, making it seem like she's being irresponsible if she doesn't comply. Meanwhile, Evans and his NGO comes off as the hero.

His need for control is also obvious in how he talks about intelligence. In Episode 1:38:15, he bluntly says, “Intelligence isn’t really a desirable quality around here.” That’s not just a comment it’s a warning. He doesn’t want the girls to think for themselves. He wants obedience, not reflection. And when he snaps at Emem in Episode 2:00:04 “You do not question my authority at this hour” his tone and timing make it clear that he’s not just giving an order; he’s performing dominance. Even Sis Barb is reminded of her place. Foucault would describe this as discourse that disciplines words that don’t just say something, but enforce submission.

Evans also uses business language to describe what’s happening in the clinic. In E:2:13:13, he says, “It’s time to get her pregnant again... we are in business, it’s never way too soon...” Here, pregnancy is treated like a transaction, something that can be repeated without emotion or concern for the girls’ bodies. The word “business” shows that the clinic is run like a factory, with the girls reduced to units of production. This ties into Lakoff and Johnson’s theory in *Metaphors We Live By*, where they argue that metaphors shape how we see the world. In this case, the metaphor of business shapes how lives are managed and exploited.

Even the name *Baby Farm* is part of this control. Whether it’s spoken by characters or used in the title, it turns childbirth into something mechanical like livestock production. It strips away the humanity of motherhood and replaces it with market value. From a CDA perspective, naming something “farming” is a way of normalising exploitation. It makes it sound routine, even acceptable.

This dominance isn't limited to the clinic. It shows up in other institutions too. The police, who are supposed to protect people, use detached language that downplays serious issues. When Ify reports her sister Emem missing, they call it an "incident." That word makes it sound minor, not urgent. It's a way of brushing off the situation and protecting those in power. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* explains this well he argues that systems of power use language to dehumanise and make injustice seem normal.

Family language also plays a role. When Adanna's parents find out she's pregnant, they don't offer support. Instead, they say, "You have brought shame to us... you could have been the first graduate but see the shame you have brought.." (E1:3:38). Their words focus on reputation, not her well-being. This kind of discourse mirrors the wider societal pressure that pushes Adanna into vulnerability and eventually into Evans' trap.

So, in *Baby Farm*, language isn't just background it's the foundation of dominance. Through kind-sounding words, business metaphors, institutional detachment, and family shame, those in power maintain control. Every word from Dr Evans and his circle is calculated, and every silence from the girls carries the weight of that control. Language here doesn't just communicate it dominates.

2.3 Voices of Resistance

If Dr Evans and Sis Barb use language to dominate, then resistance in *Baby Farm* emerges when the girls begin to reclaim speech, silence, and tone to assert their humanity.

Critical Discourse Analysis reminds us that resistance often lies in reworking the very discourse used to oppress. In this series, characters like Emem and Adanna show that even silence, code-switching, or sharp utterances can become tools for survival and rebellion.

One of the earliest examples comes from Emem's blunt dismissal of Adanna in Episode 1. Sensing Adanna's naïve hope, Emem snaps: "Wetin you de do for here? Carry yourself and your pikin commot for here" (E1:10:23). Her use of Pidgin is deliberate. Unlike the polished English spoken by Evans and Sis Barb, Pidgin here becomes a language of truth-telling. Emem's words cut through the clinic's false benevolence with urgency and clarity. CDA would interpret this as counter-discourse Emem resists institutional language with the raw immediacy of her own.

. Adanna's resistance is quieter but no less powerful. When Evans says, "Intelligence isn't really a desirable quality around here..." (E:1:38:12), his goal is to suppress thought. But Adanna keeps asking questions and refuses to comply, directly challenging his authority. Her silence at key moments also speaks volumes. In oppressive systems, silence is often mistaken for submission, but here it becomes defiance. Adanna's silence withholds consent and echoes bell hooks' idea in *Talking Back* that refusing to speak on the oppressor's terms is itself a form of resistance.

Maternal language also becomes a site of resistance. While Evans and Barb reduce the girls to "makers" or "units," the girls reclaim identity through possessive, affectionate terms like "my pikin" and "my baby" (repeated across Episodes 1–2). These

words are not just emotional they're political. They challenge the commodification of motherhood and restore relational value. In CDA terms, this is a direct challenge to dominant discourse, foregrounding humanity over commerce.

. Characters like Ebun, Itunu, and Asha also resist through dialogue. Despite their traumatic backstories rape, prostitution, and exploitation their whispered conversations in the clinic form an alternative network of speech. Gossip, shared tears, and quiet warnings become what Foucault calls subjugated knowledge: hidden narratives that survive beneath official discourse. By telling each other stories, they resist isolation and build solidarity.

. Emem stands out as a voice of fearless defiance. Even after Evans takes her child, she continues to challenge him until she's forcibly silenced with a needle. Her voice rises when others shrink back. When Evans declares, "You do not question my authority at this hour" (E:2:00:04), Sis Barb's repeated attempts to confront him show that language can still destabilise dominance even when met with violence. Their resistance reflects Paulo Freire's concept of *conscientização* the process by which the oppressed gain critical awareness and refuse to be voiceless.

. Resistance also exists outside the clinic. Adanna's parents shame her with words like, "You have brought disgrace to this family" (E1:3:38), but her decision to leave home and search for her lover in Lagos becomes a counter-speech act. She may not say much, but her actions speak clearly: she refuses to be defined by their discourse.

Ultimately, resistance in *Baby Farm* takes many forms. It ranges from sharp outbursts in Pidgin to affectionate maternal language, strategic silences, and storytelling. What connects these acts is their ability to disrupt the dominant discourse of control. The girls are no longer just “makers” or “units” they are mothers, daughters, and survivors. Even in the most oppressive contexts, they seize language spoken and unspoken as a weapon of survival. Through their words, tone, and silence, they carve out space for humanity against the dehumanizing machinery of Evans’ clinic.

2.4 Collective Defiance

The voices of the oppressed in *Baby Farm* are not singular or uniform. They emerge in fragments whispers, gossip, songs, silences, and cries. Yet together, they form a counter-discourse that resists erasure. While Evans and Sis Barb rely on polished, medicalized English to maintain control, the girls’ broken speech and informal exchanges become a subtle but powerful language of solidarity. Critical Discourse Analysis interprets these fragmented voices as collective resistance.

From the very beginning of Episode 1, the girls are presented not as passive victims but as carriers of an alternative communicative system. Ebun, Itunu, and Asha whisper in corners, often mocking the fake kindness Evans and Barb perform. Their speech may lack the coherence of institutional rhetoric, but it destabilizes authority by creating shared knowledge. For instance, when Adanna arrives, Itunu mutters in Pidgin, warning her about the “dark room” (E1:12:40). These warnings don’t openly challenge Evans, but they circulate beneath his structure, exposing what’s hidden.

Tears and cries also function as voices. When Emem loses her child in Episode 2, her plea “please let me hold my baby...” is prolonged and public. Evans tries to shut it down with cold authority: “You told us we can trust you to play by the rules of the game and it’s quite clear we cannot” (E2:01:06). But her cry lingers. CDA teaches us that non-verbal sound is not meaningless it’s discourse that resists silence. Emem’s tears speak louder than Evans’ words, making visible the trauma the clinic tries to suppress.

Code-switching is another marker of resistance. Adanna’s parents switch into Igbo while scolding her: “You could have been the first graduate, but see the shame you have brought us” (E1:3:38). The switch into the home language intensifies the weight of tradition and shame. For Adanna, switching between English and silence becomes a survival strategy. She refuses to adopt Evans’ “maker” vocabulary, holding on to her own words of affection “my pikin, my baby” (E:1:25:42, E:2:09:15). This choice resists commodification and asserts maternal identity. Emem’s final words to her child (E:2:01:37), spoken in Igbo, are consolations to herself and her baby. In this moment, language expresses grief, pain, and resistance. Both Pidgin and Igbo become tools for emotional survival and defiance.

Gossip within the clinic also becomes a communal voice. At several points, the girls joke bitterly about the word “maker,” turning it from Evans’ dehumanising label into a shared inside term. In Episode 1 (37:05), Itunu says, “Na me be Itunu, I be maker of new life.” Evans uses “maker” clinically, but the girls rework it into a badge of survival.

This re-appropriation aligns with Bourdieu's idea of symbolic resistance—taking the language of domination and reshaping it into solidarity.

Silence, often overlooked, becomes one of the loudest voices in *Baby Farm*. Adanna's silence when confronted by her parents (E:1:3:40–3:50) is not weakness it's refusal. Instead of defending herself on their terms, she withholds speech. Foucault reminds us that silence is part of discourse. In this case, Adanna's silence communicates what cannot be said within oppressive structures: her right to choose, her refusal to be shamed, her resistance to their expectations.

The collective voices of the girls also emerge in their shared rituals crying together, whispering secrets, gossiping about escape, calling each other “sister,” “family,” or “blood.” These small acts create a micro-community inside the clinic. Their discourse may be fragmented, but it destabilizes the rigid hierarchy enforced by Evans and Barb. As bell hooks argues in *Talking Back*, even marginal speech carries radical power when it insists on being heard.

In essence, *Baby Farm* portrays the voices of the oppressed as diverse coming from many directions, sometimes fragile, sometimes fearless always present. Their strength lies not in a single loud declaration, but in their persistence. Whisper by whisper, tear by tear, silence by silence, these women resist being reduced to “units” or “makers.” They use their language to survive, to warn, to reclaim identity, and to speak truths that cannot be silenced.

2.5 Gendered Speech and Social Inequality

In *Baby Farm*, one of the clearest indicators of gender inequality is how language itself becomes a tool of control and marginalisation. Through tone, word choice, and coded expressions, the series reveals a society where male authority is reinforced linguistically, while women are diminished, objectified, and silenced. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) helps uncover how this unequal distribution of linguistic power mirrors broader social and gendered hierarchies.

The imbalance is evident from the opening scenes, particularly in Adanna's relationship with her boyfriend. When confronted with her pregnancy, his response is dismissive: "...wrong timing..." (E:1:03:03). This brief, casual phrase avoids responsibility and shifts the emotional and social burden entirely onto Adanna. CDA shows how even brevity can be oppressive; his refusal to engage meaningfully becomes a linguistic escape, leaving her to carry both the child and the shame.

The inequality intensifies when Adanna faces the boy's parents. His mother accuses her with moralistic blame: "You seduced my son and you claim a child from him" (E:1:05:00). This statement is loaded with patriarchal assumptions: the man is innocent, the woman is the corrupter. The word "seduced" casts Adanna as the active agent of wrongdoing, while the son is portrayed as passive and blameless. This gendered inversion reflects a deep-rooted cultural narrative in which women are held accountable for men's actions.

Adanna's own parents reinforce this narrative. Upon discovering her pregnancy, they switch into Igbo to express their disappointment: "You could have been the first

graduate, but see the shame you have brought us...” (E:1:03:38). The code-switching adds emotional weight, signalling not just personal disappointment but cultural dishonour. Adanna’s body becomes the site of family shame, while her feelings and choices are ignored. Instead of offering support, her parents use language to discipline her, repeating “shame” as a marker of moral failure. CDA identifies this as discourse that enforces compliance by making women the guardians of family reputation.

The verbal degradation continues with her mother’s outburst: “Why you wan soil this house with your shame... commot this house... ashawo” (E:1:10:23). Again, “shame” is tied not to Adanna’s personal experience but to the household’s honour. The label “ashawo” (sex worker) is not just an insult it’s a disciplinary tool meant to humiliate and exclude. Gender inequality here is not abstract; it is lived through every insult and rejection. CDA frames these as gendered speech acts language that doesn’t just describe reality but actively produces inequality by casting women as threats to social order.

Inside the clinic, the inequality persists but is masked by formal language. Dr Evans speaks with calculated superiority, using words that sound benevolent but conceal domination. When Sis Barb introduces Adanna to Evans, she says: “This is Adanna, she’s considering being one of our guests” (E1:24:59–25:02). The term “guest” disguises coercion as hospitality. CDA reveals how euphemisms like this sustain inequality by erasing the realities of exploitation.

Evans later makes a chilling remark: “Intelligence isn’t really a desirable quality around here...” (E1:38:15). This statement discourages critical thought and autonomy,

specifically targeting young pregnant women. It implies that they are incapable of rationality and undeserving of agency. His words strip them of intellectual value, reinforcing submission under the guise of clinical exploitation.

The term “makers,” used repeatedly by Evans and his associates (E1:37:05), further enforces inequality. While men are referred to as “clients” and treated with respect, the women are reduced to reproductive functions. They are not addressed by name or personality, but by their capacity to produce babies. CDA highlights how such lexical choices shows symbolic violence what Pierre Bourdieu describes as harm inflicted through language that quietly reinforces subordination.

Yet, resistance emerges through alternative language. Emem warns Adanna: “Wetin you de do for here? Carry yourself and your pikin commot for here” (E:1:15:42). Her use of Pidgin English stands in contrast to Evans’ polished, manipulative register. Pidgin becomes a language of truth and resistance raw, direct, and protective. Unlike the deceptive rhetoric of the clinic, Emem’s words are unfiltered and empowering. Through her, we see how gender inequality in language is challenged from below. Another scene in Episode 1 when Adanna says “I wan commot, you say I fit commot anytime I want” these words of Adanna to Sise Barb is resistance. Her word scream a loud no to its oppressors, this show how humans who are informed of their right resiste oppression even when there is little or no free well .

What unfolds in Baby Farm is a layered portrayal of gendered linguistic inequality. Men and institutions speak with authority, brevity, and control, while women

are subjected to moralistic insults, euphemisms, and shame. Yet the women carve out spaces of resistance by reclaiming affectionate speech “my pikin, my baby” and by choosing alternative registers like Pidgin or silence. The series shows that the struggle for gender equality is not only fought through actions but through every word spoken, withheld, or redefined.

2.6 Hierarchies and Class Divide

One of the most visible ways *Baby Farm* dramatizes social hierarchy is through its use of different languages and registers particularly the contrast between Standard English and Nigeria Pidgin. This linguistic divide is not just about communication; it symbolises class, power, and identity. Standard English is consistently associated with authority, education, and control, while Pidgin becomes the register of survival, solidarity, and marginalization.

From the outset, Dr Evans and Sis Barb speak in polished Standard English. In Episode 1, when they lure Adanna into the clinic, their speech is dressed in clinical and benevolent language: “We offer free food, free accommodation and free healthcare. We want to help women in your position and give babies the best chance at a better life” (E1:23:29–23:47). Words like “offer,” “help,” and “better life” position them as charitable benefactors. But beneath this language lies exploitation. CDA shows that Standard English here functions as symbolic capital (Bourdieu), granting legitimacy and masking the violence within the clinic.

In contrast, the women trapped in the “farm” often speak Pidgin English. Emem’s warning “Them de come... nor let them carry my pikin go” (E:1:41:50) and Adanna’s question “Where Emem de?” (E:1:03:53) are raw and urgent. Pidgin signals immediacy and solidarity. Unlike Evans’ abstract promises, Emem’s language prioritises survival. CDA highlights that Pidgin is not a “lower” form of speech but a tool of truth-telling that cuts through institutional deception.

This linguistic divide is also gendered and class-based. Evans and his elite “clients” are addressed in Standard English. For example, Cherise is introduced as a “potential client” (E:1:08:21), a phrase that frames her as respectable and financially capable. Meanwhile, the women forced to give birth are called “makers” (E:1:37:05) a term rarely used in Pidgin but often paired with English to strip them of individuality and reduce them to reproductive function. The divide is clear: English elevates clients to positions of power, while Pidgin binds the exploited in marginality.

Scenes with Adanna’s parents further reveal how switching between languages reflects class and social expectations. When her pregnancy is discovered, her parents scold her in Igbo: “This child has killed me, leave me let me kill her” (E:1:03:38, translated). They speak in Igbo to express fury and cultural shame: “Why you wan soil this house with your shame... commot this house... ashawo” (E:1:10:23). The alternation between registers is significant. Standard English communicates disappointment tied to middle-class aspirations, education, upward mobility, respectability. Igbo and Pidgin, on the other hand, express intimate anger and rejection. CDA interprets this code-switching

as a layering of social meaning: English for public image, local languages for emotional truth, and Pidgin for the raw brutality of judgement.

English and Pidgin create invisible boundaries within the clinic. When Evans says, “Intelligence isn’t really a desirable quality around here” (E:1:38:15), the polished delivery in English reinforces his authority and separates him from the girls, who communicate in Pidgin whispers. For example, Itunu introduces herself: “Na me be Itunu, I be maker of new life” (E1:37:05). Her Pidgin self-identification reflects both subjugation (accepting Evans’ label) and defiance (asserting her existence through her own register). CDA reminds us that language choice is never neutral it positions speakers within hierarchies of power and resistance.

The symbolic value of these registers is stark: Standard English functions as the language of domination, law, and commerce, while Pidgin operates as the language of the oppressed informal, communal, and resistant. Evans’ reliance on Standard English cloaks his operations in legitimacy, while the women’s use of Pidgin provides solidarity in their shared struggle. The linguistic gap mirrors the social divisions between the elites who exploit and the powerless who resist.

In *Baby Farm*, language does not merely reflect class it constructs it. To speak Standard English is to wield authority and respectability. To speak Pidgin is to inhabit marginalization, but also to access a counter-discourse of truth and survival. CDA helps us see that the battle for survival in the “farm” is not only about bodies but about words, registers, and the symbolic weight they carry.

Switching between languages becomes a survival strategy. The use of Igbo and Pidgin communicates intimacy and unfiltered emotion. It strips away the public image English represents, reducing Adanna to a figure of disgrace within her cultural community. For her, learning when to respond in silence, when to hold onto English, and when to use Pidgin becomes key to surviving a hostile household.

Inside the clinic, code-switching becomes even sharper. Emem, who understands the brutality of Evans' operation, warns Adanna in Pidgin: "Them de come... lock door..." (E1:41:48). Pidgin here serves two functions: it communicates fear and calls for solidarity, and it encodes resistance in a language the elites rarely use. Yet when Emem confronts Evans, she switches to English: "Please let me hold my baby" (E:2:01:19). This deliberate shift shows how she uses Standard English to contest authority in moments where legitimacy is demanded, while retaining Pidgin in private spaces of trust.

Even the clinic staff exploit language switching for manipulation. Sis Barb uses a warm, semi-formal tone when recruiting Adanna: "We offer free food, free accommodation and free healthcare" (E:1:23:29–23:47). But in private, she slips into pragmatic English, discussing "makers" and "clients" (E1:24:59). CDA reveals this duplicity: public English presents benevolence, while private English strips the girls of humanity. Language switching here is used not for survival but for control.

The girls, however, reclaim this strategy. Itunu introduces herself in Pidgin: "Na me be Itunu, I be maker of new life" (E:1:37:05). By adopting Evans' label but framing it

in Pidgin, she acknowledges her oppression while asserting agency. Her choice resists the polished dominance of English and asserts a lived truth that cannot be erased.

Adanna's survival also depends on linguistic adaptation. She uses Pidgin to build trust with fellow victims, but switches to English when confronting injustice. In Episode 2, when she cries out against the system taking away babies, her words are in English—emphasising the seriousness of her claim and attempting to cut through institutional indifference. This reflects Judith Butler's concept of performative speech: her utterance, even if silenced, challenges the structures that deny her voice.

Ultimately, switching languages in *Baby Farm* is not just convenience—it is strategy. The elites switch registers to manipulate and control. The victims switch to resist, survive, and assert their humanity. CDA makes clear that every shift in code is a negotiation of power. In the end, the tension between Standard English and Pidgin—between polished control and raw survival is bridged by code-switching. For the women, this linguistic dexterity becomes one of the few weapons they have in a world determined to silence.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined how *Baby Farm* reveals the commodification of women and children through language, power, and institutional discourse. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, it showed how words like “makers” and “clients” enforce control, echoing Foucault's disciplinary discourse and Bourdieu's symbolic violence. Yet, resistance emerges through Pidgin, silence, and maternal language—acts aligning with

Freire's and bell hooks' views of language as liberation. The contrast between Standard English and Pidgin reflects gendered and class hierarchies. Ultimately, *Baby Farm* portrays language as both a weapon of oppression and a tool of resistance through which women reclaim identity, dignity, and survival.

CHAPTER THREE

INSTITUTIONAL COMPLICITY: METAPHOR OF CONFINEMENT, REPRODUCTIVE CONTROL AND RESISTANCE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the use of metaphor in *Baby Farm* as a means of reinforcing, critiquing, and unsettling social realities particularly those tied to gender, power, and reproductive control. Drawing on the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, the chapter analyses how metaphor extends beyond dialogue and enters into visuals, gestures, character actions, and the broader narrative environment.

In *Baby Farm*, metaphor is not merely a stylistic feature but a powerful representational tool. It makes visible the invisible systems of control and resistance, such as commodified motherhood, institutional complicity in gendered oppression, and the social stigma surrounding infertility. The metaphors woven into the series contribute to both emotional resonance and critical commentary. The documentary-styled visuals, haunting imagery, symbolic objects (like syringes and handcuffs), and character dynamics all work together to represent deeper societal anxieties surrounding motherhood, exploitation, and survival. One example from the series is the repeated visual motif of locked rooms, barred windows, and hidden corridors within the Evans Foundation facility, which evoke the metaphor of confinement—as womb, or motherhood as imprisonment. This recurring theme, highlighted in both Margaret Lyons' *New York*

Times review and Nzeakor's critical appraisal, helps construct the central argument of the series: that motherhood, in the context of socio-economic violence and commodification, can become a prison rather than a sacred role.

Additionally, the language used by institutional actors transforms biological processes into transactional exchanges. Pregnancies are referred to with euphemisms like "units," "deliveries," or "assets," reducing maternal experience to commodified objects. Through such metaphorical language and symbolic storytelling, *Baby Farm* critiques the sanitization of structural violence and illuminates the lived realities of the marginalised.

Thus, this chapter will examine how metaphor functions in *Baby Farm* across three levels: dialogue, visual structure, and character action. It will reveal how these metaphorical elements provide layered insight into the show's exploration of resistance, control, birth, trauma, and freedom—while reflecting entrenched gendered inequalities in Nigerian society.

3.2 Metaphors of Confinement, Female Vulnerability and Bodily Resistance.

Baby Farm constructs a persistent metaphor of entrapment and systemic confinement through both visual language and dialogue. From the opening episodes, the series illustrates how young women are boxed into oppressive circumstances shaped by familial rejection, societal expectations, and institutional control. This metaphor operates across multiple registers: domestic shame, urban displacement, reproductive stigma, and eventual incarceration within the Evans Foundation.

In Episode 1 (03:30), Adanna is emotionally berated by her parents for becoming pregnant while preparing to be the family's first university graduate. Her mother's declaration of shame transforms the family home—typically a space of refuge—into a metaphorical prison. Rather than offering support, the family ostracises her, erecting the first symbolic bars of confinement.

Upon arriving in Lagos, Adanna's pregnancy becomes a social label. In Episode 1 (10:23), a landlord figure shouts, "Why you wan soil this house with your shame... commot this house ashawo!" The use of **ashawo** (a derogatory term for sex worker in Nigerian Pidgin) frames her reproductive status as moral transgression. Lagos itself becomes a metaphorical space of rejection, where her body is viewed as contaminated and unworthy.

This theme extends to Cherry, a wealthy woman struggling with infertility. In Episode 1 (12:22), Cherry whispers, "I should never have told the world we were trying," revealing the societal shame attached to barrenness. Infertility is portrayed not merely as a medical issue but as a social disgrace—an internal prison of unmet expectations. While Adanna is punished for being too fertile, Cherry is metaphorically imprisoned for being unproductive. These parallel experiences demonstrate how women across class lines are entrapped by reproductive norms.

Literal confinement within the Evans Foundation intensifies these symbolic prisons. The nursery, introduced in Episode 1 (24:17), is a pristine but surveilled space where infants "wait for their new home." This euphemism recasts the clinic as a holding

facility, echoing metaphors of the body as commodity and the clinic as production line. The pink room offered to Adanna (E:1:30:10) represents false freedom—a soft enclosure preceding hard lock. Her relocation to a bunk room strips her of individuality, metaphorically erasing her identity.

The punishment room in Episode 1 (38:50) offers the most striking visual metaphor of entrapment. Marked with eerie handprints and cloaked in darkness, it evokes psychological horror. When Adanna was locked inside in Episode 2 (08:58) for nonconformity, the room becomes a physical manifestation of ideological suppression. It functions like Foucault's panopticon not merely to punish, but to intimidate and control. The room also made her to discover some hidden things in the clinic. A contrasting scene in Episode 2 (55:00) shows Dr. Evans and Sis Barb riding horses while discussing clinic logistics. The horses symbolise freedom, power, and wealth, sharply contrasting with the trapped girls inside. In visual metaphor, those on horseback dominate those behind bars, reinforcing systemic inequality.

The metaphor of confinement extends into broader social systems. Joy, the blogger, expresses negativism about law enforcement in Episode 3 (15:09): “You think police will listen to us that we are talking about rich foreigners?” Her words expose a justice system working in the good of those who are powerful, where the oppressed are voiceless. When Emem's sister later approaches the police (E3:32:48), she is dismissed with, “That's your sister? Is she an ashawo?” This response criminalizes women who deviate from social norms, reinforcing structural confinement.

The climax of this metaphor unfolds in Episode 5 (24:47), when Chief Alabi instructs Dr. Evans to burn down his office and “get out of here.” This moment reveals law enforcement’s complicity in sustaining the metaphorical prison. Even as the structure collapses, the system protects its architects.

The series concludes with a powerful reversal. Dr. Evans is locked in the same torture room once used on the girls, and the building is set ablaze. This final image reclaims the metaphor what once confined the oppressed becomes the grave of the oppressor. It visualises poetic justice and the collapse of systems built on silencing and incarceration.

Within this environment of surveillance and control, physical actions particularly those performed silently or in defiance of authority emerge as potent metaphors for resistance. Where speech is punished or appropriated, the female body becomes the final site of protest, and movement transforms into symbolic language that challenges control and asserts autonomy.

One of the earliest instances of embodied resistance occurs in Episode 2 (32:51), when the girls orchestrate an escape using a laundry cart. This object, typically mundane and overlooked, is reimagined as a vehicle of liberation. By concealing Adanna inside it, the girls subvert its original function, transforming a tool of routine into an instrument of defiance. The cart becomes a metaphor for reappropriating mechanisms of oppression into pathways of escape. Though seemingly minor, the act signifies that rebellion often begins with what dominant systems fail to notice.

Another layered act of resistance is seen in Episode 5 (13:11), when Emem's sister expresses hope that the media she contacted will respond: "Na to hope say those media people when I send message give for her phone go show... crowd self go show... police too..." Her strategy bypasses formal institutions, appealing instead to public visibility through mass media. The reference to "crowd," "police," and "media" functions as a metaphorical call to assemble witnesses. The flyer she leaves behind operates as a silent outcry a written substitute for speech in a context where voices are routinely dismissed.

In Episode 4 (28:16), Emem's sister uses a small bribe wrapped in white paper to gain entry into the Evans Foundation fundraiser. While the act involves corruption, it is driven by a pursuit of justice. The white paper, often symbolising peace or innocence, becomes the wrapper for a subversive transaction. In this moment, corruption is inverted used not to exploit, but to expose. Her presence at the event disrupts the Foundation's curated image, serving as a metaphorical fracture in its polished façade.

Silence itself is rendered as resistance. In Episode 3 (20:20), Cherry Okon delivers a speech about her miscarriages, intended to humanise the Foundation's mission. When Joy, the blogger, interrupts with "Actually five," Cherry's ensuing silence becomes a moment of rupture. This pause, laden with discomfort and judgment, undermines the scripted narrative. Her silence does not signify submission; rather, it exposes the tension between institutional image and personal truth, revealing the emotional cost of complicity.

Further resistance is demonstrated in Episode 3 (32:48), when Emem's sister returns to the police station after being dismissed. The officer's mocking question "That's your sister? Is she an ashawo?" attempts to delegitimise her concern. Yet her persistence, despite rejection, constitutes a radical act. In a context where certain women are deemed disposable, her refusal to be silenced becomes a metaphor for reclaiming visibility and asserting personhood on behalf of the marginalised.

A climactic metaphor of rebellion unfolds in Episode 5's final moments. Dr. Evans is confined in the same torture room once used to punish the girls, while his wife sets fire to the building and its evidence. This act transcends literal destruction. The room, once a site of suppression, becomes a space of reckoning. Fire traditionally associated with purification and renewal functions as a closing metaphor for flawed justice. The system turns inward, consuming itself. The oppressor is imprisoned by his own mechanisms. The act performed by Sis Barb is layered: it embodies revenge, confession, and collapse.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power offers a useful lens here. Power is not only enacted through speech but also through the shaping of perception and recognition (Bourdieu 1991). The acts of running, hiding, burning, bribing though performed under surveillance disrupt the dominant narrative. These gestures become coded language, challenging authority through embodied metaphor.

In *Baby Farm*, rebellion is rarely overt. It resides in the margins: in laundry carts, in silent exchanges, in trembling hands, in unspoken grief. These actions, while modest,

dismantle the metaphor of helplessness and replace it with one of endurance, resilience, and slow-burning resistance. Through physical defiance, the characters inscribe their refusal to be commoditized, reclaiming agency in a system designed to erase it.

3.3 Reproductive Commodification and Visual Metaphors of Control

Baby Farm presents pregnancy not as a life-affirming process but as a commodified transaction an economic output subject to deadlines, surveillance, and market logic. This conceptual metaphor is embedded in the film's language, visuals, and institutional framing, exposing how reproductive labour is stripped of emotional and spiritual significance and repurposed for profit.

In Episode 2 (28:16), Dr. Evans refers to the clinic's operation as a "breeding programme," evoking industrial and eugenic undertones. The clinic functions less as a healthcare facility and more as a factory, with the girls reduced to reproductive machinery. This aligns with Michel Foucault's theory of biopower, where institutions regulate bodies to serve economic and political ends (Foucault 1995). The term "*maker*", repeated across Episodes 1 to 4 (E:1:55), superficially suggests agency but is steeped in irony. These girls are not creators in the traditional sense they are vessels for forced surrogacy, their labour repackaged as empowerment.

Visual metaphors reinforce this commodification. In Episode 1 (24:17), Sise Barb describes the nursery as a space where "infants wait for their new home." The sterile, colour-coded room resembles a showroom, with babies displayed like inventory. The metaphor of supply chain logistics is evident: the nursery operates as a packaging

unit, not a cradle. Surveillance cameras and clinical order further dehumanise the space, echoing Marx's theory of alienation, where human life becomes detached from its producers and commodified for consumption (Marx 1844).

Cherry's speech at the press conference (E3:20:15) adds another layer. Her statement—"I know what it feels like to long for something you can't have... the Foundation's work is nothing short of a miracle"—romanticises the transactional nature of parenthood. Her personal grief is co-opted to justify the sale of children, transforming emotional pain into consumer demand. As bell hooks argues, systems of domination often require the erasure of personal history and voice to maintain control (hooks 1989).

The film also critiques how institutions interact with media to sustain this commodification. In Episode 5 (20:17), Dr. Evans declares, "There's no law here. Money is the law. We are the law." This statement obliterates any humanitarian pretense, asserting that capital—not ethics—governs the reproductive economy. His words reflect Pierre Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power, where language shapes perception and legitimises dominance (Bourdieu 1991).

This economic logic is reinforced through punishment and surveillance. In Episode 2 (26:26), girls who fail to conceive are flogged publicly. Fertility becomes a performance metric, and non-productive bodies are treated as defective units. The womb is reframed as a rental space or warehouse, and emotional attachments are discouraged. In Episode 1 (30:10), Adana's request to keep a family photo is denied, symbolizing the erasure of identity in favour of biological utility.

These metaphors extend into the film's promotional materials. The movie flyer features a girl dressed in pink a colour traditionally associated with innocence and motherhood. However, this image functions as a metaphor for coercion and commodification. The solemn, prison-like backdrop and rigid posture of the women evoke dehumanisation and captivity. The contrasting uniforms pink for idealised femininity, brown for servitude symbolise the stripping of individuality and the transformation of women into reproductive assets.

Additional symbolic elements deepen this critique:

Teddy bear: Represents childhood innocence, but in this context, it becomes a metaphor for the commodification of children.

Handgun: Symbolises violence and control, used to enforce silence and compliance.

Syringe: Suggests medical intervention but carries undertones of illicit sedation and harm; in Episode 1, Dr. Evans uses a syringe to silence Emem.

Brass knuckl : Embodies raw violence and physical assault, reflecting the hidden brutality within the Foundation's operations.

Together, these visual and verbal metaphors construct a coherent critique of reproductive commodification. Pregnancy is not portrayed as a sacred or personal journey but as a contract, a KPI, and a transaction where the producer is denied profit, voice, and autonomy. *Baby Farm* uses these layered symbols to expose how institutions reframe care as control and motherhood as marketable labor.

3.4 Metaphors of Maternal Pain and Institutional Rhetoric

In *Baby Farm*, the figure of the mother is consistently framed through a metaphor of martyrdom portrayed as enduring suffering, sacrifice, and emotional restraint. This representation extends beyond the “makers” within the clinic to include women navigating infertility, societal rejection, and institutional exploitation. These characters function as symbolic vessels through which the series critiques the burden placed on motherhood, revealing how societies impose unattainable expectations of perfection, silence, and selflessness.

A notable example appears in Episode 3 (20:20), where Cheris shares her experience of multiple miscarriages during a press conference. Her trembling voice and emotional vulnerability are publicly valorised, transforming personal trauma into institutional capital. The Foundation repurposes her suffering as a promotional narrative, masking systemic abuse beneath the language of maternal devotion. Her pain is not only normalised but commodified, positioning her as the symbolic mother of the NGO’s mission.

This moment is disrupted when Joy, the investigative blogger, interjects with “Actually, five,” challenging the scripted narrative. The audience’s discomfort and Cheris’s silent response intensify the metaphor of martyrdom. The scene illustrates how maternal suffering is socially accepted only when it remains decorous and unchallenged. Attempts to confront or name the pain are met with hostility, reinforcing the expectation that mothers must endure quietly.

Earlier in the same episode, Cherry confesses, “I should never have told the world we were trying” (E1:12:22), revealing the shame associated with infertility in a pronatalist society. Her personal grief is reframed as public failure, and her body becomes a site of social scrutiny. Similarly, Adanna’s pregnancy in Episode 1 (03:30) is condemned by her parents, who view it as a moral and academic collapse. These instances demonstrate how motherhood, when it deviates from patriarchal norms, is not celebrated but punished.

Ebun's death at Episode 5(28:47) shows the significance of the sacrifice of martyrdom which is death,. She lye down her life just to save Adanna and her twins. In a peartrical sociey mothers and women are seen as sacrificial lambs and are expected to sacrifice all for the benefit of its society. This is not just metaphorically but symbolic as Ebun is the sacrificial lamb used to unite mother and child.

The metaphor of martyrdom is further complicated by economic structures. The “makers” are not autonomous mothers they are young women recruited into a system that exploits their fertility. Their suffering is institutionalized, their voices marginalised, and their bodies reduced to reproductive output. In Episode 2 (04:00), girls are punished for failing to conceive quickly, turning maternity into a performance metric. The metaphor becomes literal: mothers must produce or face consequences.

This emotional and physical exploitation is sustained through a calculated use of language. Institutions within *Baby Farm* deploy sanitized vocabulary bureaucratic terms, euphemisms, and emotionally detached phrasing to obscure violence and justify unethical

practices. Language becomes a tool of concealment, transforming coercion into care and commodification into service.

In Episode 1 (14:35), Dr. Evans accepts a humanitarian award, stating, “On behalf of the babies that will have homes, and families that will be healed, we thank you.” While the statement appears benevolent, the terms “homes” and “healed” strategically mask the transactional nature of the Foundation’s operations. The children are not simply placed into loving families they are processed through a commercial system. The language reframes exploitation as restoration.

The term “maker,” introduced in Episode 1 (00:55), exemplifies this linguistic manipulation. It suggests empowerment, yet within the clinic, it functions as a euphemism for breeder. The girls are not granted reproductive agency; they are instrumentalised. This aligns with Foucault’s concept of disciplinary discourse, where language regulates bodies and obscures structural violence (Foucault 1995).

Further examples include Sise Barb’s description of the nursery in Episode 1 (24:17) as a place where infants “wait for their new home.” The phrase evokes warmth and destiny, yet the reality is mechanical and transactional. The nursery operates more as a warehouse than a cradle, and the term “waiting” conceals the commodification of newborns. At the press conference in Episode 3 (20:15), Cheris refers to the Foundation’s work as “miraculous” and speaks of “families being built.” These emotionally charged words divert attention from the machinery of exploitation. Joy’s attempts to challenge

this narrative are met with discomfort and suppression, highlighting how institutional language resists rupture.

In Episode 2 (28:16), Dr. Evans refers to the operation as a “breeding programme,” stripping pregnancy of emotional depth and reframing it as a goal-oriented process. This terminology reflects Freire’s notion of oppressor consciousness, which transforms human life into objects of domination (Freire 1970, p. 58). Language becomes the primary mechanism of that transformation.

The humanitarian façade, revealing a raw assertion of dominance. It exemplifies Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic power, where language shapes perception and enforces structures of control (Bourdieu 1991). In the movie, the clearest articulation of institutional power through language occurs in Episode 5 (20:17), when Dr. Evans declares, “We have not gone far enough. There is no law here. Money is the law. We are the law.”

Even lower-level staff receptionists, nurses, security guards participate in this linguistic cover-up. Their rehearsed responses, filled with terms like “procedures,” “confidentiality,” and “protection,” create an illusion of care while enabling abuse. The institution functions as a linguistic machine, producing compliance through carefully curated vocabulary.

In *Baby Farm*, maternal suffering and institutional rhetoric are intertwined. The metaphor of the mother as martyr is sustained not only through emotional imagery but through language that glorifies pain and conceals exploitation. By exposing these

mechanisms, the series critiques how modern institutions—particularly those cloaked in humanitarian language use metaphor and discourse to protect their interests while silencing the vulnerable.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined Baby Farm’s use of metaphor as a vehicle for exposing institutional complicity, reproductive control, and the struggle for resistance. Through Conceptual Metaphor Theory, it revealed how confinement, commodification, and maternal pain function as layered metaphors representing gendered oppression and systemic violence. Visual and linguistic elements—such as locked rooms, syringes, and euphemistic language like “makers” and “units”—transform motherhood into a site of exploitation and surveillance. Yet, amidst control, resistance emerges through silence, rebellion, and symbolic acts of defiance. Ultimately, Baby Farm uses metaphor to critique institutions that profit from suffering while affirming women’s enduring resilience.

CHAPTER FOUR

LANGUAGE, RELIGION, MEDIA, AND STATE POWER IN THE REINFORCEMENT OF SOCIAL STIGMA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how language, religion, media, and state power help to keep social stigma alive in society. Language spreads ideas through words, religion supports them with moral authority, the media like Joy to the World.com repeats them through images and stories, and the state especially the police gives them official backing. Together, these institutions shape how people view issues like infertility and women's roles.

The discussion shows that stigma is not just about personal views but about systems that make inequality continue. It also notes that, even within these structures, there are voices of resistance that try to challenge and question them. Characters such as Adanna, Emem, and Ebun engage with these institutions through language and symbolic acts of resistance. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) remains the guiding theoretical lens, offering insight into how ideology is embedded in institutional language and how power is exercised or contested through speech, silence, and legitimizing narratives (Fairclough 45; Van Dijk 112).

Finally, the chapter turns to personal testimonies and counter-discourses, illustrating how individual narratives challenge the dominant portrayal of benevolence constructed by Dr. Evans and his allies. Through these perspectives, Chapter Four

demonstrates that *Baby Farm* critiques not only individual corruption but a network of institutional power sustained by language, silence, and symbolic control.

4.2 Institutional Complicity and the Language of Silence

In *Baby Farm*, institutions are portrayed not as neutral arbiters of justice or morality, but as active enablers of systemic abuse. From the family unit to law enforcement and the media, structures that should protect the vulnerable instead function as mechanisms of dismissal, shame, and silence. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the series exposes how institutional language legitimises exploitation and sustains elite interests.

The family emerges as the first site of institutional failure. In Episode 1 (03:30), Adanna's parents respond to her pregnancy with condemnation: "You could have been the first graduate but see the shame you have brought us." This utterance prioritises reputation over care, framing motherhood as a moral transgression. CDA reveals how such discourse reinforces patriarchal norms, assigning the burden of honour to the girl child while erasing her autonomy. The family's reaction exemplifies how domestic institutions reproduce gendered control through language.

This exclusion continues in the economic sphere. At Episode 1 (10:23), Adanna's Lagos employer declares: "Why you wan soil this house with your shame... commot this house... ashawo." The term *ashawo*, a derogatory label, functions as institutional vocabulary that criminalizes reproductive deviation. Employment, a key social structure, becomes inaccessible due to pregnancy, demonstrating how women's

bodies are policed and penalized across domains. The employer's language enacts economic silencing, reinforcing the metaphor of the female body as a site of contamination.

The media, another institution central to public perception, is depicted as complicit in sustaining the Foundation's image. In Episode 1 (11:15), camera flashes and red carpet coverage present the Evans Foundation as benevolent. The absence of investigative scrutiny reveals how mainstream media operate as instruments of legitimacy, endorsing exploitation through celebratory framing. In contrast, Joy the blogger disrupts this narrative. Her question in Episode 1 (11:54) "So what is a big celebrity like you doing in this charity event? Is it because of your loss and considering adopting a baby?" though sarcastic, exposes the performative nature of institutional benevolence. Joy's intervention illustrates how alternative media challenge dominant discourses and create space for counter-narratives.

Law enforcement represents the most explicit form of institutional betrayal. In Episode 3 (32:48), Emem's sister reports her sibling's abduction, stating: "My sister was kidnapped by very powerful people and now I think they might be after me." The police respond dismissively: "That's your sister? Is she an ashawo? ... You want me to arrest a doctor? This woman watch too many movies." This exchange trivialises human trafficking and reframes the victim as morally compromised. Van Dijk's theory of institutional discourse is evident here: power is maintained not only through speech but

through strategic silencing and ridicule. The police's language delegitimizes the report, protecting elite actors while undermining the credibility of the vulnerable.

Corruption further entrenches complicity. In Episode 4 (28:16), Emem's sister gains access to the Foundation's fundraiser by bribing a guard with money wrapped in white paper. What should be a secure checkpoint becomes a transactional gateway, revealing how institutional roles are subverted to serve exploitative networks. Later, in Episode 5 (24:47), Dr. Evans appeals to Chief Alabi, the head of police: "Chief Alabi, what is this? Tell these people to give us some space." Chief Alabi responds, "My friend you better start thinking about the statement you are going to make right now. I will not be dragged into any scandal." This exchange confirms the police as collaborators, prioritizing institutional reputation over justice. The ideology underpinning this complicity is articulated in Episode 5 (20:17), when Dr. Evans declares: "We haven't gone far enough. There's no law here, money is the law, we are the law." This statement encapsulates the logic of impunity. It reframes legality as a tool of the powerful, where justice is not a principle but a commodity. CDA reveals how such language constructs a self-legitimizing narrative, positioning institutional actors as arbiters of truth and morality.

Across these examples, silence and complicity are not passive omissions but deliberate strategies of dominance. Institutions in Baby Farm do not merely fail to protect—they actively participate in the erasure of victims and the elevation of perpetrators. Through shaming discourse, euphemistic framing, and rhetorical dismissal, they reproduce the violence of the Foundation. CDA demonstrates that these linguistic

choices are embedded in broader structures of power, where the poor and vulnerable are silenced while elites maintain control through carefully constructed narratives (Fairclough 89; Foucault 27).

4.3 Religion, Media, and the Social Perception of Motherhood

In *Baby Farm*, motherhood is constructed not merely as a biological function but as a social marker of identity, respectability, and moral legitimacy. Through language, gesture, silence, and media representation, the series critiques how women are evaluated almost exclusively by their reproductive capacity. Religion and media play particularly influential roles in reinforcing these ideologies, transforming private struggles into public commentary and moral spectacle.

In Episode 1 (03:30), Adanna's parents respond to her pregnancy with shame and disappointment. Her father's rebuke "You could have been the first graduate... but see the shame you have brought us" is delivered in Igbo, a deliberate code-switch that intensifies its emotional and cultural resonance. The use of a mother tongue situates the condemnation within a framework of religious and communal morality, framing pregnancy outside wedlock as a transgression against both family honour and divine expectation. CDA reveals how parental discourse operates as a linguistic tool of social control, embedding Adanna's perceived failure within a broader moral order that privileges chastity and obedience for women.

This moral framing continues in Episode 1 (10:23), when Adanna is rejected by a Lagos employer who declares, "Why you wan soil this house with your shame? Commot

this house... ashawo.” The metaphor of “soiling” links her condition to impurity, while the insult ashawo (sex worker) collapses reproductive status into moral deviance. Religious morality is embedded in everyday speech, where female sexuality is policed and punished regardless of context. The language functions as a gatekeeping mechanism, excluding women from economic participation based on perceived moral failure.

Media intensifies these stigmas by converting personal pain into public judgment. In Episode 1 (11:54), Joy, the blogger behind Joy to the World.com, asks Cherry, “So what is a big celebrity like you doing in this charity event? Is it because of your loss and considering adopting a baby?” Though framed as a question, the tone is performative and mocking. Infertility becomes entertainment, confirming Goffman’s theory that stigma is not inherent but discursively constructed. Cherry’s reproductive history is transformed into spectacle, her body subjected to public scrutiny and ridicule.

This theme escalates in Episode 3 (20:15 20:20), when Dr. Evans announces Cherry as the Foundation’s global ambassador. Cherry publicly confesses, “Yes, five miscarriages... so I know what it feels like to long for something you can’t have.” Her personal grief is appropriated into a narrative of resilience, staged for media consumption and donor appeal. CDA reveals that her reproductive pain is commoditized as symbolic capital, legitimizing the Foundation’s operations. The expectation that she disclose her miscarriages underscores how motherhood is treated as the ultimate marker of womanhood, and failure to conceive demands public justification.

The blogger's interruption "Actually five" (E3:20:20) delivered with sarcasm, transforms vulnerability into humiliation. The audience's reaction gasps and silence demonstrates the collective force of discourse: infertility is judged as deficiency. Hooks' argument in *Talking Back* that women's voices are disciplined by a culture of surveillance resonates here, as Cherry's pain becomes a moral performance where she is simultaneously pitied and mocked (hooks 122).

Religious influence is subtly embedded in the metaphors surrounding motherhood. Cherry's testimony resembles a confession, drawing on narrative structures of sin, suffering, and redemption. Her miscarriages are framed as trials, her role in the Foundation as penance, and her fundraising efforts as acts of service. This sanctified framing merges religion with philanthropy, using the language of sacrifice and divine purpose to justify exploitative practices. The religious undertones elevate her suffering into moral virtue, masking the institutional violence beneath a veneer of spiritual redemption.

Meanwhile, the press represented by flashing cameras in Episode 1 (11:15) functions as an institutional accomplice. Rather than interrogating the Foundation's activities, the media reproduce a curated narrative of benevolence. CDA demonstrates that omission is as powerful as speech: the refusal to investigate transforms the press into a participant in systemic oppression.

The intersection of religion, media, and motherhood reaches its peak in the fundraiser scene (Episode 3, 17:50–20:30) Cherish aviates between sanctimony and

scandal, invoking the language of brokenness “I know what it feels like to be broken” while Joy disrupts the moralized script with pointed questioning: “Cherish”, is that the only work you are doing with the Evans Foundation?” This clash of discourses highlights resistance. Joy refuses to allow the Foundation to monopolize the moral narrative, challenging the audience to confront their complicity.

Thus *Baby Farm* reveals how women’s identities are policed by a trinity of discourses: family (through religion and morality), media (through spectacle and gossip), and society (through expectations of fertility). CDA shows how these discourses intersect to marginalise women, reducing them to binary roles either “mothers” or “failures.” Yet resistance persists in the defiant interruptions of Joy and in the silences of Cherry, whose pained expression communicates truths that language cannot contain.

4.4 Corruption and State Power

Baby Farm presents corruption not as a usual or routine practice embedded in everyday institutional life. Through critical discourse analysis, the series reveals how language, gesture, and scene construction normalize abuse while presenting it as order. Speech by powerful actors does not merely describe reality; it produces it. It closes investigations, opens doors, and converts violence into procedure.

A. Police denial and the language of minimization are central to this dynamic. In Episode 3 (32:48), when Emem’s sister returns to the station to report continued danger, the officer responds with a chain of dismissive questions: “You want to report a missing person?... That is your sister, is she an ashawo?... Lots of girls

come from the village and go to the streets.” These utterances shift the frame from crime to morality, and from a specific victim to a stereotype. The label “ashawo” renders the missing woman unworthy of protection, while the generalisation about “girls from the village” reduces urgency to nuisance. In Bourdieu’s terms, this is symbolic power in practice: the speech act transforms a report into non-action, bypassing evidence and due process.

- B. Gatekeeping and petty bribery** further illustrate how corruption is embedded in institutional performance. In Episode 4 (28:16), Emem’s sister gains entry to the Foundation’s fundraiser by bribing a guard. Though brief, the gesture reveals the system’s logic: security is a performance for the public, while actual access is commodified. The scene links spectacle, money, and selective visibility. The charity hall is protected in name but porous in practice. Corruption survives through small transactions that appear as flexibility, while the institution maintains a façade of order and care.
- C. Sovereign speech and the invention of law** are exemplified in Episode 5 (20:17), when Dr. Evans declares, “There is no law here. Money is the law. We are the law.” The statement performs three discursive moves: it suspends the state, enthrones capital, and asserts personal sovereignty. The grammar is absolute. The first clause erases legal authority; the second redefines the organising principle; the third crowns the speaker. This is not mere arrogance it is policy. In Foucault’s terms, power speaks as truth and produces the field in which others must act.

- D. Conspiracy and Institutional theatre** are exposed in Episode 5 (24:47), when Dr. Evans appeals to Chief Alabi: “Chief Alabi, what is this, tell these people to give us some space.” The Chief replies, “Start thinking about the statement you are going to make right now,” and advises, “Set fire to your office and get out of here now.” The diction is managerial, not investigative. The officer does not request evidence; he issues instructions that protect the institution and erase records. This is crisis management disguised as law enforcement. The police badge legitimises the cover-up, and the uniform converts sabotage into protocol.
- E. Media pressure as counter-power** emerges as a fragile but potent force. In Episode 1 (11:15), cameras bathe the Foundation in celebratory light, staging charity without scrutiny. Yet Joy the blogger disrupts this narrative. Her question to Cherry “Is it because of your loss and considering adopting a baby?” (E:1:11:54) transforms celebrity gossip into a probe of irregular adoption networks. Later, the Foundation monitors *Joy to the World News* on a laptop (E3:00:42), confirming that independent publicity can threaten impunity. Emem’s sister embraces this strategy in Episode 5 (13:11): “Those media people we messaged will show. The crowd will come. The police will join. They will find her and read that note. If that does not make noise, I do not know what will.” The phrase “make noise” becomes a theory of action. Where law fails, visibility becomes method. In Freire’s terms, the oppressed break the culture of silence by creating publics the state cannot fully control.

F. Moral theatre and public confession further illustrate how suffering is commodified. At the press event (E3:20:15–20:20), Dr. Evans names Cherry as global ambassador. She narrates her miscarriages as testimony, while the blogger interrupts with a correction that feels like mockery and exposure. The Foundation turns pain into brand value; the blogger turns brand into scandal. CDA reveals how state-aligned charity absorbs religious and media language to manufacture consent. Hooks describes this disciplinary gaze, where women’s voices and bodies are staged for judgement rather than care.

G. Household shame as the first police is evident in Episode 1 (03:30), when Adanna’s parents rebuke her in Igbo for bringing shame and wasting the chance to be the family’s first graduate. The employer in Lagos echoes this script: “Why you want to soil this house with your shame. Leave this house. Ashawo” (E1:10:23). The insult fuses morality, property, and patriarchal order. By the time Adanna enters the Foundation, she has already been trained to submit to authority that speaks the grammar of care while practicing control.

H. From care to control through naming is central to the clinic’s operation. Women are called “makers,” adopters are “clients,” and the programme is a “breeding” plan. This vocabulary shifts the field from human relations to production and logistics. Naming becomes the mechanism that converts violence into work and theft into service. As Nzeakor observes, the system glosses harm

with a smooth surface, even as lapses such as an officer handling evidence without glove reveal the sloppiness and complicity beneath the discourse of order.

4.5 Conclusion

Taken together, these scenes show corruption not as isolated misconduct but as a language that structures life. It begins with shame in the family, continues as insult in the market, hardens as denial at the station, dresses itself as charity on the stage, and speaks as sovereign command in the office that claims to save children. Visibility, coalition, and refusal to accept imposed labels become the only tools that pierce this web. *Baby Farm* teaches that when law is captured, words still matter. The right words, in the right place, with the right audience, can generate pressure that institutions cannot fully absorb.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Chapters

This study critically examines *Baby Farm* as a cinematic text that exposes the commodification of the female gender, institutional complicity, and gendered inequalities through language, metaphor, and symbolic resistance, using Critical Discourse Analysis and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The research focuses on its objectives with the theoretical framework established through these approaches. It outlines the intention to explore how institutions use language and imagery to control female bodies and how characters resist these structures, further analyzing how language functions as a tool of control and resistance. Terms like “ashawo,” “maker,” and “breeding programme” were shown to regulate identity and reproductive value, while characters such as Adanna and Emem’s sister demonstrated resistance through silence, confrontation, and strategic speech.

Metaphor was explored as a representational strategy, where pregnancy was framed as a product, motherhood as martyrdom, and rebellion as bodily defiance. These metaphors revealed how institutions reduce women to reproductive assets while masking

exploitation behind euphemistic and moralized language. The discussion also situated these discursive strategies within broader institutional frameworks such as family, police, religion, and media. It demonstrated how these institutions reinforce oppression through complicity, moral theatre, and public spectacle, while also highlighting counter-discourses that challenge dominant narratives.

The study's findings confirm that *Baby Farm* critiques systemic violence not only through overall action but through the symbolic power of language and metaphor. It concludes that while institutions speak the grammar of care, they often practice control, and that resistance, though quiet, remains potent through visibility, disruption, and refusal to conform. This research was set out to examine how *Baby Farm* critiques the commodification of the female gender, exposes institutional complicity, and reveals gendered inequalities through language, metaphor, and symbolic resistance.

5.2 Findings

The findings of this research are explained below ;

a. Family as the First Site of Control and Shame

The film portrays the family not as a source of support but as the first institution to enforce moral judgment. In Episode 1 (03:30), Adanna's parents scold her for becoming pregnant, lamenting that she was meant to be the first university graduate. The use of Igbo intensifies the emotional weight, embedding the shame in cultural and religious morality. This scene illustrates how familial discourse prioritizes reputation over care, preparing young women for later silencing by employers and institutions.

b. Language as a Mechanism of Exclusion and Moral Policing

Language is used to categorize and exclude. In Episode 1 (10:23), Adanna's employer calls her "ashawo" and accuses her of "soiling" the house, linking pregnancy to impurity and moral failure. Similarly, in Episode 3 (32:48), the police dismiss Emem's sister's report with, "Is she an ashawo? Lots of girls come from the village and go to the streets." These utterances shift the frame from crime to vice, transforming victims into stereotypes and silencing their claims.

c. Media as a Tool of Spectacle and Resistance

The media is shown both as a complicit institution and a site of resistance. In Episode 1 (11:15), cameras glorify the Evans Foundation at an award night, reinforcing its public image without scrutiny. Joy the blogger, however, disrupts this narrative. Her question to Cherry "Is it because of your loss and considering adopting a baby?" (E1:11:54) exposes societal expectations of motherhood and challenges the Foundation's moral façade. In Episode 3 (00:42), the Foundation monitors Joy's blog, confirming that independent media can threaten institutional impunity.

d. Motherhood as Public Spectacle and Moral Currency

Cherry's infertility is transformed into a public confession. At the press conference (E3:20:15), she says, "I know what it feels like to be broken," framing her miscarriages as emotional capital to legitimise the Foundation's mission. Joy's interruption "Actually five" (E3:20:20) turns vulnerability into public judgment. Cherry's silence and visible pain reflect the emotional cost of being staged for moral approval. Her

fundraising announcement further commodified her suffering, aligning motherhood with institutional branding.

e. Corruption as Routine in Institutions

Corruption is shown as part of everyday life. In Episode 4 (28:16), Emem's sister bribes a guard with money wrapped in white paper so she can enter the fundraiser. This shows how access is treated like something you can just buy. In Episode 5 (24:47), Chief Alabi tells Dr. Evans to "set fire to your office and get out," which shows that even law enforcement is helping the Foundation. Later, Dr. Evans says, "Money is the law. We are the law" (E5:20:17). This means those with money feel above the law, and their words make it seem normal.

f. Visibility and Public Disruption as Resistance

Resistance emerges through visibility and disruption. Emem's sister declares, "If that one no make noise, I nor know wetin go make noise again" (E5:13:11), using media attention as a weapon against institutional silence. Joy's persistent questioning at the press conference (E3:17:50) challenges the Foundation's curated narrative. These acts demonstrate how public exposure becomes a form of resistance when legal systems fail.

g. Name as a means of control and violence

Inside the clinic, terms like “makers,” “clients,” and “breeding programme” (E2:28:16) convert human relationships into logistics. Naming becomes the mechanism that turns exploitation into service. Even small lapses such as an officer handling evidence without gloves reveal how the discourse of order conceals sloppiness and complicity. Language is not neutral; it is the tool that transforms care into control.

5.3 Conclusion

Baby Farm shows how women and children suffer from gender exploitation, institutional failure, and symbolic violence. Through the use of metaphor, dialogue, and character actions, the film exposes how power works through care, morality, and silence. Families, police, and other institutions do not protect victims but instead help to erase them while giving support to oppressors. Still, there are moments of resistance in speech, silence, and visibility. The last scene, where Dr. Evans is locked in the same torture room and the building is set on fire, represents poetic justice and turns the idea of confinement against the oppressor. The film teaches that when the law fails, language becomes important because the right words can still challenge control. Since language in society is often used in different ways, people should pay more attention to words and symbols as they can reveal hidden intentions. Filmmakers and institutions should also learn from this by using language that promotes fairness and by avoiding words that shame or silence women. Schools and media bodies can help by creating awareness on how language

shapes behaviour and by supporting open conversations that encourage justice and empathy in society.

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