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Identity Construction in Adichies two texts *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

The study attempts to examine Identity construction in Adichies texts, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). The study was guided by the reader response theory. A critical reading of the texts has revealed that, every character in both texts has been struggling in constructing his/her identity. The study involved three aspects of identity, which included self, social, and national identity. All children in texts struggle to carve out their own identities through interaction with the environment through which they pass they through. Chimamanda Adichie is also introducing the concept of social identity, where by the elite in *Half of a Yellow Sun* organizes to meet in Odenigbo house and share different ideas concerning Pan Africanism, tribalism, nation, and race. Likewise in *Purple Hibiscus*, the family of aunty Ifeoma with father Amadi helps Jaja and Kambili to build their social identity through interaction, and engaging them into different activities. National identity is also discussed in this study by involving both children and adult characters from the texts. Everyone is looking forward on possible ways in which they can put their hands together to bring harmony and peace in their country.

Keywords: *Identity, Construction, Adichies texts, Half, Yellow, Sun, Purple, Hibiscus.*

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1.0 Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is among the young African writers who has contributed much in narrating the story which highlights various aspects embedded in African history particular in Nigeria. Adichie introduces issues like ethnicity, racial, religion, family issues, cultural attitudes, and social classes. Through her works she has opened the minds of young generations and people around the world to see what happened in the past. This study, looked at Identity construction on Chimamanda's two texts *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Identity refers the sense of who we are as individuals and as members of social groups. Identity is formed through interactions with others, through different approaches like sharing ideas, observing people's culture, engagement of economic activities, form and non-formal education. For an individual to construct his/her identity, the individual needs to be supported by others in the society so as to be able to discover who we are and how people find us as individual. Identities grow in response to both internal and external factors. To some extent, each of us chooses an identity, but identities are also formed by environmental forces out of our control. (Erickson, 16-19). Therefore, identity is used to describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and how they are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and Culture. According to Jess Whittleston (2014), we all have a certain image of ourselves and beliefs about the kind of person we are. Having a strong sense of identity seems to be desirable; something that brings comfort and security, identity also helps us to make decisions on some issues. We're constantly faced with complex decisions and circumstances.

Adichie's work *Purple Hibiscus*, and *Half of a Yellow sun*, identity construction is presented by different aspects, including self-identity, social, and national identity. Social identity is built and developed through interaction and community that individuals can perceive the shared task and goal between group members, which are characterized by the shared identity. Wegge & Haslam (2003) adds that; social identity influences how people see them and how they interact with others. It is true that those individuals who have a positive view of their identity in a given group, will mostly been accepted by other members in a group. In these two novels by Chimamanda Adichie, there is a struggle of self-identity, social identity, and National identity. Self-identity has been presented through individual characters in *Purple Hibiscus* (2017), the children Kambili and Jaja, the home environment doesn't give them freedom for their growth because of the harsh and violent situation from their father Eugen. This therefore makes them to behave differently from Aunt Ifeomas children. The narrator is describing them as children

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who are shy, Purple Hibiscus (139), they are not free at all, thus leading Aunt Ifoeman's children to find it difficult to associate with Kambili and Jaja for the first time. Apart from the three identities mentioned above, there is also religious, intellectual, and psychological identities in the two texts. Intellectual Identity may be defined as that element of your "self" through which you interpret and understand the world around you. Intellectual Identity guides how one relate to his/her surroundings.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The study paid attention to examine the identity construction in Adichie's two texts *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This study thought to fill this gap in knowledge by highlighting the stylistic strategies that the writer uses to integrate various forms of identities within in the political discourse of a nation.

2.0 Literature Review

Ange. M. Brokerhof (2019) notes that, the fictional narratives can offer fictional role models and introduce possible selves that become incorporated in the extended self-domain. Narrative themes and structures influence how people conceptualize and structure their social and narrative identity. Through narratives one can be helped in identity construction.

Ogaga Okuyade (2009) looks in silence as a character in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* this demonstrates the development of the story's main character-Kambili and her struggle to speak under her father's abuse. The researcher also studies Kambili's growth concerning religion and domestic violence, since she is presented in the novel as an observer and victim. Okuyade tackles Kambili's coming of age and how she finds her voice. At the same time, the researcher compares Kambili's growth in Nigeria after colonialism. The research explains how silence is conceptualized through characters; they are divided into subservient and dominant groups. Finally, the researcher supports the hypothesis by considering silence as a weapon of the subservient group; it helps them attain their power.

Through naming, ones identity is supported. , Dehnart (2009), notes that naming help to identify the person whom the name is given; the continuous use of the name communicates the whole personality of an individual as well as the identity of his environment or society. Through names, we can identify where a person comes from, hence, they (names) reflect both the linguistic and the cultural identity of the bearer.

Lauren Rackley (2015) carried her research on Gender performance, trauma and orality; she states that Adichie's focus on the lives of Kainene and Olanna result in the positional that becomes specific to middle class Igbo women. However, Adichie includes other female working- class characters that undergo exceptional trauma because of war. Adichie's decision to keep men as main characters and to illustrate women and men's interactions during times of conflict depicts the implications of war as a woman palaver, that is as a problem involving both men and women and needing both sexes for resolution(Ogumyemi 99) . Lauren Rackley is still explains that, Ifeoma becomes a feminist figure within the Novel and fights for the autonomy for women through the system of belief that women must maintain elements on the fact that her female students are getting married at young age. As the narrator is telling;

What is the use of degree, they ask me when we cannot find a job after graduation- six girls in my first year similar class are married, their husbands visit in Mercedes and Lexus cars every weekend, their husbands by them stereos and textbooks and refrigerators, and when they graduated, the husbands own them and their degrees. Don't you see? (Adichie *Purple Hibiscus* (75).

Bagul & Kale (2017), conducted a research on Identity crisis of Negro youths in Richard Wrights *Native Son* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Their novels present identity crisis as dehumanizing factor for social status of blacks in America. The Negro youths are caught in an unpleasant situation which is difficult to escape. The problem of their identity crisis is basically related to their social status, economical status and racist environment. The marginalized Negro youths found themselves helpless before oddity of white world. Their efforts for their social identity and survival is neglected and rejected by figurative blindness of American society. White men's superiority complex drove them in the crisis of identity.

Kiguru Doseline (2012) conducted a research to investigates the role of the child figure in telling narratives of violence based on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's two novels: *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). I have explored the uniqueness of the child's voice in the two novels and the significance of the gender of the child narrator. The narrative techniques that Adichie uses, is kind of violence, the child narrator presents it and how the gender of the narrator affects the presentation of this violence through two main theoretical frameworks: (Narratology and Historical Revisionism). Narratology examines the ways that narrative structures our perception of both cultural artefacts and the world around us. Felluga

(2005). Adichie indicates how violence and suffering can hinder the identity construction on a person.

3.0 Methodology

This study used content analysis. Content analysis is a researcher method used to analyse the environment through interpretation words and images from documents and art according to Crossman, (2019) the researcher did close reading of both primary and secondary texts, including journals, literary racism texts among others. The researcher vividly looked at identity construction on the literary art of Chimamanda Adichie *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

4.0 Results Discussions

The study looked at the aspects of identity in the two selected novels by Chimamanda. The study found that, Adichie's texts uses characters and situations to portray identity at different levels, In *Purple Hibiscus*, the children Jaja and Kambili Achike seek to carve out their own identities through aunty Ifeoma's environment. In Eugene's environment, the freedom is limited in such a way that he fixes the timetable for his children. The narrator tells that Kambili's schedule is written in bold letters on top of the white sheet of paper; just as Jaja's is placed on the desk in his room. (pg.23). Papa desires order or control in the household.

Individual characters find themselves in situations that damage their self-esteem and leave them struggling to understand themselves. *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* depict both positive and fragmented family relationships that have adverse impacts on the identities of a cross-section of different characters ranging from children, young adults, adults, men and women. These characters constantly engage in constructing their self-identities. (Appadurai, 2004). Identity is not only a story, a narrative which we tell ourselves about ourselves, it is a story which change with historical circumstances. Identities come from outside, they tell how we are recognized, without others there is no self and no self-recognition. In *Purple Hibiscus*, fifteen-year-old Kambili is the voice that tells the story and presents the experiences of the rest of the characters. Kambili and Jaja, as well as Mama (Beatrice), their mother, undergo enormous torture and oppression at the hands of his husband Papa (Eugene Achike).

Papa is a person who is extremely wealthy, famous, deeply religious, a donor, and a champion of human rights yet Kambili reveals how insecure and disoriented the family is as a result of Papa's authoritarianism and tyrannical tendencies. The children lead a fragmented life and keep

questioning themselves and the sort of father they have. Their father has imposed a lot of restrictions in their lives in such a way that they lack the confidence of standing alone on the issue of decision making. Parents play a significant role in shaping their children's identities. (Emerllahu, Dali, 1998) states that, it is an undeniable fact that parents are the ones who brought the children into life, it is simply their married. They are the ones who reproduce humankind in a given society, as in this way they contribute to the development of the human identity. Parents or family as a whole, are one of the direct holders of educational work. In Eugene's family, the situation of parents helping their children to construct their self-identity is different due to the brutality of Eugen. His wife and children are forced into silence because of the impossible and unrealistic standards that he has set for them. They do not have the freedom of expression and association to the extent that Kambili is mute and unable to interact with her peers even at school (p 51). Papa only expects academic excellence such that failure to obtain the first position is an offense even to God. Kambili learns this the hard way when she drops to position two and has to face her father's wrath, as she narrates;

Papa pulled a small mirror, the size of a powder compact, from his pocket." Look in the mirror" I stared at him. I took the mirror peered at it. How many heads do you have, go? Papa asked speaking Igbo for the first time. One. The girl has one head too; she does not have two so why did you let her come first? It will not happen again, Papa. (Pp.46-47).

This is a conversation between Papa and Kambili when Papa visits Kambili's class. Kambili becomes an introvert whose identity is fractured yet deeply yearns to interact with the other girls in school. Her schoolmates do not understand her troubles and think she is proud due to her wealthy background. (p 51) Eugene has employed a rule for her children who also reports back everything that they do at school. Kambili's cousin - Amaka initially refers to her as abnormal. Kambili and Jaja's brief visit to their aunt Ifeoma in Nsukka mark the beginning of their self-identity reconstruction.

The passage describing Kambili and Jaja's first meal at their Aunt's house in Nsukka provides a plain contrast to the oppressive atmosphere in their home in Enugu (p 121). It is at Aunt Ifeoma's house that Kambili begins to speak and laugh. She realizes that she loves the traditional values that their grandfather Papa-Nnukwu imparts through his narratives and prayers (p167-168). Initially, she is ashamed when she cannot join in the call and response songs like her cousin and her friends, but she gradually learns this. Kambili finds the traditional

songs and worship in church and her grandfather's rituals more fulfilling forms of worship than what their father subjects them back at home. So this mark the beginning of Kambili change intellectual, psychological, and spiritual.

Additionally, the development of Kambili's identity is fragmented; her relationship within her home not only involves acting and imitation but also transports her into a sphere of social isolation. Eugene's harsh disciplinary measures constricted Kambili's tongue from holding a normal conversation. Okuyade Ogaga (2009) observes that "she struggles within herself to hold a normal conversation, a struggle which usually terminates in a statement, making her classmate observe her with familiarity laced with contempt" (p.48-51). Due to her inability to make her classmates in school, she is isolated and labelled a "backyard snob" Thus symbolizing a conquered victim. The snobbish identity of Kambili is the submerged pattern of a remote-controlled life, a kind of robot-human controlled by his father Eugene. Even in his absence his wicked present still dominates. Kambili's life is controlled and regulated by his inscribed schedule. Any breach of his commandments earns Papa's slap, as she recounts, "Once Kelvin told Papa I took a few minutes longer, and Papa slapped my left and right cheeks at the same time, so his huge palms left parallel marks on my face and ringing in my ears.

The individuals recognize the meaning and significance of culture as they grow; they need to put into operation their cultures so that they can be able to enrich their lives. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Papa-Nnukwu represents struggles to keep on his identity as indigenous culture specifically that of Igbo land (P.81) Papa-Nnukwu, as all of the Achilles, is ethnically Igbo; however, he is the only one who practices Igbo cultural traditions. The colonize culture together with the indigenous culture in Nigeria, has created the sibling futures of Nigeria that Eugene and Ifeoma, Papa Nnukwu's children, represent: autocracy and democracy.

Papa-Nnukwu's death leads to the arrival of Eugene's in Nsukka to pick Kambili and Jaja (p 189) Kambili once more exposes her father's brutality when she narrates how he made her stand in boiling water for not disclosing to him their grandfather's death(p 194-195). The other incident is when he discovers that Kambili has kept her grandfather's portrait as a souvenir and kicks her until she becomes unconscious, (p.210-211). But the experience in Auntie Ifeoma's house contributes a great deal to the transformation of Kambili and Jaja. They are aware of who they are, what they value, and their rights in the family. Jaja demonstrates this newfound freedom by deciding not to go for Holy Communion on Palm Sunday (p 7) Eugene becomes furious and throws the Missal (Liturgical Book) at him but instead shatters at his son's open

defiance, he restrains himself from extreme brutality and son, and he also restrains himself from his hitherto extreme oppressive approach.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Ugwu a young Igbo boy from the small bush village of Opi who become Odenigbo's houseboy begins to make his own choices independent from the family, Ugwu's relationship with Eberechi is beginning to assert his self-interest and taking steps necessary for his continuing self-identity construction, (p. 352)

The importance of education is expressed by Master as a tool to help one to fight and defend him/ her. He keeps on saying, "How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation (p. 10). Education is the key to every life of a person, so Master is informing Ugwu that he will enrol him in the staff primary school (p. 11). Through education, Ugwu later becomes an excellent in cooking and he ends up writing the book titled *The World Was Silent When We Died*, which was the story of the Biafran conflict.

Adichie's work offers the development of social identity in different categories of people in the text, elite and non-elite like Ugwu and Jomo who are taking care of the garden, as they discuss their professional work. Adichie is narrating:

What kind of animal do you kill? Ugwu asked. Jomo beamed, as if this was exactly the question he had wanted, and began to talk about his hunting. Ugwu sat on the steps that led to the backyard and listened. From the first day, he did not believe Jomo's stories of fighting off a leopard barehanded, of killing two baboons with a single shot but he liked listening to them. (p.15).

Social identity construction is portrayed in Adichie's *Half of Yellow Sun*, through different groups who have been presented by Adichie on her work, which involves, the elite group who meets at Odenigbo house and talk about different issues, concerning on politics (p 18) Adichie explains.

More friends visited on weekends the group discussed about Igbo, Professor Ezeka snorted and shook his head, thin legs crossed, he said. "But you become aware that you were Igbo because of the white man. You must see that tribe as it is today is as colonial a product as nation and race. The pan- Igbo idea existed long before the white man!" Master shouted. Go and ask the elders in your village about your history. (p.19).

There four, Adichie's work definitely offers the development of social identity in different categories of people in the text, elite and non-elite like Ugwu who is the house boy and Jomo

who is taking care of the garden, (p.15). Which all of them help in construction of social identity to each individual.

Children in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are also involved in constructing they are National identity by educating them about the symbol of the Biafra flag, which made them build the mind of becoming patriotism of their nation. Adichie is narrating:

They sat on wooden planks and the weak morning sun streamed into the roofless class as she unfurled Odenigbo's cloth flag and told them what the symbols meant. Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra will have, and finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future. (Pp.280-281).

Individuals within the group can shape social identity. Aunt Ifeoma who is Eugene's sister is found to be opposite to his brother in nearly every way. She allows her children a great deal of freedom, (p140), Adichie states that:

Laughter always rang out in Aunt Ifeoma's house and no matter where the laughter comes from, it bounced around all the walls, all the rooms. Arguments rose quickly and fell just quickly. Morning and night prayers were always prepared with songs, Igbo praise songs that usually called for hand clapping.

This situation facilitates aunt Ifeomas' children to influence Jaja and Kambili to construct social identity as they move to Nsukka. Contrast to Eugene who maintains tight rules pretending to pay respectful of cultural tradition but not bound to it, and educated in Western thought forms. Ifeoma is representative of the democratic option for Nigeria's imagined future. It is a future where all people, regardless of ethnic group, religion, or gender, are allowed to have a voice. Although Ifeoma and Eugene share the same blood, they represent wildly divergent styles of ruler ship Eugene, the somewhat autocratic imperialism; Ifeoma present the modern Western democracy.

The two characters aunt Ifeoma and father Amadi, both struggle to construct the Identities for Kambili and Jaja intending to form upon hopes and goals for the future and continue to shape them for future generation .(p269). Father Amadi and Aunt Ifeoma, both are struggling to influence Kambili and Jaja get out from the hands of Eugene; however, both of these characters ultimately leave Nigeria, indicating that the futures they represent cannot come to pass. As Father Amadi is explaining to Kambili;

Your aunt thinks you and Jaja should go to boarding school .I am going to Enugu next week to talk to Father Benedict. I know your father listens to him. I will ask him to convince your father about boarding school so you and Jaja can start next term. (p.269).

In her works, Adichies portray the levels of identity in different levels like, self-identity, social identity and national identity. Susana Z. Andrade (2011) refers to both of Adichie's novels (2003's *Purple Hibiscus* and 2006's *Half of a Yellow Sun*) as representing "a politics of the family while quietly but clearly telling stories of the nation" (p. 91*Purple Hibiscus*).

5.0 Conclusion

Therefore, the construction of identity in Adichie's texts *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*, illustrate many of the life experiences of African people background , together with the consequences of colonialism on the individual Nigerian, through the utilization of domestic settings, and the Nigerian nation as a whole, through the counterparts of domestic settings and national settings, reveal Adichie's belief that Nigeria will be able to overcome the sufferings on the individual and national levels through the acceptance of both traditional and colonial practices, which will make a new national performance.

6.0 Recommendations

The researcher recommends from the respondents quoted from the selected novel under the title "Identity Construction in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichies's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*", that, the study will benefit those in the writing industries such as novel writers, academic scholars and higher learning institution. The recommendation based on the Identity Construction in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichies's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*". The research will also help many scholars to use it as a reference, especially the university and any other learning institution in the literature sector.

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