

# Resisting Gender-Based Violence in Buchi Emecheta's Fictions: *The Joys of Motherhood* and *The Bride Price*

Nèma Touhou-Diakite<sup>1,2</sup>, Toulou Stéphane Blimi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Anglophone African Literature and Civilization, University Felix Houphouët Boigny of Cocody, Abidjan, Ivory Coast

<sup>2</sup>Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, African Studies, Penn State University, State College, USA

<sup>3</sup>Anglophone African Literature and Civilization, University Alassane Ouattara, Bouaké, Ivory Coast

Email: lperfect431@gmail.com, diakite.nema@gmail.com, blim2402@gmail.com

**How to cite this paper:** Touhou-Diakite, N., & Blimi, T. S. (2024). Resisting Gender-Based Violence in Buchi Emecheta's Fictions: *The Joys of Motherhood* and *The Bride Price*. *Advances in Literary Study*, 12, 17-29.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/als.2024.121002>

**Received:** September 19, 2023

**Accepted:** January 15, 2024

**Published:** January 18, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International

License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

## Abstract

This research aims to examine the entrenched gender-based violence encompassing issues such as domestic abuse, societal oppression, and the psychological toll of gender-based expectations. Simultaneously, it explores the emergence of a new female archetype while assessing how female writers engage with prevailing societal norms, deconstruct stereotypes, and redefine the portrayal of African women. Rooted in feminist scholarly frameworks, the research concentrates on the significant role played by female African writers. Notably, Buchi Emecheta's "The Bride Price" and "The Joy of Motherhood" serve as focal points to exemplify how postcolonial female authors engage in deconstructing the patriarchal narrative and challenging prevailing stereotypes.

## Keywords

Sexism, Gender-Based Violence, African Women, Feminism, Discrimination

## 1. Introduction

The enduring stereotypes of women as the "weaker sex" or the "second sex" continue to persist, perpetuating harmful beliefs and expectations. Women are often expected to embody fragility, submissiveness, silence, and passivity. Simone de Beauvoir captures this notion by stating: "To be feminine is to appear weak, futile, docile (de Beauvoir, 1974)." These stereotypes have been reinforced over time, including the colonial era when European powers imposed patriarchal values on African societies. Therefore, the exploration of "Resisting Gender-

based Violence in Emecheta's fictions" holds significant merit due to the pervasive nature of agony, which profoundly impacts African women.

Scholarly investigations have focused on the discriminatory experiences encountered by African women, as evidenced in Susheila Nasta's article, "Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia" (Nasta, 1991). Nasta's insights further emphasize the urgent need to challenge and dismantle the societal norms that disregard the holistic experiences of women.

In addition, Lewis & Mills (2003) assert that Emecheta addresses elements of Western feminism, exposing gender inequality, sexual differences, and gender oppression within Igbo society. She portrayed how women are silenced and oppressed by patriarchy in essence, and she critiques how traditional African institutions define "motherhood".

In the analysis by Balavatbhai (2020), Buchi Emecheta's novel "The Joys of Motherhood" is interpreted as a story that sheds light on the marginalization and suffering experienced by women in patriarchal African communities.

Chukwuma's scholarly perspective, as articulated in the statement, underscores the pivotal role played by Buchi Emecheta in bridging the divide between male and female characterization within literary discourse (Chukwuma, 1989). He contends that Emecheta's literary works adeptly portray the multifaceted experiences of women, ranging from the subjugated slave girl archetype to the empowered and fulfilled single mother figure.

Similarly, Cynthia Ward, in her discerning evaluation, commends Emecheta for her portrayal of African womanhood, thereby advocating for the recognition and empowerment of Emecheta's female characters and, by extension, African women in general (Ward, 1990).

Specifically, the study explores how the African woman, as depicted through the female protagonists in Buchi Emecheta's narratives, are subjected to instances of violence perpetrated by men.

African women necessitate resilience and empowerment, embodying traits of self-assertion, independence, and resilience, particularly within the patriarchal societies. It is crucial to underscore the importance of highlighting women's voices, experiences, and perspectives within narratives, considering the profound impact this emphasis has on their self-assertion.

The objective of the research is to investigate how Emecheta sheds light on the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence within the cultural context portrayed in her fiction. It seeks to elucidate the strategic employed by Emecheta to empower African women amidst the challenges.

"The Bride Price" (Emecheta, 1976), represents her first authentic work of fiction following her two autobiographical novels; in the *Ditch* (Emecheta, 1972) and *Second Class Citizen* (Emecheta, 1974). The novel vividly portrays how the practice of paying a bride price has become a significant aspect of the lives of the Ibuza people. As Palmer asserts, the patriarchal system functions as a structure that seeks to control and subjugate women, limiting their agency in matters of

economy, sexuality, marriage, and pregnancy (Palmer, 1982).

Published in 1979, “The Joys of Motherhood” serves as a potent critique of polygamy, patriarchy, and the evolving roles of women within the urban landscape of Nigeria. The novel intricately portrays Nnu Ego’s challenging existence in Lagos (Emecheta, 1979).

While Emecheta may resist being labeled as a feminist, her ideas, as conveyed through her literary works, undeniably align with feminism on a significant scale. Her writings resoundingly and unequivocally express her feminist beliefs. Through her portrayal of female characters, Emecheta addresses the sexism and oppression experienced by women in patriarchal societies.

According to Tate, sexism is a valuable theoretical framework for studying the dynamics and outcomes stemming from the oppression of women. It involves openly antagonistic attitudes and actions directed towards women, encompassing the belief in the inferiority of women and the rationalization of discrimination and violence based on gender. She writes “Black women suffered violence under slavery and racism the same as African American men. They struggled together with black men to fight (such) racism but now they struggle with black men over sexism (Tate, 1983).”

In examining gender-based violence, it becomes evident that systemic discrimination, historical injustices, and social constructs have profoundly hindered the empowerment of women. However, their resilience and activism against traditional stereotypes are crucial elements in the ongoing struggle for equality, self-determination, and socio-economic advancement.

Our research is centered on the critical examination of issues surrounding violence against women and the imperative aspects of women’s empowerment. Emecheta’s works showcase a significant portion of gendered-based violence and self-assertion challenges. Consequently, we deem it essential to analyze “The Bride Price” (Emecheta, 1976) and “The Joy of Motherhood” (Emecheta, 1979) due to their substantial portrayal of the themes central to our study, encompassing issues of violence against women. Our analysis will adopt a feminist perspective to examine the lives, challenges, and resilience of African women within a predominantly male-centric environment.

The paper systematically investigates three significant themes within Buchi Emecheta’s literary works. Firstly, it delves into the themes of abduction and sexual harassment portrayed in “The Bride Price”. This section critically examines the nuances of these themes, offering a comprehensive understanding of their representation in the novel. Secondly, it explores the intricate portrayals of emotional and mental violence within the context of “The Joys of Motherhood”. By dissecting the narrative, it sheds light on the complexities of these forms of abuse, highlighting their impact on mothers and the broader societal implications. Finally, the paper meticulously outlines the feminist reactions to male aggression as depicted in Emecheta’s works. It analyzes the responses of female characters to the prevailing male aggression, providing insights into the ways in

which these characters navigate and challenge patriarchal norms and attitudes.

## 2. Appraisal of the Sexual Harassment Faced by Women in “The Bride Price”

“The Bride Price”, records the growing pangs of the young African girl, carefully delineating the gradual submergence of the central character, Aku-nna, into traditional society. Despite being an ardent lover of her culture and the ancient customs of the land, Emecheta depicts the unpleasant truth while speaking about women’s lives in traditional Africa. Even though sociological studies show that women were relatively autonomous, “The Bride Price”, presents women as the voiceless section of society that must bend to male prerogative as exemplified in Aku-nna and her mother Ma Blackie.

Kidnapping is a grave issue that affects societies globally, and unfortunately, Africa is not immune to this troubling phenomenon. It is characterized by its brutality and has far-reaching consequences. Girls are targeted for various reasons, such as forced marriage, human trafficking, ransom demands, or ideological motivations. These acts not only infringe upon the fundamental rights and freedoms of the girls but also leave lasting physical, emotional, and psychological scars. Writing about Caribbean slavery, Marisa Fuentes argues:

Women appear as historical subjects through the form and content of archival documents in the way they lived: spectacularly violated, objectified, disposable, hypersexualized, and silenced. The violence is transferred from the enslaved bodies to the documents that count, condemn, assess, and evoke them, and we receive them in this condition (Fuentes, 2016).

Women in *Ibuza* are depicted in a manner reminiscent of the enslaved women examined by Fuentes, where the violence inflicted upon them is portrayed as though it had no justification. In *Ibuza*, where the story takes place, kidnapping is legal, and young men who cannot afford the bride price resort to brutalizing girls by cutting their hair as a means of asserting ownership. Girls live in constant fear, as they should always be on guard against potential threats. Unfortunately, these frightening encounters often occur when they are alone, vulnerable, and on their way to the marsh. Girls in *Ibuza* are trapped in a perpetual state of fear, lacking a reliable support system. Shockingly, their mothers, expected to offer guidance during their developmental phases, endorse and sustain the patriarchal system. Emecheta’s depiction of girls’ kidnapping in “The Bride Price”, underscores the need to challenge and question societal norms and traditions that perpetuate gender inequality and deny girls their basic rights. The author’s portrayal of this issue serves as a call to action, urging readers to critically examine and dismantle oppressive practices that harm girls and limit their agency. The author writes:

In *Ibuza* young girls must be prepared for anything to happen. Some youth who had no money to pay for a bride might sneak out of the bush to cut a

curl from a girl's head so that she would belong to him for life and never be able to return to her parents. (TBP, p. 106)

In *Ibuza*, instances of physical and sexual violence occur within the context of dowry negotiations. It is important to highlight that dowry serves as a means for men to enrich themselves. *Aku-nna's* father, *Okonkwo*, sent her to school with the belief that her education would increase the value of her dowry, thus benefiting him financially. During the ceremony of the virgins, *Okoboshi* brutally kidnapped her. He is, a young man with a limp, who engaged in a physical altercation with *Chike*, over the possession of *Aku-nna*.

The author portrays *Okoboshi* as a skilled fighter with a history of victories and a physically dominant and aggressive character. *Okoboshi* possesses the strength and ability to overpower *Aku-nna* physically. His physical prowess gives him a sense of entitlement and control over her, perpetuating a power dynamic that is rooted in violence and domination.

In contrast, *Aku-nna* is depicted as a physically weak and delicate individual since birth. Her small and fragile stature earned her the nickname "thin" from her mother. Therefore, there exists a physical disparity between *Okoboshi* and *Aku-nna*, leaving *Aku-nna* defenseless against his advances. Excited and filled with desire, *Okoboshi* forces himself upon her, coercing her onto a bed while tightly gripping her arm, causing numbness. To resist, *Aku-nna* kicks him in the leg, prompting him to deliver a powerful slap.

The power dynamics depicted in this scene reflect broader societal issues related to violence based on gender and the oppression experienced by women. It highlights the imbalance of power between men and women, where physical strength is utilized as a means of dominance and control. By portraying *Okoboshi's* actions as brutal and coercive, the author condemns such behaviors and exposes the injury they cause to women. Additionally, the insults directed at *Aku-nna* by *Okoboshi* not only demonstrate his physical dominance but also reveal the underlying power dynamics influenced by gender. His anger and derogatory remarks further perpetuate the systemic devaluation and objectification of women, contributing to a culture of violence and gender-based oppression.

Through this portrayal, *Emecheta* brings attention to the widespread issue of male violence and its detrimental effects on women's lives. By highlighting the power dynamics, physical disparity, and verbal abuse depicted in this scene, she confronts readers with the harsh realities that many women face in patriarchal societies. *Okoboshi* angrily insulted *Aku-nna*:

"You dirty animal!" he shouted. Do you think I want to touch you now? Slave girl! He hit her again. I never really wanted you anyway! ...Soon I shall marry the girl of my choice (TBP, p. 64).

Upon discovering that *Aku-nna* is not a virgin, *Okoboshi* harbors contempt and subjects her to humiliation. The distressing incident leaves *Aku-nna* unconscious and physically weakened. Upon regaining consciousness, she cannot

return to her mother as she has just been disciplined by Okoboshi, so she goes back to her new in-laws. However, her mother-in-law, upon learning that she is not a virgin, despises her and subjects her to mistreatment. It becomes evident that Okoboshi, the perpetrator, shows no concern for Aku-nna's well-being. He physically abuses her, inflicting severe slaps that cause her mouth to bleed.

Through this passage, Emecheta exposes the cruelty and perversity exhibited by certain men when they fail to control their sexual impulses. The author also draws readers attention on the power relationship at play, where men possess the right to select and manipulate women as they please, while women are expected to remain silent or risk being rejected. In *Ibuza*, the physical and emotional wounds inflicted upon women often go unnoticed. Aku-nna's life was on the brink of being lost during a legalized act of rape, yet no one pays attention. Her exhausted, bloodied, and battered body is left to heal on its own. Okoboshi strikes her once more, causing her to collapse onto the floor and lose consciousness (Emecheta, p. 64). Emecheta points out the callousness of certain men towards women's suffering. The author writes:

She knew that both her eyes must be swollen for she found it difficult to lift her eyelids upwards. Her head was still reeling like that of someone half-drunk. She allowed herself to shed a few tears into the silent stream. (TBP, p. 147)

The passage above vividly portrays the physical and emotional toll that Aku-nna is enduring. The mention of swollen eyes and difficulty lifting her eyelids suggests a traumatic experience; her head reeling as if she were half-drunk conveys the disorientation and turmoil she is feeling. Aku-nna shedding tears into a silent stream is a poignant image, symbolizing her internal struggle. Overall, this passage effectively conveys Aku-nna's inner turmoil and suffering, drawing the reader into her emotional journey.

### **3. Motherhood and the Perils of Violence in "The Joys of Motherhood"**

The concept of male violence in Africa refers to the pervasive issue of violence perpetrated by men against women in various forms within African societies. This type of violence includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. Male violence in Africa often stems from deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and unequal power dynamics between men and women.

Several contributing factors underpin the prevalence of male violence in Africa. These factors include gender inequality, rigidly defined gender roles, and societal attitudes that condone such abusive behavior.

In Buchi Emecheta's novels, male violence emerges as a recurring theme, illuminating the harsh realities confronted by women within patriarchal societies. Her literary works frequently portray the physical and emotional abuse endured by female characters at the hands of men, offering a stark commentary on the

systemic oppression and gender inequality pervasive in African communities.

Within Emecheta's narratives, male violence is depicted as a manifestation of deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and societal expectations. Through her exploration of these themes, Emecheta provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of gender-based violence, urging readers to critically examine and challenge these deeply ingrained societal structures.

For example, in "The Joys of Motherhood", we can observe instances of psychological harm experienced by the female character Adaku. This occurs when Nwakusor and Ubani, friends of Nnaife, intervene to address a disagreement between Nnu Ego and her co-wife Adaku. From a male-centered perspective, they attribute the conflict to Adaku's lack of male children for the family. Therefore, they argue that she has no grounds to complain about her senior wife's behavior because she not only gives birth to girls for Nnaife but also fails to have boys. In this meeting, Nwakusor and Ubani reprimand Adaku, highlighting the cultural belief that African women secure their husbands' legacy through the birth of male offspring. This is said in the following statement:

I know you have children but they are girls who in a few years will go and help build another man's immortality. The only woman who is immortalizing your husband you make unhappy with your fine clothes and lucrative business. If I were in your shoes, I would go home and consult my chi to find out why male offspring have been denied to me. But instead, you are here quarreling about your senior wife (TJOM, p. 166).

Moreover, African societies place significant value on both fertility and the birth of male children. This perspective is deeply rooted in cultural and traditional beliefs and can be seen in various aspects of social life. Fertility is highly regarded because it ensures the continuation of family lineage and community. The birth of boys is particularly esteemed due to cultural norms, inheritance practices, and the perception that male heirs carry on the family name and legacy. These beliefs can vary across different African cultures and regions but often reflect the importance of family cohesion, community stability, and the perpetuation of cultural heritage. Lerner contends that the basis for male dominance originates from the inherent biological distinctions between genders. She writes:

The traditionalist explanation focuses on a woman's reproductive capacity and sees motherhood woman's chief goal in life, by implication defining her as a deviant woman who does not become a mother. Women's maternal function is seen as a species necessity since societies could not have survived into modernity without most women devoting most of their adult lives to childbearing and child-rearing. Thus, the sexual division of labor based on biological differences is seen as functional and just (Lerner, 1986).

The passage above underscores the traditionalist viewpoint, which places significant emphasis on a woman's ability to bear children and primarily identifies motherhood as her ultimate life goal. It suggests that women who do not fulfill



this role are seen as departing from societal expectations. Within this perspective, a woman's function as a mother is deemed crucial for the advancement and continuity of societies, particularly during their transition into modern times. As a result, the division of labor based on biological differences is considered not only practical but also ethically acceptable.

The role of women in terms of productivity is complex and often challenged by cultural and societal expectations. While the novel acknowledges the importance of women's contributions to both the household and the community, it also portrays how these contributions can be undervalued and undermined within a patriarchal society. Nnu Ego, the central character, exemplifies the struggles of women to be productive within their defined roles as wives and mothers. She is expected to bear children, particularly male heirs, to ensure the continuity of her husband's lineage and the prosperity of the family. Nnu Ego's worth is often measured by her ability to fulfill this role, which can lead to emotional and psychological distress as she faces challenges and disappointments. She was surprised to hear her husband saying:

I have no time to waste my precious male seed on an infertile woman. I have to raise children for my line. If you want to know, you don't appeal to me anymore you are so dry and jumpy when a man comes to a woman he wants to be cooled, not scratched by a nervy female who is all bones (TJOM, p. 31).

Nnu Ego's life is marked by the heart-wrenching struggle between her inability to have children and the burdens imposed by a patriarchal social structure. Hannam in her book *Feminism* provides a concise and accurate description of the central tenets of feminism. It highlights key aspects of feminist ideology, such as the acknowledgment of gender-based power imbalances and the belief that women's status is a social construct that can be transformed. She comments on Feminism:

A set of ideas that recognize in an explicit way that women are subordinate to men and seek to address imbalances of power between the sexes. Central to feminism is the view that women's condition is socially constructed and therefore open to change (Hannam, 2014).

Upon her arrival in Lagos to join her second husband, Nnaife, Nnu Ego experiences emotional distress during their intimate encounter. She had hoped for a reprieve, especially on her first night in Lagos, before engaging in such intimacy with her new spouse. Regrettably, Nnaife overlooks her emotional well-being and approaches her eagerly, further exacerbating her feelings of distress and discomfort, as described by the author.

This one worked himself into an animal passion...this man's appetite was insatiable, and by the morning, she was so weary...O, my dead mother, please make this dream come true, then I will respect this man, I will be his faithful



wife and put up with his crude ways and ugly appearance (TJOM, p. 44-45).

These instances of violence against women during intimate encounters represent forms of degradation that women commonly endure in African societies. Through careful analysis, it becomes apparent that men often use such violence as a way of seeking retribution, revenge, against women. Ultimately, Nnu Ego is subjected to a series of psychological violence. Initially, she must come to terms with her husband's decision to marry a younger wife named Adaku. Nnu Ego is compelled to endure the presence of her co-wife in the cramped single room they share, alongside their children.

Nnaife embodies the traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms ingrained in their society. His viewpoint on marriage and family is molded by cultural expectations that prioritize male heirs and the continuation of the family lineage. While he harbors affection for Nnu Ego, his choices are largely guided by societal conventions rather than his wishes. Nnaife's character shows the difficulties and responsibilities placed upon men within the framework of a patriarchal structure. He is expected to provide for his family, secure their future, and uphold the family's societal standing. These pressures influence the decisions he makes throughout the novel.

The dynamic between Nnu Ego and Nnaife mirrors the wider societal norms and gender dynamics that prevail in the Igbo culture of Nigeria during the novel's timeframe. Their relationship serves as a microcosm that illustrates the intricate interplay between tradition and modernity, gender roles, and individual aspirations. Elaborating on those viewpoints, Eustace Palmer writes:

Male chauvinism is surely at its peak in traditional society where females are regarded by males as little better than goods and chattels. If they are wives, then their main use is as vehicles for procreating children, thus immortalizing the husband's name and ensuring the continuity of his line; if they are daughters, the fathers' only interest in them relates to the amount of money they will bring into his coffers in the form of bride price (Palmer, 1982).

This statement highlights the prevalence of male supremacy within traditional societies, where women are often perceived as mere possessions. In such contexts, when women are wives, their primary role is seen as facilitating the husband's legacy by bearing children, which serves to immortalize his name and ensure the lineage's continuation. On the other hand, when they are daughters, their value is primarily measured in terms of the financial contributions they can bring to their fathers through bride prices, underscoring the materialistic and objectifying aspects of gender dynamics.

#### **4. Ideological Stakes of Emecheta Resistance to Violence and Sexist Injustices**

Emecheta emphasizes the role of education as a tool to restore women's rights

and attain self-identification, despite their considerable hardships. Umeh highlights: “Education... is the crucial liberating force in the lives of Emecheta’s heroine, and in fact, their degree of servitude is inversely proportional to the amount of education they receive (Umeh, 1980).”

One way that Emecheta responds to male violence is by opting to educate her protagonist. In her novel, Aku-nna’s mother, Ma Blackie, becomes a powerful advocate for her daughter’s autonomy and dreams by sending her to school. This act of defiance challenges the patriarchal norms that have kept women oppressed for centuries.

Blackie Aku-nna’s mother held a firm conviction that education and independence were fundamental for women. Despite prevailing societal norms that discouraged girls from attending school during her time, she actively encouraged Aku-nna to pursue education. She emerges as a beacon of strength and inspiration in Aku-nna’s life, empowering her to defy societal expectations and challenge the oppressive customs that restricted women’s options. Blackie’s determination to support Aku-nna’s education exemplified her courage to go against the grain, demonstrating her strong belief in the importance of women’s education.

Additionally, Emecheta highlights the transformative power of education as a means of empowerment for women. Aku-nna’s enrollment in school exposes her to new ideas and opportunities, broadening her horizons and challenging the traditional roles assigned to women. Through education, she gains a sense of self-worth and the tools to envision a different future for herself. Emecheta is confirming that women can overcome the challenges they face and achieve their goals. She shows that it is possible to be strong and independent, even in a society that tells you otherwise. Emecheta writes:

“What she feared was the type of man who would be chosen for her. She would have liked to marry someone living in Lagos so that she would not have to work on a farm and carry cassava. She had heard stories of how strenuous farm life could be for a woman.” (TBP, p. 51)

As the story unfolds, Aku-nna’s determination to forge her path becomes increasingly clear. She finds comfort and support in her relationship with her childhood friend, Chike, who shares her dreams of breaking free from societal constraints. Together, Aku-nna and Chike strive for a love that transcends the oppressive traditions surrounding them.

Emecheta’s response to gender-based violence is also embodied in her character Adaku, who epitomizes the contemporary African woman. Adaku’s journey portrays a modern woman’s struggle against patriarchy, male dominance, and cultural values. She embodies Womanism, acknowledging her equality with men and asserting her autonomy in decision-making. She represents progress and rebellion against stereotypical social norms, achieving success independently.

Adaku articulates her determination by stating: “I am not prepared to stay here and be turned into a mad woman, just because I have no son.” (TJOM, 189)

Her commitment to education grows as she frees her two daughters from societal conventions and male control. She strongly holds the belief that education empowers her daughters to break free from male supremacy and traditional patriarchal customs, allowing them to stand on their own and realize their fullest capabilities. She expresses her desire by stating: “I want to be a dignified single woman. I shall work to educate my daughters; though I shall not do so without male companionship.” (TJOM, 191)

Women who can achieve their dreams and live their lives on their terms are more likely to be happy and fulfilled. They are also more likely to be able to make a positive impact on the world. By depicting *Aku-nna* and *Adaku*’s journey toward self-discovery and liberation, the author challenges the status quo and encourages readers to question and redefine societal norms that hinder women’s progress and pursue their dreams.

Buchi Emecheta’s novels serve as an illustration of the African feminist perspective, firmly grounded in Igbo customs and traditions. Emecheta contends that during the transition from the pre-colonial era to the colonial period and beyond, women can develop a critical awareness of both the beneficial and oppressive aspects of traditional Igbo culture. This understanding would empower them to challenge established patriarchal norms while also safeguarding valuable elements of Igbo culture that risk erasure in the face of evolving colonial realities. She defines herself as a proponent of African feminism. She actively engages with feminist ideas within the African context, emphasizing her contribution to gender equality and women’s rights on the continent. Cornwall writes:

African feminism is not reactive; it is proactive. It has a life of its own that is rooted in the African environment. Its uniqueness emanates from the cultural and philosophical specificity of its provenance. African feminism’s valorization of motherhood and respect for maternal politics should not be pitted against the demotion of motherhood/maternal politics by radical feminism in the West, rather they should be investigated in the context of their place and importance in the African environment (Cornwall, 2005).

This comment provides an insightful perspective on African feminism, emphasizing its proactive nature and its deep connection to the African cultural and philosophical context. African feminism’s distinctiveness emerges from its roots in this specific environment. Furthermore, the author advocates for a nuanced understanding of African feminism’s emphasis on motherhood and maternal politics, suggesting that these aspects should not be viewed solely through the lens of Western radical feminism’s critique of them. Instead, they should be examined within the unique African context to appreciate their significance and complexity.

## 5. Conclusion

Buchi Emecheta’s works extensively delve into the experiences of African women, meticulously focusing on their lives and delving into the structural inequali-

ties and systemic injustices that disproportionately affect women. The exploration of violence in her fiction serves as a powerful critique of harmful traditional practices and societal expectations that detrimentally impact women's lives and well-being.

Through her narratives, she also showcases the vital themes of empowerment and resistance, emphasizing their crucial roles in the face of adversities prevalent in their societies. In both "The Joys of Motherhood" and "The Bride Price", she presents characters who actively strive to assert their agency and challenge societal expectations. Notably, Aku-nna's mother, Ma Blackie and Adaku who defy traditional norms by sending their daughters to school, a decision considered unconventional in their community. This act of defiance serves as a potent challenge to the patriarchal norms that have historically oppressed women for generations.

Emecheta, illuminates the urgent need for societal transformation and the essential empowerment of women to liberate themselves from the cyclical patterns of violence and oppression.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### References

- Balavatbhai, V. H. (2020). Tale of African Women: Buchi Emecheta's Joy of Motherhood. *International Journal of Advance Academic Studies*, 2, 11-14. <https://doi.org/10.33545/27068919.2020.v2.i2a.77>
- Chukwuma H. (1989). Positivism and The female Crisis, The Novels of Buchi Emecheta. In H. C. Otokunefor, & O. C. Nwodo (eds.), *Nigerian Female Writers: A Critical Perspective* (pp. 2-18). Malthouse Press.
- Cornwall, A. (2005). *Readings in Gender in Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1974). *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books.
- Emecheta, B. (1972). *In the Ditch*. Barrie and Jenkins.
- Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second Class Citizen*. Alison and Busby.
- Emecheta, B. (1976). *The Bride Price*. Allison & Busby.
- Emecheta, B. (1979). *The Joys of Motherhood*. Heinemann.
- Fuentes, M. J. (2016). *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*. University of Pennsylvania Press. <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812293005>
- Hannam, J. (2014). *Feminism*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315833170>
- Lerner, G. (1986). *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Vol. I, pp. 6-123). Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, M., & Mills, S. (2003). *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Routledge.
- Nasta, S. (1991). *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*. Women's Press.
- Palmer, E. (1982). A Powerful Female Voice in the African Novel: Introducing the Novels of Buchi Emecheta. *New Literature Review*, No. 11, 21-23.
- Tate, C. (1983). *Black Women Writers at Work*. Continuum.

- Umeh, M. (1980). African Women in Transition in the Novels of Buchi Emecheta. *Présence Africaine*, N°116, 190-201.
- Ward, C. (1990). What They Told Buchi Emecheta: Oral Subjectivity and the Joys of "Otherhood". *PMLA*, 105, 83-97. <https://doi.org/10.2307/462345>