

**IRONY AND INHUMANITY IN IKECHUKWU ASIKA'S
*LOVE OF AN ANGEL***

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BENIN CITY**

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
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IN PARTICULAR TO FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study was carried out by Yakubu Sophia Ikojoh (Miss) in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

DR. MRS. A.O. ERAUGA**Project Supervisor**

DATE

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty, who has been the source of my strength, I am grateful to God for giving me the grace to start and to finish well.
May His name be praised forever!

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Thank you all for helping me reach this milestone!

ABSTRACT

This study examined the themes of irony and inhumanity in Ikechukwu Asika's novel "*Love of an Angel*". Through a close reading of the text, this project revealed how the author employed irony to critique societal norms and power structures, highlighting the devastating consequences of cruelty and exploitation. The study analyzed the portrayal of suffering, oppression, and resilience in the novel, emphasizing the importance of empathy, education, and collective action in creating a more compassionate and equitable society.

Methodologically, this project combined literary analysis with critical theory, drawing on the works of scholars such as bell hooks and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to inform its critique of power and oppression. The study engaged with the concept of irony, exploring its various forms and functions in the novel. Through a nuanced and contextualized analysis, this project demonstrated the ways in which "*Love of an Angel*" offered a powerful critique of societal injustices and a testament to the human spirit's capacity for resilience and hope.

The findings of this study highlighted the significance of "*Love of an Angel*" as a literary work that challenged readers to confront the harsh realities of suffering and oppression. Through its exploration of irony and inhumanity, the novel offered a powerful critique of societal norms and power structures, emphasizing the need for empathy, education, and collective action to create a more just and equitable world. This study contributed to ongoing conversations in literary studies, critical theory, and social justice, demonstrating the importance of literary works in shaping our understanding of the world and our place within it.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

This study examines irony and inhumanity in Ikechukwu Asika's *Love of an Angel*. It focused on how irony and inhumanity are use to project and critique societal norms, power structures and different form of exploitation in the Nigerian society. The study attempts to add to a deeper understanding of the novel's themes and literary significance while also offering insights into the larger social and cultural circumstances in which the novel was written through a thorough analysis of the plot progression and irony that the novel employs. It also seeks to show how literature may highlight the harsh realities of the human condition while also encouraging compassion, empathy, and societal change.

1.2 Scope of Study

The study is limited to the examination of irony and inhumanity in Ikechukwu's *Love of an Angel*. This novel is selected because of its powerful portrayal of the exploitation and oppression of vulnerable individuals, particularly women and children. The novel's use of irony and inhumanity as literary devices to critique societal ills warrants closer examination. The research also focuses on the characters' experiences, the use of language, and the plot development to uncover the ways in which Asika sheds light on the darker aspects of human nature and

the consequences of unchecked power and greed. The study aligns with research interests in power dynamics, gender, and resilience in the face of adversity.

1.3 Methodology

The study adopts qualitative methods to thoroughly explore the novel, with a specific focus on identifying instances of irony and inhuman acts that reveal deeper meanings related to the theme of inhumanity. The primary text for the study is Ikechukwu Asika's *Love of an Angel*. By closely examining the text, the study extract information on various literary devices by the author to convey their message.

By employing techniques like close reading, textual analysis, interpretation, and contextualization, the study provides an understanding of how literature both reflects and influences societal views on inhumanity. Relevant instances from the text are isolated and analysed using feminist theory. Also, secondary materials such as articles, essays and comments are consulted to enrich the study.

1.4 Theoretical Background

This study employs feminist theory which provides a comprehensive framework for analysing Ikechukwu Asika's *Love of an Angel*.

There is no specific pioneer of feminism. However, feminism is a social, political, and cultural movement that advocates for gender equality and challenges patriarchal norms and structures. It is a movement that seeks to promote women's

rights, interests, and empowerment, and to eliminate discrimination and violence against women.

Feminists hail from a wide range of backgrounds and places—spanning centuries and countries. Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of the ground-breaking work "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" in 1792; Simone de Beauvoir, the author of "The Second Sex" in 1949; Betty Friedan, the author of "The Feminine Mystique" in 1963; Gloria Steinem, a key figure in the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s; bell hooks, the author of numerous works on feminism and race; Judith Butler, the author of gender and sexuality; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a modern feminist writer and activist; and Malala Yousafzai, the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for her support of women's education and empowerment.

Feminism also promotes body autonomy, challenging societal and cultural expectations that restrict women's choices and freedoms. It seeks to break down rigid gender roles and expectations, promoting gender fluidity and nonconformity. By recognizing the diversity of women's experiences and perspectives, feminism strives to create a more inclusive and diverse movement. Ultimately, feminism seeks to create a more just and equitable society, where all individuals can thrive and reach their full potential, regardless of gender or any other identity.

Arinze Chiemenam in review of the text in his work, 'Review of Asika's *Love of an Angel*' says,

Ikechukwu Asika's novel "*Love of an Angel*" is a powerful exploration of feminism, identity, and culture. The novel follows the story of Olachi, a young Nigerian girl who is subjected to physical and emotional abuse by her mistress, Mrs. Chendo. Despite her hardships, Olachi remains resilient and hopeful for a better future. Through Olachi's experiences, Asika critiques the patriarchal norms and structures that oppress women, particularly in Nigeria (115)

The novel highlights the importance of feminism and intersectionality, recognizing the ways in which gender intersects with race, class, and sexuality to produce unique experiences of oppression and marginalization.

In "*Love of an Angel*," Asika also explores the tenets of feminism, particularly the importance of intersectionality and the need for inclusive and intersectional approaches to challenging patriarchal power structures. The novel critiques the dominant feminist discourse, which has historically been dominated by white, middle-class women, and highlights the need for a more inclusive and diverse feminism that recognizes the experiences and perspectives of women of color, queer women, and women with disabilities.

In conclusion, feminism is a complex and multifaceted movement that seeks to challenge and dismantle patriarchal systems and promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Its proponents are diverse and numerous, and its tenets are far-reaching and inclusive. "*Love of an Angel*" is a powerful exploration of feminism, identity, and culture, and highlights the importance of intersectionality and inclusive and intersectional approaches to challenging patriarchal power structures. As a theoretical framework for your final year project, feminism offers a powerful tool for analyzing and critiquing the patriarchal norms and structures that oppress women and marginalized communities, and for promoting gender equality and social justice.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship

Ikechukwu Asika's *Love of an Angel* is a poignant and thought-provoking exploration of the human condition, exploring the themes of suffering, resilience, and the complexities of relationships. Through the protagonist Olachi's journey, Asika masterfully weaves a narrative that exposes the harsh realities of exploitation, oppression, and the struggles of the vulnerable. According to Orlando Patterson,

'Love of an Angel' examines man's inhumanity to man. It highlights the pressing problem of inhumanity in everyday life and the need for societal development. The study uses data from primary and secondary sources, with

sociological criticism as the theoretical framework. It reveals that selfishness, greed, and hubris are the main causes of cruelty against fellow humans. The researcher recommends a change in man's dealings with others to address this issue and promote development, growth, and brotherliness (23).

As reviewed by Orlando Patterson above, *Love of an Angel* by Ikechukwu Asika explores the pressing issue of man's inhumanity to man through the protagonist Olachi's harrowing experiences. The novel masterfully weaves a narrative that highlights the cruel treatment and exploitation of the vulnerable, exploring themes of suffering, resilience, and the human condition. Through sociological criticism, the novel sheds light on systemic issues that perpetuate cruelty and oppression, humanizing victims and highlighting the devastating consequences of selfishness, greed, and hubris. The novel's conclusion offers a glimmer of hope for a better future, serving as a powerful reminder of the importance of empathy and compassion. *Love of an Angel* is an all-around brilliant examination of the human condition that highlights the spirit of humanity's resiliency and urges action against injustice and cruelty. Cornel Onyemauche Ujowundu in review of the text also states that,

Some of our children especially the ones from poor family backgrounds are now being used as slaves in the name of house helps. Most of these children suffer even more than Olachi in Asika's *Love of an Angel*. These children are like

slaves in the families they find themselves, no education, food, rest, good clothes, shelter and love. Some were made to struggle under the scorching sun, barefooted with wearied and tattered bodies drenched with sweat in the process of hawking. These children are being tortured, maltreated, harassed sexually and sometimes beaten to death by their masters/madams. The idea of using these children as house helps is what the researcher called "second slavery." This is because as soon as they settle down in such families, they automatically become slaves and are ushered into the world of slavery and soul torture, hardship, suffering and molestation. All these are instances of man's inhumanity to man (164)

Cornel Onyemauche Ujowundu's review above, highlights the heart-wrenching story of Olachi, a young girl subjected to unimaginable suffering and cruelty in the name of "house help." The novel *"Love of an Angel"* by Ikechukwu Asika masterfully weaves a narrative that exposes the harsh realities of modern-day slavery, where children from poor families are exploited and dehumanized. Olachi's journey from her village to the city is marked by relentless mistreatment, abuse, and suffering at the hands of her employer, Mrs. Chendo. Despite her hardships, Olachi remains resilient, and her story serves as a powerful reminder of the need for empathy, compassion, and societal change. The review emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the cruel treatment of vulnerable individuals and the need for collective action to combat modern-day slavery and human rights

violations. The novel is a poignant exploration of the human condition, shedding light on the devastating consequences of selfishness, greed, and hubris. Through Olachi's story, the author humanizes the victims of inhumanity and offers a glimmer of hope for a better future, underscoring the resilience of the human spirit and the power of love and redemption. And lastly, Arinze Chiemenam reviews that,

Ikechukwu Asika's *'Love of an Angel'* highlights the pressing problem of inhumanity in everyday life and the need for societal development. The study uses data from primary and secondary sources, with sociological criticism as the theoretical framework. It reveals that selfishness, greed, and hubris are the main causes of cruelty against fellow humans. The researcher recommends a change in man's dealings with others to promote growth and brotherliness. The study aims to shed light on the issue of inhumanity in society (118).

Arinze Chiemenam review above, explores the devastating consequences of inhumanity through the story of Olachi, a young girl who faces unimaginable suffering. The novel critiques societal norms that perpetuate oppression and emphasizes the importance of empathy, education, and collective action in creating a more compassionate and equitable society. Through Olachi's story, the author shows the resilience of the human spirit and inspires hope and resilience.

The novel is a powerful call to action, challenging readers to confront the harsh realities of inhumanity and work towards a more just and compassionate society.

1.6 Justification of Study

The reviewed works have examined "*Love of an Angel*" and how it explores themes of resilience, hope, and the human spirit in the face of adversity. The story follows protagonist Olachi, who faces the struggles of the vulnerable and the dark intentions of those who oppress others. The novel serves as a powerful commentary on social and economic injustices in Nigeria, particularly for women and children. The author skillfully employs emotive language and vivid imagery to vividly portray the harsh realities of poverty, abuse, and exploitation. The novel also delves into the intricate dynamics of human connections, delving into themes of love, family, and friendship. The author's talent in crafting relatable characters and scenarios adds depth to the narrative, allowing readers from diverse backgrounds to connect with and appreciate the narrative. This study aims to explore the novel's intricacies and how it employs literary devices to convey its message of hope and resilience, contributing to the ongoing conversation about the role of literature in shaping our understanding of the human experience.

1.7 Thesis Statement

In *Love of an Angel*, Ikechukwu Asika adopts irony and the theme of inhumanity to project and critique societal norms, power structures and the vulnerability of individuals in the Nigerian society

CHAPTER TWO

IRONY

2.1 Introduction

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, irony is a literary device and rhetorical tool that plays with the expectations and realities within a situation. It thrives on the juxtaposition between what is explicitly stated and what is actually meant or understood. By using language that conveys the opposite of its literal meaning, irony allows for the indirect expression of ideas and emotions. The impact of irony can vary, from eliciting amusement and sarcasm to offering criticism or building suspense.

In "*Love of an Angel*," Ikechukwu Asika masterfully weaves a narrative that is replete with irony, a literary device that contributes depth and complexity to the story, enriching the overall experience for the audience and allowing for a deeper exploration of themes and emotions. Irony serves as a powerful tool in literature and communication, offering a unique way to convey nuanced meanings and provoke thought and reflection. From the contrast between Olachi's expectations and her harsh reality to the stark difference between Mrs. Chendo's outward appearance and her cruel nature, irony permeates the text, and this chapter will explore the various instances of irony in the novel, examining how they contribute to the overall themes and message of the book. Through a close

analysis of the text, we will uncover the ways in which Asika employs irony to critique societal norms, highlight the struggles of the vulnerable, and ultimately offer a message of hope and resilience.

2.2 Verbal Irony

This occurs when spoken words convey a meaning that contradicts their literal interpretation.

Within the novel's narrative, the author skillfully employs irony as a powerful tool to underscore the cruel treatment that Olachi experiences at the hands of Mrs. Chendo, despite the latter's promises of a better future. An example that stands out is when Mrs. Chendo assures Olachi of educational and job prospects in the city, but only to subject her to mistreatment and emotional turmoil instead. This specific situation serves as a clear demonstration of verbal irony, where words spoken by Mrs. Chendo carry a meaning that contradicts their literal sense.

Verbal irony, in this context, highlights the stark contrast between Mrs. Chendo's words and actions. On the surface, her promises appear benevolent and supportive, but in reality, they belie a sinister intention to exploit and oppress Olachi. This irony not only underscores the cruelty of Mrs. Chendo's actions but also serves to emphasize Olachi's vulnerability and the dire circumstances she faces.

The discrepancy between Mrs. Chendo's actions and her stated intentions serves to magnify the harshness and exploitation that Olachi is forced to endure in the story is exemplified below.

What if I decide to take you back with me to the city, where you can start your school all over again, work and help your father train your brothers and sisters? (31)

The irony in the excerpt underscores the theme of deception and the ways in which words can be used to manipulate and control others. Through the use of verbal irony, the author masterfully exposes the hypocrisy and cruelty of Mrs. Chendo, contributing depth to the narrative.

This instance of verbal irony highlights Olachi's tragic situation, where her hopes for a better future are consistently dashed by the harsh realities of her circumstances. The contrast between Mrs. Chendo's promises and the actual treatment Olachi receives also serve to emphasize the devastating impact of exploitation and oppression on individuals and communities. Verbal irony shows Olachi's tragic situation, where hopes for a better future are crushed by harsh realities. Mrs. Chendo's promises versus treatment highlights exploitation and oppression's devastating impact. The author uses irony to reveal societal injustices, urging readers to acknowledge the need for change.

2.3 Situational Irony

This happens when the outcome of a situation is the opposite of what was expected.

A striking example of this irony arises when Olachi finds herself in the position of having to sell bread in order to fund her academic aspirations. However, she is met with additional mistreatment and humiliation. This particular incident serves as a clear illustration of situational irony, in which the result is contrary to what one would anticipate. Olachi's dreams of a brighter future through education are continuously dashed by the cruel behavior of Mrs. Chendo, thus perpetuating a pattern of letdown and loss of faith for the young protagonist and this is further exemplified below.

Olachi had a standing order to finish all the loaves of bread that she always sells at the local market in the city. It was an abomination for her to return home with a single loaf of bread. And so daily, she toiled and struggled under the scorching sun, barefooted- with a weary and tattered body drenched with sweats- all in the bid to finish the loaves of bread she carried to the market everyday. (10)

Situational irony, in this context, highlights the cruel twist of fate that Olachi experiences. Despite her determination and efforts to improve her situation through education, she is met with further exploitation and humiliation. This irony

underscores the harsh realities of Olachi's world, where even the most well-intentioned actions can lead to devastating consequences.

The situational irony in this scenario also serves to emphasize the theme of oppression and the ways in which systemic injustices can crush individual aspirations. Olachi's desire for education and a better life is continually thwarted by the oppressive forces that surround her, thus leading to a sense of hopelessness and despair. Through the use of situational irony, the author masterfully exposes the dark underbelly of societal injustices, prompting readers to confront the harsh realities of the world and the need for change.

This instance of situational irony highlights the character development of Olachi. Olachi is forced to confront the cruel realities of her situation. Despite her resilience and determination, Olachi is met with continuous disappointment and heartbreak, leading to a nuanced exploration of the human spirit and its capacity to endure suffering. By employing situational irony, the author adds depth and complexity to the narrative, inviting readers to reflect on the human experience and the ways in which we respond to adversity.

2.4 Dramatic Irony

This arises when the audience is aware of something that the characters in the story are not. Through this technique, the author skillfully manipulates the

reader's knowledge, allowing us to see beyond the characters' understanding and perceive the truth of their situations.

In Chapter One, the novelist introduces Olachi, a young girl whose life is marked by suffering and injustice. While she remains hopeful for a better future, we, the readers, are aware of the harsh reality of her circumstances, setting the stage for a poignant exploration of her struggles. As the story unfolds, we encounter Oliver, who secretly laces Olachi's food with Indian hemp in Chapter Five. Olachi is unaware of this dishonest deed, but we know the truth, which heightens the tension and sense of dread.

In Chapter Seven, the truth about Miriam's death is revealed, but not to her mother. This contrast between our knowledge and the character's ignorance heightens the emotional impact of the scene and underscores the cruel fate that has befallen Miriam.

In Chapter Ten, we witness Mrs. Chendo's manipulative tactics as she exploits Chief Shedrack for her own gain. While Chief Shedrack remains oblivious to her true intentions, we are aware of her cunning plan, adding a layer of complexity to the narrative.

Gbenga's selfless act in Chapter Thirteen, where he sells his belongings to save Olachi's life, is another example of dramatic irony. We are aware of his

sacrifices, but Olachi remains in the dark, highlighting the depth of Gbenga's devotion and the severity of Olachi's circumstances.

Finally, in Chapter Sixteen, we are aware of Mrs. Chendo's sealed fate, knowing that she will never recover from her injuries. This knowledge creates a sense of inevitability, underscoring the consequences of her actions and the justice that has been served.

Throughout these chapters, the dramatic irony weaves a intricate web of tension, emotion, and understanding, drawing us deeper into the world of the characters and their struggles. By manipulating our knowledge, the author masterfully crafts a narrative that is both engaging and thought-provoking, inviting us to reflect on the complexities of human experience.

A prime illustration of irony that emphasizes the unpredictable nature of life can be seen in the story of Olachi, a determined young girl who is working hard to support her education by selling bread. However, instead of achieving her goal, she unexpectedly becomes a victim of physical abuse and humiliation. Despite Olachi's strong desire for a better future through education, her hopes are constantly crushed by the harsh and heartless actions of Mrs. Chendo.

Dramatic irony, in this context, highlights the stark contrast between Olachi's aspirations and the cruel reality she faces. The audience is aware of the impending doom that awaits Olachi, despite her valiant efforts to improve her

situation. This irony creates a sense of tension as the reader is powerless to prevent the tragic events that unfold.

The idea of life's unpredictable nature and how even the best-laid intentions can go wrong is emphasized by dramatic irony. This irony also serves to highlight the character development of Olachi, who is forced to confront the cruel realities of her situation. Despite her resilience and determination, Olachi is met with continuous disappointment and heartbreak, leading to a nuanced exploration of the human spirit and its capacity to endure suffering.

The use of dramatic irony in the novel also invites the reader to reflect on the societal norms and power structures that perpetuate oppression and abuse. The cruel treatment of Olachi by Mrs. Chendo is a stark reminder of the ways in which those in positions of power can exploit and manipulate others. By employing dramatic irony, the author prompts the reader to confront the harsh realities of the world and the need for change.

The incorporation of irony within Asika's novel *Love of an Angel* is a fundamental element that plays a pivotal role in shedding light on the harsh and unfair treatment that Olachi undergoes throughout the story. It also serves to emphasize the discrepancies between the characters' words and actions, adding depth to the narrative. Moreover, irony is utilized to underscore key themes such

as exploitation, oppression, and the unwavering strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Asika's *Love of an Angel* skillfully highlights the harsh reality of Olachi's society, where oppression and exploitation are commonplace, through the use of sarcasm. Asika also draws attention to the sharp difference between appearance and reality through the words and deeds of the characters, highlighting the issue of deception and the ways in which power can be exploited. The irony in the book highlights the harsh treatment Olachi receives in spite of her fortitude and will to change her circumstances.

In addition, the use of irony gives the story a deeper level of complexity and challenges the reader to assess the characters' intentions and deeds. The issue of hypocrisy is brought to light by the contradictions between words and deeds, which emphasize how people can appear sincere while concealing their genuine motivations. This irony highlights the idea of the human spirit's ability to bear suffering when Olachi's unwavering will and fortitude are faced with an unjust fate.

The way in which *Love of an Angel* employs irony serves to emphasize the concept of social justice by illuminating the manner in which exploitation and oppression are sustained by structural inequities. Asika skillfully reveals the murky side of society conventions via the experiences of the characters, forcing

the reader to face the hard facts of life and the necessity of change. Irony is used throughout the book to highlight how crucial empathy, compassion, and understanding are to tearing down the walls that separate people from oppression and exploitation.

In conclusion, *Love of an Angel* employs irony skillfully to enhance the story's depth, complexity, and subtlety. Asika skillfully illustrates the harsh reality of Olachi's life by utilizing irony, highlighting important concepts like oppression, exploitation, and the resilience of the human spirit. The irony in the book acts as a wake-up call, forcing the reader to face the harsh facts of life and the urgency of change.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter examines instances of irony in *Love of an Angel* and provides insight into Olachi's harsh and unfair treatment as well as the contradictions between the characters' spoken and unspoken statements. Irony is a clever device used in the story to highlight issues of exploitation, suppression, and what most individuals face because of their status. It also offers a critical analysis of the social norms that support the mistreatment and disregard of the socially underprivileged. "*Love of an Angel*" invites readers to reflect on the intricacies of human nature and the significance of opposing injustice in all of its manifestations through its examination of irony.

CHAPTER THREE

INHUMANITY

3.1 Introduction

According to the Oxford dictionary, Inhumanity refers to the deliberate and systemic infliction of suffering, cruelty, and violence on fellow human beings, often driven by factors such as prejudice, power dynamics, and societal norms. It encompasses a range of behaviors and actions that violate basic human rights, dignity, and empathy, leading to harm, oppression, and marginalization of individuals and groups.

Inhumanity can manifest in various forms, including discrimination, racism, sexism, genocide, torture, and human rights violations, among others. Understanding the complexities and root causes of inhumanity is crucial for developing effective strategies to prevent and address these issues, promote social justice, and foster a more compassionate and equitable society.

This chapter will explore the myriad ways in which Olachi is subjected to inhumanity, ranging from physical and emotional violence to being coerced into labor, exploited sexually, and even deprived of the basic right to education. The exploration of these forms of mistreatment sheds light on the depth of suffering experienced by Olachi and highlights the resilience she demonstrates in the face of such adversity.

3.2 Physical and Emotional Abuse

Olachi's encounter with Mrs. Chendo is a horrifying illustration of inhumanity, as she suffers both physical and emotional abuse in the form of slaps, beatings, and humiliation. Olachi has severe anxiety and low self-esteem as a result of Mrs. Chendo's continuous denigration and bullying. Olachi's humanity and dignity are taken away by the combination of emotional and physical abuse, leaving her feeling like a slave in her own flesh.

Despite the hardship she faced daily in her mistress' house, her beauty like a yam tendril added new shoots daily and flourished despite her mistress' daily effort to panel beat her face and ruin her beautiful face. At her age, her mistress still cut her hair with razor blade and would never give her a cloth unless they were worn out with torn patches all over. She derived pleasure in just pounding her face just to disfigure the beauty (9).

The physical abuse experienced by Olachi is a brutal reminder of the ways in which power can be used to control and dominate others. The beatings and humiliation she endured are not only painful but also dehumanizing, thus reducing her to a state of vulnerability and helplessness. The physical scars she bore are constant reminders of the cruelty she suffered, and the emotional scars run even deeper.

The emotional torment Olachi experiences is equally devastating, as Mrs. Chendo's constant belittling and degradation erode her sense of self-worth and identity. This emotional abuse is a form of psychological warfare, designed to break Olachi's spirit and reduce her to a state of submission. The impact of such cruelty runs deep, creating lasting scars that go beyond just the physical wounds. The combination of physical and emotional abuse has a profound impact on Olachi's mental health and wellbeing. She struggles with anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which affects her relationships and daily life. The abuse also has a profound impact on her sense of identity and self-worth, leaving her feeling like she is worthless and deserving of the cruelty she has suffered.

The terrible reminder of the evil in the world, where one person's power may be exploited to cause another person such agony and suffering, is provided by inhumanity. Olachi's mistreatment serves as a clear reminder of how society expectations and norms can be used to excuse and condone cruelty, as well as the necessity of taking collective action to question and alter these expectations.

3.3 Forced Labor

Olachi, a young girl, is unfortunately being forced to work long hours, performing strenuous tasks and selling bread on the streets. Her days are filled with exhausting labor, leaving her body tired and worn out. She rises before dawn to

begin her chores, and her work continues well into the night, with little time for rest or reprieve. The physical demands of her labor are immense, and the emotional burden is equally crushing.

Olachi had a standing order to finish all the loaves of bread that she always sells at the local market in the city. It was a abomination for her to return home with a single loaf of bread. And so daily, she toiled and struggled under the scorching sun, barefooted with a weary and tattered body drenched with sweats- all in her bid to finish the loaves of bread she took to the market. This made her pass with a nauseating body odour. Olachi almost put her legs on thorns daily just to complete the sales of about sixty to eighthty loaves of bread she carried to the market everyday. She lurked in all the corners of the streets and markets in order to see what providence had in stock for her and t make good sales. Despite the struggle under the scorching sun, and all the cruel tortures by the natural elements, Olachi had nothing to show for her sufferings (10).

Olachi is frequently reminded of her lack of autonomy and respectability, as she is regarded more like a slave than a person. Olachi's experience with forced labor serves as a sobering reminder of the injustice and exploitation that many marginalized people experience in our society. She is treated as a resource to be used and then thrown away, depriving her of the fundamental rights and safeguards enjoyed by others. The relentless demands placed on her are

dehumanizing, and the lack of rest and recuperation time take a devastating toll on her physical and mental health. The cycle of forced labor perpetuates Olachi's suffering, with no end in sight. She is trapped in a never-ending cycle of exploitation, with no hope of escape or respite. The emotional toll of this treatment is immense, leaving her feeling drained, powerless, and devoid of hope. The injustice of her situation is compounded by the knowledge that she is not alone, and that many others face similar struggles and hardships. Olachi's story is a heartbreaking reminder of the need for collective action to address the systemic injustices that perpetuate forced labor and exploitation.

3.4 Sexual Exploitation

The inhumanity experienced by Olachi is not limited to physical and emotional abuse; she is also subjected to sexual exploitation, a violation of her body and dignity. Olachi is raped by Oliver, Mrs. Chendo's son, who preys on her by taking advantage of her weakness. Olachi's already brittle sense of self is further damaged by this horrible deed, leaving her feeling helpless and broken. She is plagued by the trauma of this event, which serves as a continual reminder of the evil she has encountered.

Olachi is made to bear the burden of this trauma, finding it difficult to accept that her body was raped in such a cruel and senseless manner. She feels useless, guilty, and ashamed after the encounter, which feeds the cycle of

marginalization and oppression. Olachi's experience with sexual exploitation serves as a sobering reminder of the ways in which gender-based violence and exploitation are supported by cultural norms and expectations.

Oliver's actions are not only criminal but also sanctioned by a society that views women's bodies as objects for male gratification. This societal norm is rooted in patriarchal beliefs and power structures that perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination. The novel critiques this societal norm, highlighting the need for change and the importance of treating all individuals with dignity and respect. The book also emphasizes how survivors of sexual exploitation are affected for a long time. Olachi's experience is more than just a one-time incident; it is a trauma that affects her relationships, her sense of value, and her general health. The book exhorts readers to acknowledge the seriousness of sexual exploitation and to assist survivors on their path to recovery and justice.

Olachi's story in the novel is a powerful call to action, urging readers to challenge societal norms that perpetuate sexual exploitation. It emphasizes the importance of advocating for the rights and dignity of all individuals. The novel stresses the need for a society built on values like consent, respect, and equality, while holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

3.5 Denial of Education

Olachi is denied access to education, a fundamental human right that is essential for personal growth, empowerment, and development. Mrs. Chendo's promise to send her to school remains unfulfilled, as Olachi is forced into labor and prostitution, perpetuating a cycle of oppression and marginalization. This denial of education is a form of intellectual oppression, robbing Olachi of the chance to develop her mind, explore her creativity, and reach her full potential.

In addition to violating Olachi's human rights, Mrs. Chendo is limiting her options and possibilities for social mobility by preventing her from attending school. Mrs. Chendo is keeping Olachi trapped in a cycle of tyranny and poverty for a long time by denying her access to education, which is a potent tool for social change. Olachi's sense of identity and worth is significantly impacted by the denial of schooling. Olachi is compelled to depend on her oppressors for existence because she lacks access to education, which feeds her cycle of helplessness and dependency. Olachi is psychologically oppressed by this denial of education, which undermines her self-worth and sense of direction. She feels helpless and unheard since she isn't given the chance to hone her critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative talents. Olachi's lack of education also restricts her access to knowledge, which increases her susceptibility to deceit and abuse.

The novel emphasizes the value of education as a basic human right and an effective means of bringing about societal change through Olachi's experience. The book challenges social norms and expectations that support the denial of education, especially for underprivileged populations, and it calls on readers to support everyone's right to an education. The book also highlights how important it is to have inclusive and fair educational systems that provide everyone the chance to thrive, regardless of their circumstances or background.

Mrs. Chendo's decision to deny Olachi access to education is not just a simple act of exclusion; it is also a perpetuation of oppression that has deep-rooted consequences. By depriving Olachi of educational opportunities, Mrs. Chendo is not only hindering her personal growth and development, but also contributing to a cycle of ignorance and marginalization that affects not only Olachi, but also her community and society at large. The novel emphasizes the importance of education in breaking the cycle of poverty and oppression. Education is not just a means to gain knowledge, it is also a tool for empowerment, enabling individuals to actively participate in their own liberation and contribute positively to society. By denying Olachi access to education, Mrs. Chendo is not only limiting her potential, but also perpetuating a system of inequality that ultimately harms everyone involved.

The book also emphasizes the importance of inclusive, egalitarian education that takes into account the unique needs and experiences of excluded communities. This includes instruction that is accessible in all languages, attentive to cultural differences, and designed with the particular difficulties and obstacles that marginalized people confront in mind. The book challenges readers to acknowledge that education has the ability to change people's lives, communities, and societies by promoting the right to an education. The novel illustrates through Olachi's experience how education is not only a vital human right but also a potent force for social change and how denying someone access to school feeds a vicious cycle of marginalization and oppression with far-reaching effects.

3.6 Conclusion

Olachi's narrative is a powerful exploration of societal norms and expectations that perpetuate oppression. It highlights the need for change and the importance of treating every individual with respect. The novel emphasizes the transformative potential of empathy, compassion, education, empowerment, community, solidarity, accountability, and justice in fostering a fairer society. It calls for collective action and societal transformation to create a world where every individual is respected. Olachi's story serves as a call to action, encouraging readers to confront their prejudices and strive for a society that respects all human life. The novel encourages readers to reflect on their roles in perpetuating or

challenging these norms, and to take action towards effecting change. It offers hope and resilience, highlighting the human spirit's ability to overcome challenges and inspires readers to work towards a world where all individuals can live with dignity and respect.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated how Ikechukwu Asika's *Love of an Angel* employs irony to expose the harsh realities of inhumanity and advocate for a more compassionate society. Through a close analysis of the novelist's use of irony, the study has shown how Asika critiques societal norms and power structures that perpetuate suffering and oppression. By highlighting the resilience and strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity, the novel inspires hope and resilience in the reader.

Chapter one introduces a research study on Ikechukwu Asika's novel "*Love of an Angel*", examining how the novel uses irony and inhumanity to critique societal ills, particularly the exploitation and oppression of vulnerable individuals, through a qualitative approach using feminist theory.

Chapter two examined the use of irony in "*Love of an Angel*". It analyzed verbal, situational, and dramatic irony to show how it contributes to the novel's themes and messages. Through irony, the novel critiques societal norms, highlights the struggles of the vulnerable, and offers a message of hope and resilience, adding depth and complexity to the story.

Chapter three examined the theme of inhumanity in "*Love of an Angel*". It presented Olachi's suffering and resilience in the face of physical and emotional

abuse, forced labor, sexual exploitation, and denial of education. The chapter argued that understanding inhumanity is crucial for promoting social justice and creating a more compassionate society. It also highlighted the importance of education, empathy, and collective action in addressing these issues.

This study makes significant contributions to the existing body of literary analysis by examining the use of irony in "*Love of an Angel*" to critique societal norms and power structures. Through a close analysis of the novel, this project reveals how the author employs irony to expose the harsh realities of suffering and oppression. Additionally, this study analyzes the novel's portrayal of suffering, oppression, and resilience, highlighting the devastating consequences of cruelty and exploitation. Furthermore, this project emphasizes the importance of empathy, education, and collective action in creating a more compassionate and equitable society, underscoring the need for a more just and equitable world.

Based on this study, several recommendations can be made. Firstly, further research should be conducted on the use of irony in African literature to critique societal norms and power structures. This would provide a deeper understanding of the literary device and its potential for social commentary. Secondly, "*Love of an Angel*" should be included in educational curricula to raise awareness about the consequences of inhumanity and the importance of empathy and collective action. This would promote a more informed and empathetic

citizenry. Finally, community programs and initiatives should be established to support victims of suffering and oppression, promoting a more compassionate and equitable society. This would provide tangible support to those affected by inhumanity and work towards creating a more just world.

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