

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS FOR MALE  
CHARACTERS IN AFRICAN FEMINIST LITERATURE BY TWO MALE AND  
TWO FEMALE WRITERS**

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**Abstract**

The area of literature and cultural studies has continued to address gender inequality and feminist arguments. While similar studies have been done, it seems the identities of male characters have frequently been disregarded in favor of the portrayal of female characters, particularly in feminist literature. In this study, the researcher examined how male and female authors have presented societal expectations of male characters. The study was limited to four African feminist texts, two by male authors and two by female authors, in order to carry out a critical analysis of how the authors have voiced out the issue of male identity in their texts. Textual analysis was applied in analyzing the thematic concerns related to the study objectives. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the four texts; Margaret A. Ogola's *The River and the Source*, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and *Imaginations of Sand* by André Brink. From the research findings, it is evident that while the male characters remain constant, the female characters have continued to be presented with progressive characteristics. Additionally, the feminist authors have been influenced by the social ideologies, which permit male dominancy over the female characters. The study suggested recommendations to; the Ministry of Education to evaluate novels which concern themselves with female characters and tend to overlook the male characters. Secondly, the society should curb stereotypical views which promote gender inequality. Finally, feminist authors should address the issue of gender as a concern to both men and women in today's society.

**Keywords:** *Societal Expectations, Male Characters, African Feminist Literature*

**INTRODUCTION**

According to Lange (2008), gender is a major factor in people's social lives. This is apparent as early as infancy, when a kid is dressed in pink or black clothing and forced to act in accordance with social norms regarding what is acceptable for boys and girls. Depending on the gender of the child, different behaviors are taught. In a society where men predominate, this primarily suggests that men will have more freedom and power than women, who are subordinate to and dependent on men. Because it fosters the idea that these roles reflect a specific gender and results in gender stereotypes, pushing men and women into various roles based only on their gender is harmful. Also, it prevents men and women from seeing life

from different perspectives based on their sexes. Literature would be expected to depict civilizations with these gender disparities if art is a depiction of societal experiences. Although it is challenging to eliminate gender norms from society, some male authors have made an effort to support women.

Since the groundbreaking works of the late 1980s and 1990s, relevant men's studies have become more diverse, fluid, and subtle in their orientation. In order to understand how certain problematic forms of masculinity continue to emerge and reappear in various morphed forms, analysts from a variety of disciplines around the world have investigated the versatility of masculinity in a wide range of micro-contexts. They have also investigated the dialectical relationship between masculinity and more general material conditions within societies, as well as masculinities as discursive productions and acts, and they have investigated the intersection of masculinity. Finally, they highlighted the ongoing consecratory nature of subjectivities by shedding light on alternative male subject positions that can actually point us in the direction of different and at the same time more equitable and just ways of being men and women in the various societies that we occupy. They also exposed the benefits and drawbacks of masculinity as performativity (Shefer et al., 2010).

Gender is the socially constructed role that a person is expected to play in a particular setting, and a significant portion of this function is learned through the process of gender role socialization. Gender role socialization refers to the concept that individuals receive social signals, either positive or negative, of their supposed gender roles, which form their gender presentation. This has a range of aspects to it. The first is that people take an active part in choosing their gender identity, given the social pressures on them to behave in different contexts in a certain way. Second, various cultures prefer some ideologies over others, leading to differentials of power (Connell, 2005).

Firstly, men must be the primary family breadwinners or providers. Third, it is believed that people have an apparently insatiable sex drive. Third, it is expected that men may demonstrate physical strength or endurance, which may involve using violence to manipulate others. Combined these things appear to cause people to become more aggressive, and more likely to use violence as a first response to problems and confrontations. This then leads to the fact that people, against people, commit the vast majority of violent crime (Grieve et al., 2019). According to Thompson (1986), men will only adhere to the standards of masculinity in accordance with their demands in order to achieve prestige, position, and other forms of respect in 2006.

In addition to this, modern feminist critics need to acknowledge the literary errors they've made in the past and open themselves up to the practice of critiquing texts that provide a fresh perspective on gender. If they avoid reading literature that presents equal gender roles, this will simply serve to reinforce gender stereotyped beliefs on the roles that are traditionally associated with both men and girls in society. If males continue to be seen as dominant in society, it is possible that they will never be able to accept seeing themselves in a new light or even embracing change since they would believe it is pointless (Lange, 2008). As a result, this brings up a societal issue, namely the gender inequality that is widespread.

Also, the goal of the African feminist was to provide a venue for literary criticism and fiction, as well as for works and productions that would be specifically about African women. It was necessary for African women to make such a move in the realm of writing, which had hitherto been designated mainly for male representation. The African feminist, having thereby gained admission into African literary and critical growth, pays weight to and disseminate the literary works of females in order to remove the masculine preconceptions and biases that were previously entrenched against females. Not only does African feminist

literature seek to provide a critical analysis of the transition from traditional to contemporary social mores, but it also focuses on the oppression and discrimination that women experience in countries that are mostly led by males. This is evident in; Sembene Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood*, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*; and Aminata Sow Fall's *L'ex pere de la nation* (Orjinta, 2011).

As an African writer and feminist, the fondest interest of Minna Salami is the shape of African masculinity; how African people are represented in literature. She defends Odenigbo, from the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; as a romantic hero as spectacular and lusted after as Don Juan, Heathcliff and Romeo. Contemporary debates point to a growing interest in portrayal of masculinity in culture, from the political environment to the family life. In Minna Salami's analysis of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, she complements Odenigbo as a lead character and whose physical looks, attracts women. Yet despite the fact that Odenigbo has made women's pulses race, the impact it has had on the image of romantic heroes is, for the most part, overlooked. The underrepresentation of masculinity in feminist writing is singled out for significant criticism by Minna Salami. Olanna neglects Odenigbo, the most memorable character in the work, while the most of the characters in this text have primarily and unsurprisingly endeavored to grasp his female lead character (Uwakweh, 2012).

The problem of gender equality, in which females and males share equivalent rights and obligations and in which everyone is entitled to equal possibilities in society, has long been a topical concern for both men and women. This is especially true in more recent times (Dorius & Firebaugh, 2010). A significant amount of focus has been placed, in a variety of research investigations as well as literary texts, on the female depiction. In the realm of literature, gender inequality is often cited as a modern problem that needs to be addressed. On the other side, literary works that discuss gender problems tend to laud female characters very highly while failing to depict male characters in a manner that is balanced and fair. A thorough examination of the majority of feminist works reveals that masculine characters are grossly underrepresented in such works. Yet in comparison to the female characters, the male characters in these literary works are limited in number, they are given with achievements only very seldom, and the majority of the time it is the female character who takes on the role of the protagonist. This continued underrepresentation of male characters in literature perpetuates gender inequality, which exists not just in society but also in literary works. So, this is an issue in today's society that has to be addressed since it poses a problem for people. In addition, the expectations placed on men by society produce a standard that ultimately compels men to conduct themselves in a specific manner. The research study examined how male identity is perceived in African feminist literature, using four selected African novels; *The River and the Source* by Margaret A. Ogola, *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta, Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and *Imaginations of Sand* by André Brink.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The area of literature and cultural studies has continued to address gender inequality and feminist arguments. Although comparable studies have been done, it seems the identities of male characters have often been disregarded in favor of the representation of female characters, particularly in feminist literature. The researcher thus examined how male and female writers presented social expectations, the idea of masculinity, and the underrepresentation of male characters. The research study was a critical analysis of male identity in African feminist literature, in four selected African novels; Margaret A. Ogola's *The River and the Source*, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and André Brink's *Imaginations of Sand*.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Societal Expectations for Male Characters**

Critics including Mark Stein, claim that literature serves a performative role, allowing a number of new individual's subject roles to be accessible through their very creation, while the novels themselves act as a tool for cultural re-production (Stein, 2007).

The authors take their inspiration for their literary work from the culture around them, and this is reflected in the works that they choose to compose. In today's culture, considerably more worry and attention has been given to the so-called "female kid" as compared to the so-called "boy child." The historical subjugation of women has always been a major source of worry on a worldwide scale, which is why this is the case now. Nonetheless, there is a pressing need to become aware of the representation of males in today's society as well as in works of literature.

### **Cultural Ideologies**

The methods of socialization and the impacts of society have a far greater impact on gender behavior than the fundamental or intrinsic differences that exist between the sexes. Community, history, geography, politics, and other factors all have a part in determining gender roles. A person's gender plays a significant role in the social norms that they are expected to adhere to, which to a large part are determined by the society in which they reside. It is difficult for many individuals to accept the fact that a significant portion of their view of gender is the result of the influence of others (Fisher & Silber, 2003).

The gender structures of a civilisation give some patterns of behavior in a society the label "masculine," while other patterns of behavior in the same group are given the label "feminine." On one level, persons may be described using these patterns as a basis for comparison. As a result, we can remark that a certain man (or woman) is masculine, or that they behave in a way that is stereotypically associated with men. On the other hand, the same patterns may be seen at the collective level as well. The development and upkeep of masculinities are all largely influenced by societal institutions, including but not limited to businesses, armies, governments, and schools. A research conducted in the workplace came to the conclusion that masculinities are collaboratively determined in the working environment. Moreover, according to the results of studies conducted in the field of criminology, masculinities are defined collectively in informal organizations such as street gangs (Mallet, 2015).

There is also the possibility that society may see masculinity in an impersonal manner. For instance, video games do not only propagate cliched ideas of what it means to be a physically dominant and aggressively masculine person. The player is required to make this display of masculinity in order to participate in any aspect of the game. It has been shown that the organizational structure of organized sports, which includes the format of competition, the manner of training, and the stringently hierarchical levels and rewards, contributes to the development of an aggressive masculinity in its participants. While the majority of people only fit very inadequately into the cultural niches that have been so formed, images of this masculinity are widely disseminated through sports media.

There is no such thing as a masculinity that preexists social conduct, either as a condition of one's body or as a permanent personality trait. Instead, masculinities are formed as a result of the actions that individuals do. They are carried out as routines in daily life or in the life of an organization, functioning as forms of social activity. Recent study has shed light on the ways in which people "do gender" in their day-to-day lives. The relationship between masculinity and criminality has recently received fresh light thanks to a similar realization. This is not the result of a rigidly defined male character expressing itself via criminal behavior. Rather, the



relationship is the outcome of a range of men—from destitute juvenile gangs on the street to white-collar criminals at the computer—using crime as a resource to develop different masculinities. This includes both white-collar criminals and street gangs (Mallet, 2015).

According to Jenkins (2016), a cultural study of male identity has to begin with the gathering of present social regulations and expectations, followed by the identification of unique cultural norms and the persons who manage those expectations in the society. It is necessary to take into consideration the many ways in which "masculinities" might be combined with the cultural practices of different persons. As Philip Mallet explains in the preface to his book *The Victorian Novel and Masculinity* (Mallet, 2015), "male identity" can only be comprehended in the framework of a certain social and cultural limit. This makes it challenging for a man to completely know his own male identity. In addition, due to the fact that cultures evolve as a result of changing historical conditions, it might be challenging to completely comprehend one's own masculine identity.

According to Roch (2005), masculinity, like femininity and other gender-related issues, is a social construction. In a manner of speaking comparable to this, it is a method for the production of cultural performances that are carried out by members of the society. The many of ways in which people are unique from one another are reflected in the myriad of ways in which diverse cultures and social ideals of masculinity are unique from one another. In spite of this, there are a wide variety of conceptions of what constitutes masculinity, and the vast majority of the time, these conceptions are linked to other cultural constructions as well as individual expectations for things like gender. Roch in her article; *Representations of Masculinity in 'Things Fall Apart' and 'Wide Sargasso Sea'* (2005), analyzes the representations of masculinity in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys. She examines the manner in which Okonkwo and Mr. Rochester present their masculinity by expressing it and the problems that they confront, all the while attempting to mirror these socially created masculinities in their portrayals of themselves. *Things Fall Apart* introduces Okonkwo, the protagonist of the story, as a guy who is courageous, hard-working, and aggressive right from the beginning of the book.

Okonkwo has a slight stammer and whenever he's angry and can't get his words out fast enough, he's going to use his fists ... He's become well known throughout the nine villages and beyond. His reputation is built on solid personal achievements. Not only is he known for his wrestling skills, he also took two titles and displayed remarkable strength in two inter-tribal wars (Achebe, 1958, p.3).

The majority of Okonkwo's warrior attributes, including as aggressiveness, strength, bravery, and great persistence, were regarded as characteristics that males naturally possess and exhibit. Yet a significant portion of Okonkwo's manliness may be attributed to the fame of his exploits as a warrior. The paragraph provides the audience with information on his courage. It is him who is successful in defeating Amalinze the Cat, a seven-year-old fighter who was previously unbeaten. He is the first warrior in history to carry home the severed head of an enemy warrior killed in an inter-tribal conflict. Roch is a symbol of the disparities that may be seen from one culture to another in terms of the standards and expectations that society has around the notion of masculine identity. Because of the cultural norms and expectations that are prevalent in the society, the male characters are compelled into adopting identities that do not come from them. This occurs as a direct consequence of the societal standards and expectations. Yet in order for them to survive and live up to the standards established by society, they are pressured to embrace behaviors that are harmful to their health. This is the only way for them to keep up with the norms. It is expected of males to have bravery, as well as the responsibility to protect their family and fight for them when required. Okonkwo, for

his part, is reluctant to accept change for the simple reason that he was hesitant to permit the participation of an administrative authority. As a result, he is unable to adapt to new circumstances. The same sense of manliness that leads him to kill Ikemefuna also leads him to shoot a clansman, which eventually leads to his being cast out of the clan and sent into exile. It is conceivable to have the position that some societal expectations are forms of gender oppression and slavery based on a person's choice of behavior rather than on the gender of the individual being judged, rather than on the gender of those who are expected to fulfill those expectations.

Ibo culture, much like western culture before the advent of feminism, organizes its community practices according to the gender norms that prevail in the society. Thus, attributes such as courage and aggression are seen as characteristics of 'masculine' characters, while characteristics such as gentleness, tranquility, passivity, and meekness are regarded as qualities associated with 'women.' For instance, "Agbala" is not just a name for a woman, but it is also considered to be a term for a guy who is seen to be weak and who has not been awarded to any titles within his clan. Roch provides an analysis of Okonkwo's need to emphasize his masculinity, which he attributes to Okonkwo's father, Unoka. The origin of Okonkwo's manliness is made abundantly evident right at the beginning of the poem. According to Okonkwo,

Unoka, the father, was a disappointment ... he took no title whatsoever, and is heavily in debt when he dies. And so, Okonkwo was dominated by one passion to hate everything that his dad loved. Softness was one of those things (Achebe, 1958,p.11).

For Okonkwo, he is the opposing kind of masculinity, since he manages to establish his own, "proper" societal notion of male identity. Unoka, the "Agbala," is consequently perceived to express his character characteristics of friendliness, lavishness, musicianship, leisure, and peacefulness. The worry that he would be seen as having a low income informs his masculinity type. This is clear to see, Nwoye, in the manner in which he interacts with his family. According to Okonkwo, Nwoye, much like his grandpa Unoka, has a tendency to be too "feminine." He enjoys music, he respects the oral tales that his mother tells (with which he disagrees in order to make his father happy), and, in essence, he is too intelligent. It is clear that Okonkwo has developed a sense of embarrassment as a result of his son's choice to become a Christian, as seen by the way he greets his other sons:

You have now seen your brother's grand abomination. It's not my son or your brother any more. I'm going to have only one son who's a kid, who's going to keep his head among my men. If any of you prefers being a guy, let him follow Nwoye right now while I'm alive so I can curse him. I'll visit you and break your neck if you turn against me when I'm dead (Achebe, 1958,p.126).

Questions on culture, in Ousmane's perspective, are improper, and Mireille does not have permission to interrogate him more on the issue. They have no option except to assimilate into African culture or give up their way of life altogether. Ousmane eventually takes on the role of a traditional husband, one who subjugates his wife to a position of inferiority inside the home. Mireille, who was formerly an equal partner, the perfect girlfriend, and the "blazing light directing his route," has grown into a nagging, unpleasant, and uncompromising wife who has to be put in her place. This is a significant change from her previous roles (Mutunda,2009).

One could speculate as to why Ousmane shows no regard for a lady he previously loved or is disrespectful to the emotions she is experiencing. It is likely that Ousmane wants to be accepted by his friends, and he also wants to show his group that he has not given up his

patriarchal heritage despite his Western education and the fact that he is married to a white woman. The reason for this will probably be that Ousmane wants to be accepted by his friends. The perspective of the guy is allowed to take precedence in a patriarchal relationship. Because of this, Ousmane is certain that he and his wife would not reach a consensus on anything, believing that "any compromise was synonymous with capitulation" (Mariama Ba, 1994, p.99). He feels that as a male, he has no need to accept her point of view; the only perspective that should be accepted is his, regardless of how incorrect it may be. When seen in this context, Ousmane and Mireille's relationship was destined to end in failure (Mutunda, 2009).

### **Religious Ideologies**

*In Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe places the Igbo, an agricultural people, in opposition to the colonial system that is dominated by the British. He personifies Igbo ethos by way of the story's protagonist, Okonkwo. Okonkwo is a supporter of traditional male ideals, according to which failure endangers not only the life of the person but also the life of the community. Via Okonkwo Achebe elaborates on the Igbo notion in a fundamental bond, known as "chi," that exists between a human being and God. Chi is a person's destined path in life and is ingrained in them from the moment of creation forward. Chi is an essential component of the character of every single human being. Chi is not God, yet God decides what a person's chi is going to be like. A good Igbo has a goal of reaching a certain level of chi, which can be determined by examining the lines and patterns on a person's palms. The goal of cultivating one's chi will serve as the driving force behind all of an individual's activities throughout their whole life. The individualistic spirit of the Igbo social structure is both expressed and affirmed via the practice of chi. In addition to this, it plays a significant role in Igbo culture and the ideas that direct day-to-day activities. The Igbo culture places a strong emphasis on persistence and achieving achievement in spite of challenges. Achebe includes the challenge of overcoming hurdles in his work, which contributes to the drama and interest of his tragic story. The Igbo people place a very high value on overcoming challenges since it is ingrained in their culture and seen as a sign of strength. The Igbo believe that predestination is not an unalterable sign of the course that the life of a human being will follow and instead see it as more of a guide. People have the ability to make decisions that can change the direction their lives go. The profound masculinity of Okonkwo's Chi drives him towards an encounter with British imperialists that ends in tragedy. Their Chi has a greater depth than his does. Okonkwo eventually gives in to his Chi, which contributes to the downfall of both himself and his people. The battle is fruitless. Okonkwo wants to establish a sense of distance between himself and what he perceives to be the failings of his family. As a result, Okonkwo has set his sights on being a heroic figure and a powerful man within the framework of traditional Igbo culture. According to Okonkwo, Christianity represents the polar opposite of the Igbo male values. He asserts that the Igbo have managed to maintain these traditionally male characteristics inside their society. Okonkwo said that the Igbo people's cohesiveness is mostly due to their masculinity (Salamone, 2006).

In the book *So Long a Letter* by Mariama Ba, a man is referred to in the culture of the Wolof people as 'jeker k'er, which literally translates to 'husband of the house' and, by implication, the 'first in the house.' This is a title that represents the privileges and responsibilities that a man has toward his family. By walking out on his wife and children, Modou has deprived himself of the ability to be considered a "jeker ker." The Wolof people have always held the belief that this is a dishonorable behavior. There have been documented cases of people taking their own lives as a result of a scandal that made them feel embarrassed. Because of the abundance of material items and money available to them, individuals in today's society

lack any feeling of shame or humiliation. At the time of his passing, Modou had not lived up to his responsibilities of providing a secure and prosperous future for his family, as is customary for any respectable man; nevertheless, he had failed to do so (Mutunda, 2009).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Both feminist theory and deconstruction theory were used in the course of this research investigation. Feminist literary theory is a phrase that was coined in the 1980s; before to that, gender theorists referred to feminist literary critique. A research approach or methodology in the field of literature was formerly often understood to be a criticism. The terms critique and theory are now used interchangeably in the field of feminist studies, and the phrase "feminist literary theory" may be used to both practical and theoretical approaches to the writing of literature (Code, 2000). According to Code, the objective of feminist literary theory is to examine how literary criticism and theory either encourage or discourage divides in class, gender, race, and sexuality (Salah et al., 2016). The chosen feminist books provided the basis for a conversation that was formed using feminism theory and was centered on gender concerns.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research design for this study's interpretation of the chosen texts was textual analysis. In order to comprehend the intended meaning of a document, textual analysis entails closely examining the context inside the text (Given, 2008).

The target population for this research study, consisted of four selected African novels. Two novels written by male writers and other two novels by female writers. These included: Margaret A. Ogola's *The River and the Source* (1995), Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1975), Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* (2003) and André Brink's *Imaginations of Sand* (1996). The literary works that were chosen for examination were chosen using a purposeful sample approach. The feminist works that were chosen are focused on gender problems in African civilizations.

The analysis solely focused on library studies. The researcher also used both primary and secondary sources from the research library. The primary sources came from; the four selected literary text for analysis, books, articles, journals, among others. While secondary data were obtained from sources such as; online documents, published research thesis and magazines. Textual analysis, was applied, as the method for analyzing the four selected literary texts. Textual analysis includes analyzing the text; meaning, structure or design of a text, and how elements, often as part of the social or cultural context, work.

The researcher applied the principle of deconstruction in relation to the study's goals, to evaluate the significance of the selected texts. Feminism theory was employed in the chosen feminist texts, to shape discourse focused on gender issues. The research review discussion allowed the researcher to summarize the report, conclusions, recommendations and suggest areas for further research studies.

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **Societal Expectations for Male Characters**

The women writers prefer to write about how men in African society are behaving in their relationships with women. Stereotypical characters in the works of these women show how women's viewpoints are shaped by social expectations when writing about men (Mutunda, 2009). Men have been represented with specific personalities and roles, because that is what the society has always expected of them. Hence, feminist authors display these cultural and religious ideologies about male identity, in their texts.



### **Cultural Ideologies**

The society in Ibuza, expects the men to be the bread winners for their families. Nnaife is one of the husbands who struggle to provide for his family by working hard. "... a good husband is expected to pay well for a good girl. That is the way to prove his manhood. If he cannot afford to pay, then he does not deserve a wife." (Emecheta, 1979, p. 232)

However, when Nnaife's job comes to an end, Nnu Ego condemns him for not been man enough to be able to search for other jobs. As observed in the following statement by Buchi; "Not only did life in Lagos rob him of his manhood and of doing difficult work, now it had made him redundant and having to rely on his wife" (Emecheta, 1979, p. 92). At this point, the male character is viewed as a victim of failure in the society. Nnaife withstands the hardships he faces in the war for four years, when he is forced to join the army. And even with these hardships, he is able to provide for his family back in Lagos. However, the text upraises the female character (Nnu Ego) as the mother who struggles to raise her children, which is the source of her joy. However, the representation of the male experiences is not evident in the text and thus, the reader cannot relate with the identity of the male characters.

The determination and struggles which the male characters experience, has not been well represented or given emphasis. But rather, much concern is given to the female characters who dominate the entire text.

According to the societal expectations, there are certain features/masculine personalities that only the men are expected to portray. In Brink's text *Imaginings of Sand*, Casper insults Kristen who displays masculine features of bravery, when arguing with her. "He makes an irritable gesture. 'You're too clever by half. You're trying to argue like a man. It doesn't suit you.'... 'That's the last-ditch argument of a loser, Casper, And I won't fall for it. You can't send me to the kitchen, you know.' What are you talking about?' asks Anna, without looking at us. Her eyes are red and puffy. I feel a pang of guilt" (Brink, 1995, p.79). These societal expectations stereotype the male identity, as an expectation and limitation for the men. The male characters should be left out to display their own personalities which defines their identity, but not according to societal expectations.

### **Religious Ideologies**

A critical analysis of Nuruddin Farah's text *From a Crooked Rib*, presents the religious ideologies of Muslim religion that are integrated with gender issues. For Ebla, "she loathed this discrimination between the sexes: the idea that boys lift up the prestige of the family and keep the family's name alive. Even a moron-male cost twice as much as two women in terms of blood-compensation" (Farah, 1970, p.18). These ideologies represent a negative portrayal of the male characters. According to the Muslim religion, it allows polygamous marriage in the society. The grandfather of Ebla had accepted the proposal of an old man who would marry Ebla.

"But none of them was an old man like Giumaleh, the one to whom fate had handed her over. It was yesterday morning that her grandfather had accepted Giumaleh's proposal. He was an old man of forty-eight: fit to be her father. Two of his sons had alternately courted her" (Farah, 1970, p.16). These religious ideologies, initiate a negative portrayal of male characters. This results to the overlook of the male identity and as the author seeks to present the experiences of female characters.

### **Conclusions**

The feminist authors have represented male characters based on the presumed expectations of how a man should behave, rather than their self-identity which they are willing to display as individuals with diverse life experiences. The authors have restricted their portrayal of self-identity, by concentrating on the presentation of women in the society. Firstly, feminist

authors have presented the concept of masculinity based on their perception that men should portray certain personalities such as been violent, tough and with muscular body. Male characters who appear to be non-abusive and lack strong muscular body, are regarded as not men enough. These feminist authors fail to construct male identity, by neglecting to represent the men experiences in developing societies and their own acknowledged self-identity.

Secondly, the feminist authors have been influenced by the social ideologies which advocate for superiority of men over the female characters. These are traditional cultural ideologies which are no longer practiced in today's society. Women have now been empowered to fight to their rights both in working places and in marriage life. Still, much concern has also been given on their recognition as opposed to the past. Feminist authors have presented cultural ideologies which display men with a negative image.

In certain African societies, cultural ideology such as male dominancy, is perceived to promote status of the male characters as this is regarded as male achievement. The authors present the male characters as the source of misery on the female characters.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

It is necessary for the Ministry of Education to evaluate set books, before executing them in the curriculum. As observed in this study, most feminist novels concern themselves with female characters and tend to overlook the male characters.

In the society gender inequality has remained to be a contemporary issue that needs to be addressed. Even before a child goes to school, s/he learns from the society the gender stereotypical views. Therefore, the issue of promoting gender equality should first be implemented in the society; because it plays a great role in fostering promoting gender inequality.

The society one lives in dictates the conduct patterns that a person has to be in line with, depending on their sex, to a great extent. For many people, it is hard to accept that much of their perception of gender is the product of the social influence. Certain cultural ideologies of masculinity, need to be deconstructed in order to make positive changes and to challenge stereotyping of men in the society.

Finally, feminist authors should address the issue of gender as a concern to both men and women. The feminist authors have been placing more emphasis on female characters rather than creating texts which display equality for both genders.

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