



Narratives of Stratification: Complications of Girl Child Education in Lola Akande's What It Takes and Abi Dare's the Girl with the Louding Voice

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Abstract

The body of literature that interrogates the various systemic dimensions of gender inequity and oppression is unarguably large, with many scholars' intellectually stimulating accounts of how the females have been carefully marginalized, oppressed and eventually subjugated. Even when these works are protruding, there has been a paucity of works that examines the narratives of stratification that are used by the different patriarchal societies to sustain this culture of inequity. Consequently, this work has the mandate to consider this, specifically. Using the feminist theory, it is gathered that in other for many institutions of patriarchy to continue its dominance, there have been different narratives that are used to aid their provincial agenda. These narratives are powerful to the extent that once adopted, they become potent in the hands of everyone, including the female themselves, and the resultant consequence is that they are left to permanently occupy second-class positions in their societies and this has various negative outcomes on them. The study therefore concludes that there is the need to reconsider these narratives so that females that attain a level of freedom that they actually deserve and that they can live with their integrity undenied.

Keywords: Social constructionism, biological essentialism, narratives of stratification, girl child education, gender autocracy

Introduction

There is a continually stimulating body of works that examines the lopsided representation of the two sexes, the male and the female, with sustained intellectual intensity of consolidation, negation, addition and in some cases challenging of scholarly positions (Alexandra Lepowsky, 1993; Philip Backlund *et al.*, 2004; Alix Jansen, 2015). These works are informed under the assumption that male-female conversations and then behavioral tendencies are socially or humanly constructed, usually unconsented to by the affected parties, and generally imposed by the instrumentation of social agencies. These instruments are as Hirst and Humphreys have rightly noted, are equally victims of similar institutional engineering where they inherit attitudes and transfer them to the subsequent and successive generations.¹ This, Charmaz and Mitchell (2013) have argued that it is the basis for the enhancement of cultural traditions.² It is noteworthy therefore that the preservation of cultural ideas and legacies is enhanced by the unconscious accentuation of the victims and the ones undeniably benefiting from the system.

Because of this sociocultural anomaly, the female gender for example has been rendered sterile, weak and then submissive to the patriarchal structure that is complicit in the attenuation of their capacity not by visibly conquering them, but by a gradual sterilization of what they naturally can do. These occur in forms of narratives that are used for example in the mental engineering of the children and the girl child, innocently oblivious of what danger is done to her psyche through some kind of narratives for which she is fed, embrace the second fiddle position where she settles for any or whatever is left for her by her mindlessly ambitious male counterpart for whose primary benefits of patriarchy are meant. In essence, careers are socially predetermined for her, and evidence of comparatively scanty numbers of females in some career field is an attestation to this; she has to be

¹ Hirst, A., and Humphreys, M. "Putting Power in its Place: The Centrality of Edgelands." *Organization Studies*, 34, (2013) pp. 1505–27

² Charmaz, K., & Mitchell, R. G. "Grounded Theory in Ethnography." In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography* (pp. 160–74). (London, UK: Sage, 2001).

forced to accept sociocultural definitions of womanhood, which in some cultures, especial the ones associated with the Global South civilizations, subjects her to maltreatment, and where it is not maltreatment, they are instruments of seclusion from what matters.³

All these inevitably become institutionalized for obvious reasons. It is when a coordinated and consistent narrative is transformed into ideas that institutions make them ready for the mental consumption of the target demographic. Consider for example that a female child who is enrolled in elementary school is told of her future conditions of motherhood even without being in need of such information at the stage; being told to not go for a particular program of study because it does not suit her; being systematically required to shut her voice down when embroiled in altercations, more suspiciously that such advice is not extended to the male child who is in similar situations; these all have a way of shaping the cultural and emotional system of the individual as they would be psychologically restrained to do some things.⁴ Meanwhile the society is pathologically unempathetic to the females about the consequences of their programmed knowledge which they have forced the girl child to take. When she does not have the intellectual or resources capacity to compete with her male counterpart, they would consolidate their assumptions by submitting that she is naturally weak in mental power, when she does not attain desired economic heights, predictably because of her tending to family, they would deride her for it too. This is now narrative of polarization spreads.

Education and Power: The Instrumentality of the Former

The crux of female's mental and social comparative underdevelopment may not be properly and satisfactorily understood if we refuse put in perspective the structuration of the human societies, more importantly the African world. The society is the one structured along social and political lines and the currency in use to decide this is mostly education. We would not define education in this context with its technical connotation, we would concede that education should be regarded as information that an individual has and they can use to improve their status and conditions. This improvement can be realized by the informed decisions they make to influence their world and in some other cases can be realized by the social, political and economic positions they can access using the acquired education as their instrument. But then, females have been systemically cornered in a way because not only are they discouraged by the deepened cultural philosophy that underplay what they can do with education in the future society but also they are debarred from enrolling to the level which they seem fit. For the majority of African countries, the foundation for such a condition is not untraceable. There are connections of them to the supplanting experiences which they have in recent history.

As argued by the proponent of African feminism, among which one would find at the frontline, scholars like Oyeronke Oyewumi, Akachi Ezeigbo, Molar-Leslie Ogundipe, among others, remnant of colonial structures which are still patently used in many African countries continue to dictate to a large extent the disempowerment of the female gender. The colonial imperialists are sternly concerned about the exploitation of the available human and natural resources that are in Africa and no amount of emotional blackmail for instance would make them consider gender inclusive in their political relationships with their subjects (Africans).⁵ As such, it became provocatively and frustratingly difficult to find females who would be integrated into the political structure of that time, and because the system became institutionalized, the inheritors of colonial structures contributed to obscuring further the position of women by their refusal to encourage female participation in politics. Meanwhile having political access in the post-independence period is usually determined by one's level of education and intellection.

From the look of things, the disallowance of the females in the political system means that they are not educationally inclined, and the lack of educational qualifications consequently means that they have no access to power in their society. Whereas it is through the political power that decisions are made through policy statements and government rules, the lack of access to where the decision or policies are made means that they would not be adequately represented. All these continue in the time because the situation corroborated the assumption that females are naturally below all their male counterparts. For the many parts of the continent, the opportunity to acquire education was not extended to their female child and it was understandable when they are not evenly involved in issues that affect their existence. When females attend schools in majority of the places, they are doing so to while away their time or perhaps to get moderate knowledge which can help in their domestic role-playing (Connell, 1987; Faulkner, 2000, and Butler 1990). Until the awakening was becoming domestic, the possibility of having successful females in important career field is very slim in all ramifications.⁶ This condition has remained for a very long time, but reorientation is emerging in recent history where females are standing up for their own rights.

³ Dixon R., "Measuring Equality between the Sexes," in *Journal of Social Issues*, (University Press New Haven. 1996).

⁴ Thompson M, *Violence Against the Girl-child* (America: Phoenix Press, 1999).

⁵ Mitchell Juliet. *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1974).

⁶ Collinson David L. "Engineering Humour: Masculinity, Joking and Conflict in Shop-Floor Relations." *Organization Studies* 9, no. 2 (1988): 181–99.

Monique Wittig offers us an interesting perspective on the relationship between language, power and education when she argues that the origin of female's oppression is often miscomprehended because the parochial patriarchy has fabricated fallacies lodged in rhetoric that lacks credible evidence. At this juncture, we should invoke some of her words in the work, "One is Not Born a Woman," which reads as follow:

A materialist feminist approach shows that what we take for the cause or origin of oppression is in fact only the mark imposed by the oppressor; the "myth of woman," plus its material effects and manifestations in the appropriated consciousness and bodies of women. Thus, this mark does not preexist oppression... sex is taken as an "immediate given," a "sensibly given," "physical features," belonging to a natural order. But what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an "imaginary formation."⁷

Without subscribing to biased opinions that have pervaded the intellectual spectrum of patriarchy-induced social ideas and ideals, it would be difficult to detach the potency of wrong and fabricated narratives in the eventual process of objectifying and thingifying the woman sex. Narratives that support the continued condemnation of women to the second-class positions are injected nearly in all aspects of human endeavor, and the unassuming victims become immersed in cultural or philosophical ideas that are restricting their capacity and undermining their ability to develop maximally. It is after the careful observation of this social anomaly that a number of feminists, vibrant of which is Judith Butler, conclude that the concept of woman itself is not a natural but created phenomenon in the social philosophy of a people.⁸ On this ground, once the objectification of women has undergone a successful transmission into the society, the materialist disinterest of females becomes all time high because their focus does not center on the ways by which they can explore their potentials and convert their energies into material advantage. This leads to the reduction of interest too, in anything that would promise their sociopolitical or socioeconomic expansion.

If we therefore have no contention about Beauvoir's claim that one is not born a woman, which runs in consonance with Butler's and Wittig's assumption, we can come to the conclusion that being a woman is therefore a process of becoming, yielding to the constructionist ideas and also submitting to the pressure of the society. In this sense, the definitional features of that concept would have no finitude. This is obviously because once the society that brought about the structuration of that identity is not demonstrating any urge to stop, new definitions of what the woman *should* be is not impossible. To therefore allow them to have access to education which in way will provide them all the necessary capabilities to challenge for political and then important positions that will facilitate their inclusiveness, would be strictly difficult, if not impossible. There would always remain some measures of restrictions that would disallow them from having unalloyed access to power and authority in a manner that there would be democratic distribution between them.

Institutionalizing Gender in Power Distribution

Sometimes in 2015 in Nigeria, Mr. Jibrilla Bindow, the Governor of Adamawa State in the country swore in Mr Tola as the Commissioner for Women Affairs in the state.⁹ There was wide uproar in the country, and some international figures commented on the issue that seemed like a spark of their amazement. Beyond the superficial condemnation of the Governor as being unsupportive of the women independence movement is a picture that interests us in this paper. The confidence with which the Governor of a state would appoint an individual (a male) that does not share any biological or anatomical co-referentiality with the female gender (when it was obvious that the assignment of such duty is exclusively women's affairs) is not what should catch our interest. There is something more telling. The process is one that indicates the subtle process of institutionalizing gender in the power distribution in such society. Even while it may not have direct similarities with what happens in some other civilizations, it nonetheless shares their sentiments which is expressed in some other respects. Putting a male in that position signals that the patriarchy is exclusively interested in the expansion of their influence by denying the female the opportunity to power by all means possible.

On the account that many patriarchal systems want to undermine the contributions of female to works generally, they have always created narratives around the biological incapability of women as the reason behind their disallowance from working in important positions. Several times, there is the excuse that females cannot undergo the physical stress that males go through in organizations and because of this, they would not be given opportunities to work in many of these institutions. Collinson and Jeff (1996) echo this sentiment when they intone

⁷ Monique Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman," *Race et Nature : Système des Marques, idée de Group Naturel et Rapport Sociaux*, *Pluriel*, Vol. 11, 1977

⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁹ Iron Dan Fulani "Confusion in Adamawa as Governor Appoints Man to Head Women Affairs Ministry," *Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/189403-confusion-in-adamawa-as-governor-appoints-man-to-head-women-affairs-ministry.html>.

that the careful disarticulation of what women can do is perpetuated by patriarchal system, aimed to create a level of power imbalance which will subject the female to back-benching positions. Once there is a little representation of women in these organizations, they would have no power to rewrite their history because they would be in subservient positions to their male counterparts. One would imagine that such lopsided system is not capable of surviving for long without people challenging its foundations, but one would have a better perspective as to why the situation continues when one understands that there is some cultural framework created to sustain the anomaly. Hence, the glorification of cultural sentiment.

Complications of Cultural Sentiment

On many occasions, even the females have often heard that their usefulness only ends in what they can offer as second-class citizens. They are expected to attain heights in the social setting only to the level that their husbands, or any other agent of patriarchy for that matter, permits. Such sentiment is reinforced nearly in all social or political situations. Women are either found contributing after deliberations have been made by their male partners, or as a supplementary addition in offices. This sentiment however is reinforced by all the available institutions that exist. Religious institutions give reasons why they cannot be compared to their male counterparts with some scriptural injunctions that are meant to back their discriminatory and repressive ambitions. In the society, the females are pressured to take up suitors on the account that she would have to be under the roof of another man so that she can lead her life. This is done with the complicity of female folks themselves who also assist in putting pressure on their friends on issues that patriarchy has programmed. When all these are done without resistance, the culture of submission is therefore injected into the minds of the females in the society. The fact that such system has survived generations means that the society has had enough opportunities to keep women in an eternal position of subservience.

It was not really surprising when the Nigerian president, Mohammadu Buhari said on the 14th October, 2016 that his wife belongs to the kitchen and the other room despite of her level of education. As we can see in President Buhari's instance, the problems with girl child education begin at home. Girls are educated in a different way than boys at this level of the community. Girls are essentially different from boys, according to parents, siblings, relatives, and even neighbours. They believe that males are the family's assets, and that if they are given an education, they will bring riches and improve the family's reputation. Though this notion is incorrect, boys are cleverer, adept, skilled, and responsible than girls, making them more essential in society. Despite the fact that both girls and boys are raised together at home and in the community. Even so, girls are nonetheless subjected to constraints and are compelled to grow up differently in a community where some restrictive customs are in place. They do not have the same opportunity as boys to demonstrate their abilities and develop their talents. As a result, girls grow up believing that just because they are girls, they are vastly inferior to boys. Girl child education will continue to face social discrimination as long as gender bias exists in society (Gitonga, 2009).

It would therefore not matter if a woman attains the highest level of education or bags the highest educational qualifications imaginable, cultural sentiment would make them believe that their values can only be valid under a man for example. They would in cases make derisive reference that she would end up being a cook in a man's household. This has therefore created psychological problems for the women folks. They are in most cases justifying all manners of oppression that they undergo, because they have been miseducated about what freedom is to be in their lives. It on this basis that many females were not encouraged to enroll in academic activities and for the ones who enroll, they would always doubt their capacity for independence. Many African novels for instance have portrayed women as mothers, nannies and subjugated individuals to expand the existing sentiment against the women in the society. All these are parts of the narrative that are believed to shape the principles of the women and how they go about it. Cultural sentiment has caused women to undergo traumatic experience that is garbed in the cloak of deceit.

The confinement of females to their houses, as well as their lack of encouragement to leave their homes and communicate with the outside world, has a negative impact on their mental health. These females are frequently mocked, ridiculed, and laughed at, and they are sometimes abused and mistreated. They feel vulnerable and scared as a result of these events, and they have difficulty speaking up for themselves and improving their knowledge, skills, and aptitude. Previous educational study has revealed that the girl child has been denied of her entitlement to an appropriate education for many years as a result of gender socialization. The boys are regarded with higher self-esteem and importance, and they are given most of educational opportunities.

What It Takes: Synopsis

What It Takes is an African fiction that showcases the underlying problems that surround the accomplishments of higher degree in the Nigerian education environment. The works tells the story of struggles and travails that students face in their process of bagging their doctorate degree. More importantly, it showcases how the school system frustrates the PhD candidates, especially the female ones who are usually left to the mercy of their randy

supervisors that usually wants to get down with them or take advantage of their ambition. In essence, the work is a reflection of disrepute, integrity deficit and moral decadence that has pervaded the university system in the Nigerian space. It focuses on the protagonist, Funto, whose academic brilliance does not matter to her supervisor who is an ethnic bigot. Corruption would not allow her to have the decency of studentship, and she is subjected to the system that does everything to frustrate her resolve.

Biological Essentialism in What It Takes

Lois Tyson defines biological essentialism as a "belief in the inborn inferiority of women" which consolidates the assumption that there is a general belief in the patriarchal societies that the female folks, because of their anatomical and biological differences from males, are naturally incapable of making some efforts that would help transform their lives as the males would do (Tyson, 2006: 85).¹⁰ This belief itself is etched on the social and cultural perceptions of the people and they also transmit that idea to the coming generations through the agency or narratives that are created to guide the innocent younger ones. In his book, there are many instances where the biological power of Olufunto, the protagonist, has been considered as a source of weakness to her and in that process can deny her from having the opportunities which the male counterparts are said to have in the society. In an occasion when she was exchanging communication with her very supervisor, Prof. Ephraim who is expected to guide her through in the process. The following is the conversation between them:

"You are a Lagos woman?"

"Yes, Sir, proudly so, Sir."

"That's alright. Next?"

"Sponsorship, Sir."

"Yes, who is your sponsor?"

"Nobody, Sir. I intend to sponsor myself, Sir." (56).¹¹

The above conversation shows that the Professor, despite being aware of the woman's age in their previous exchange does not believe she would be enough to sponsor herself. This is so because there is a general narrative that the females are biologically incapable of doing things for themselves except if they are helped by their male counterparts.

Social Constructionism in the Fiction

Feminists are of the opinion that gender, and not sex, is a socially constructed identity which apportions roles to the two sexes based on the biases of the people. Since the society is that of patriarchy therefore, it is understandable that some roles have been defined along male-female lines. It is within these boundaries that the females are believed to function which in most cases deny them their humanity. With this development, it means that masculinity and being feminine are both constructed by the society, for which even the females are complicit or accomplices. When you come across narratives that situate females or males along a specific social function, it is done because it has been socially constructed and embraced by the people. In the book that we are interrogating, the following conversations ensue between the protagonist and her mother:

"Indeed you are right, but I'm going back to the university to study again so that I can get an even better job."

"That's no plan at all. You are confused."

"Ha - ah, Ma'ami, why do you talk like this? You sent me to school, remember? You labored to train your children because you believed going to school was a good plan."

"Yes, I sent all of you to school and you went, Funto. You have a master's degree. What more education can anyone hope for?"

"I can go back to get a doctorate."

"Don't be foolish. You want to engage in a white elephant project, isn't it? (14-15).¹²

The contributions of the protagonist's mother above are informed by the social awareness that a project like PhD degree is a white man's project which can only be pursued by a man who is believed to have the time and the perseverance. Women are not socially expected to follow such a trajectory because they are gendered and their feminine attributes, which were socially made or constructed, would be considered as a negative attribute in achieving that. In essence, many of them have been denied important opportunities on the account of the social

¹⁰ Lois Tyson *Critical Theory Today*. (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹¹ Lola Akande *What It Takes*. (Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2016).

¹² Ibid

constructionism of human behavior, and this goes to affect the women folks eventually across every forum. Once they achieved that status, which they are usually forced to do, they cannot always find themselves to be fulfilled in the sense that they personally desire.

Synopsis of *The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Daré

Education they say will give voice to the voiceless. In the case of Adunni, the only daughter of mama and Papa. Forced out of school due to the death of her mother, Adunni became a pawn for the fishes in the ocean called Nigeria.

Against her wish, she was married off to a man old enough to be her father, Morufu the taxi driver who already has two wives and four children (girls) that he refuses to educate because he doesn't believe in the education of the girl-child. After hearing the news of her arraigned marriage, Adunni was disheartened to say the least. She remembered all her plans to be educated, be a teacher and become a rich adult woman with a car and a beautiful house. A week later, Adunni found herself in the house of her new husband, Morufu whose first wife, Labake does not relish sharing her husband with other women but she had no choice since she was not able to produce a male child, as if it takes only the woman to make a child. Morufu's second wife, Khadija, young and welcoming made Adunni feel at home. On her first night as a wife, she was made aware of the golden rule "I am the king in this house. Nobody must talk back to me. Not you, not the children, not anybody. When I am speaking, you keep your mouth quiet. Adunni, that means you don't ask question in my front, you hear me?". Despite of the many questions rearing to burst her mind, Adunni kept quiet and accepted all that she experienced in Morufu's house till she had to run away for fear of being killed for a crime she knows nothing about.

She decided against the wish of her husband not to have a child and she made her concern known to her second senior wife, Khadija who gave her some herbal concussion to take to prevent her from becoming pregnant.

After a while, on the same day that Kike, their husband's first child is being married off, Khadija ask Adunni to follow her on a visit to the midwife. While on the way, Khadija started to have labour pains. She told Adunni that their stop is Kere village. On getting to Kere village, she told Adunni to go into a house and call out a man Bamidele, apparently, Bamidele is responsible for khadijah's pregnancy. According to Khadijah, she decided to seek the help of Bamidele to become pregnant when all effort to have a male child through her husband has failed and having been in love with Bamidele before she was forced to marry her husband, she ran back to him for help so that she can have a male child and be free from constant threat by her husband who made it clear that should she not give him a male child, she will be returned to her father's house.

Unfortunately, Khadija did not make it back to Ikati alive. She died at the banks of Kere River where Bamidele took her and Adunni with a promise to bring a special soap for a supposed sacrifice that ought to be done on Khadija to prevent Khadija and the baby from dying. After a while, it became apparent that Bamidele deceive them. Bamidele refused to return and Khadija died right on the spot where Bamidele left her and Adunni. Adunni ran back to Bamidele's house only to be told that he has been away for some days and so Adunni was dumbfounded she had to run back to her father's house to seek her father's help to avoid the looming injustice that will come upon her should anybody in the village link her to the dead body of Khadija at Kere river.

After hearing her father's view on the incident, she decided to run away from home. She left in the cover of the night to Agan village where Iya, an old woman and one of the beneficiaries of her mother's good heart lives. The woman had initially promised to help her if she ever needs help. She ran to her for help although she met her in a condition that made her contemplate her decision. Iya decided to help her still even in our condition she sent for her brother, Mr Kola the Agent who lives in Idanra village. Mr Kola's agency supplies house help to influential people in the city of Lagos. So it is that the very next day after Khadija's demise, Adunni finds her herself on the way to the city of Lagos in Mr Kola's car.

In Lagos, Mr Kola took Adunni to Big Madam's, in Iekki where she is expected to work as a maid. She realise that this is another prison as it became quite clear that the education she so desperately seek would not be found in Big Madam's house and if she was ever going to make it out of this prison she needs to do something about her life. Her principal demands that she works from 5 a.m. till around midnight though she's only fourteen going to fifteen. Adunni bore this burden without any complaint. Her only complaint is the continuous and incessant beating she receives from Big Madam as if big madam has something against her that provokes Big Madam. It was at the meeting of Wellington Road Wives Association (WRWA) hosted by Big Madam that Adunni met Tia Dada, an environmentalist who later helped Adunni.

Kofi showed Adunni a newspaper clipping of the Ocean Oil Secondary School scholarship Scheme for Female Domestic Workers. Adunni knows that the scholarship will give her the chance to achieve what she had always dream about, the girl with "the louding voice". Her only fear is if she will be able to fulfil the requirement of the scholarship; an essay of no more than 1,000 words from the prospective scholar, stating why she should be considered for the scheme, as well as a signed consent form from a guarantor and referee, who must be a well-standing Nigerian citizen.

Adunni's relationship with Ms Tia is already blossoming. In the beginning, Ms Tia informed Adunni of her decision not to have a child despite the fact that she has everything else that Adunni believes every woman want in life. She was properly educated, she lives in a big house, she is rich and married to a man who loves her. Ms Tia explained that the decision not to have a child was born out of what she went through with her mother. Apparently, she has no cordial relationship whatsoever with her mother so she decided she will not bring a child to the world and treat her the same way she was treated. Adunni however told her that in spite of what she (Adunni) has been through, she will still do well become rich and make her father proud although her father did not do well by her when he stopped her from going to school and then married her off to Morufu because of community rent and food. Ms Tia's decision not to have a child changed after her conversation with Adunni. She and her husband started trying for a baby. Meanwhile, Ms Tia's Mother-in-Law has been a thorn in her life simply because Ms Tia is unable to get pregnant.

While Ms Tia was busy helping Adunni achieve her life's dream, she was dealing with a difficult mother in law. Her mother-in-law took her to a Prophet who promised to deliver Ms Tia of evil spirits barring her from getting pregnant. According to the Prophet and Mrs Dada, the infertility problem the family is facing is the fault of the woman which begs the question, does it not take two people to make a baby?. At the Miracle Centre, Ms Tia was given the beating of her life.

Eventually, Adunni decided to write her essay to be submitted for scholarship. When it was time to write, Ms Tia encouraged to write her truth, in other words, she should write from the deep recess of her heart where all the dark secrets are hidden. She eventually did this and talk to letter for my daughter and this scholarship parts office before she had to travel back to but I got to see her ailing mother.

About 3 months later series of accidents happened to Adunni. One was her attempted rape by Big Daddy. Apparently, Big Daddy has been eyeing her since the first day they were introduced but he couldn't have access to her. On this fateful night, Big Daddy having confirmed that his wife will not be around that night, sent Kofi home leaving himself and Adunni alone in the whole house. Just when he was about to fulfil his wish, Big Mummy came home unexpectedly. At that moment, it was also revealed that Big daddy has been having an illicit affair with one of Big Mummy's best friend, Mrs Caroline Bankole. These and many more atrocities that Big Daddy committed made Big Mummy send him out of the house with stern instructions to Kofi and Abu, the driver, that they must not allow him into the house.

Adunni also unravelled through her inquisitive attitude the mystery behind the disappearance of Rebecca, Big Mummy's housemaid that allegedly ran away from home. Apparently, Rebecca was impregnated by Big Daddy who promised to marry her and house her in the same building with Big Mummy. He later poisoned her but Rebecca was rescued by Big Mummy and told to never show up again.

Adunni eventually got the scholarship. Although she worked for over six months for Big Mummy, she was never paid. Adunni concluded that what Mr Kola keeps young girls like herself away from having the education that they so rightly deserve.

Complications of Girl-Child Education in *The Girl with the Louding Voice* By Abi Daré

The Girl with the Louding Voice is a painful and triumphant novel about the power of fighting for your ambitions. It tells the story of a teenage girl growing up in a remote Nigerian community who longs to receive an education so she can find her "louding voice" and speak up for herself. Despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges in her way, Adunni never loses sight of her aim of escaping the life of poverty into which she was born so that she can create the future she wants for herself - and help other girls do the same. Her unwavering commitment to finding joy and optimism in even the most trying circumstances will "tear your heart and then put it back together". There are many complications of girl-child education in the novel. These are;

Poverty

Children living in developing countries face great challenges in their quest for education, but the hurdles are especially high for girls. Globally, there are 130 million girls who are not currently enrolled in school. Investing in their future has the potential to uplift their families and the world.

When girls are educated, they see the benefits in all aspects of their lives. Adunni is of the opinion that education will raise her standard and give her a voice just as her mother said to her. Idowu, Adunni's mother could not marry the love of her life just because she was uneducated therefore, she made up her mind that no matter what it will cost her, her daughter will be. This dream was however cut short when Idowu died. Adunni's father who had earlier promised to ensure Adunni is educated reneged on his promise to his late wife when he could no longer pay for Adunni's school fee of ₦7,000.

"Thirty thousand naira is very plenty moneys. I know Papa cannot find that moneys even if he is searching the whole of the Nigeria because even my school fees moneys of seven thousand,

Papa didn't have. It was Mama who was paying for school fees and rent moneys and feeding money and everything money before she was dead". (pg 9)

An educated girl goes on to make higher incomes, and their children are healthier. Such is the mindset of Adunni, the protagonist in the novel, *The Girl with the Louding voice*. Though the circumstances around her dictates that she can't have access to quality education, she believes that if given a chance, she can make the best of herself and even her society. She is a girl determined to make impact, an impact that will outlive her.

"Adunni, God knows I will use my last sweat to be sending you to school because I am wanting you to have chance at life. I am wanting you to speak good English, because in Nigeria, everybody is understanding English and the better your speaking English, the better for you to be getting good job." "In this village, if you go to school, no one will be forcing you to marry any man. But if you didn't go to school, they will marry you to any man once you are reaching fifteen years old. Your schooling is your voice, child. It will be speaking for you even if you didn't open your mouth to talk. It will be speaking till the day God is calling you come." That day, I tell myself that even if I am not getting anything in this life, I will go to school. I will finish my primary and secondary and university schooling and become teacher because I don't just want to be having any kind voice . . . I want a louding voice." (Pg 23-24).

Funding

Poverty is the most important factor that determines whether or not a girl can access education, according to the World Bank. Parents most times often rely on girls' income to support the household, and sending a girl to school means they spend less time helping in the home. If families can't afford the costs of school, they're more likely to send boys than girls. When parents have to make the decision between buying necessities like food over sanitary napkins, girls are forced to stop learning because they don't manage their periods. Families will also allow their girls to enter child marriages if they can no longer afford to provide for them.

Such is the situation that Adunni and Khadija and many other teenagers in our society find themselves. They couldn't continue their education because their parents cannot afford the cost of school fee, have no money to take care of the basic needs of the family. The families therefore rely on the "owo Ori" (Bride Price) paid by the old men marrying these girls to keep the family afloat.

Khadija's hope for education was dashed because her father had diabetes which barred him from working and providing food for his family

"Your own is even good. Me, my father gave me to Morufu because of bag of rice," she says. "After sickness have cut my father's leg. You know diabetes sickness?" "Sickness of sugar," she says. "The diabetes bite his leg bad, and the doctor, they cut my father's leg just here—" She put her hand on her knee and make a slice around it, as if she is cutting yam. "The hospital money is too much, and he cannot work again, so we are suffering to eat. At first, Morufu was helping us, but he soon get tired and he say he must marry me or no food. He buys my family five *derica* of rice, and my father bundle me into Morufu car and wave me bye-bye. We didn't even do any wedding party like you." (pg 39-40)

Funding is an important issue when looking at reasons why girls are not in school. Education for girls is often the lowest budget priority in many countries. Daughters are perceived to be less valuable once educated, and less likely to abide by the will of the father, brother or husband.

Child Marriage

Child marriage, the marriage of a child under the age of 18, happens all over the world but occurs disproportionately in developing countries. Parents let their daughters enter child marriages for various reasons. Some believe they are protecting their children from harm or stigma associated with education and exposure of the girl-child:

"Tola is Mr. Bada child. She is twenty-five years and look like a agama lizard with long hair. Mr. Bada send her to school in Idanra town and she is now working inside bank there and is having motorcar and money, but she didn't find husband. They say she is looking everywhere for husband but nobody is marrying her, maybe because she is looking like a agama lizard with long hair or maybe because she is having money like a man." (pg 25)

Child brides who miss out on education are also more likely to experience early pregnancy, malnourishment, domestic violence, and pregnancy complications. Khadija's untimely death as a result of complications of pregnancy. For families experiencing financial hardship, child marriage reduces their economic burden, but it ends up being more difficult for girls to gain financial independence without education.

Trafficking

Statistics say 23% of girls who should be in school are being trafficked daily for domestic use and as sex workers. Mr kola's agency is an example of such trafficking agency. They supply girls for domestic duties in towns and cities and still reap off these girls. For all the months that Adunni worked with Big Madam, she was never paid. These girls have no one to report their randy bosses to because they are ignorant of what the law stipulates in situations like this. They are only eager to be free from the encumbrances of the backward life they have been living in the rural area. While the city should have been a place of freedom, it turns out that the city chokes these girls till they come to terms with their unfortunate situation or murdered.

"I have one brother, Kola is his name. We share the same father but not the same mother. He is doing job of helping girls like you..." "Can you find her job like all those girls you use to help? Adunni is very good girl. She is even knowing book. She is speaking good English..." "There is one girl that is supposed to be starting work for me in Lagos today," he says. "Maybe I can put Adunni instead. She seems to be what my boss is looking for. The right age. Can she travel to somewhere far like Lagos?" (pg 92)

Early marriage

Too often marriage is seen as a higher priority than education. The low value attached to girls' schooling means few other options are available to them. Boys can be affected but most victims of child marriage are girls. Apparently, the parents believe that because they do not have money and they do not believe in educating a girl child whose only perceived role is cooking and making the house tidy, caring for her husband and children. In other words, educating a girl child is a waste. This view deprives girls like Adunni, Kike, khadija and others like them who genuinely have something to offer access to quality education because the society does not believe in educating them.

Kike, Morfu's first daughter wishes to be a fashion designer but she could not realize this dream just because her father needed money to repair his taxi car to keep the family going. He feels by marrying her off he will make money and then use the money keep his business.

"If I have my boys, I will send them to school. They will become English-speaking taxi driver and make plenty money. Girls are only good for marriage, cooking food, and bedroom work. I have already found Kike a husband. I will use her bride-price to repair my car window, maybe buy more chickens for my farm..." (pg 38)

Another one is the girl, Rebecca who we come across through the eyes of Adunni. Rebecca was Big Madam's housemaid before Adunni. She had a chance at education but the untimely death of her previous madam truncated this effort. She soon finds herself in Big Madam's house working from dusk to midnight and being molested by Big Daddy.

Conclusion

A very close observation of the analysis done in this works would reveal that various dimensions of narratives are usually employed in the society to delimit the capacity of women. It cannot be contested that a number of women have unimaginable potentials but they are perpetually faced by the repressive society that is insensitive to their plights and conditions. Narratives are strictly important because they are culturally deployed to construct human minds in ways that would suit the cultural predilections of the society that creates them. Regrettably, many of these societies are patriarchal and their enduring interest is to see to the eternal subjugation of the women folks. To this extent, they use all the manners of narratives that would aid their biases and continue their lopsided treatment. When the narratives are reconstructed in ways that it would be fair to everyone, the society would experience undiluted peace that can facilitate development that humanity deserves.

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