PROJECTION OF THE GIRL-CHILD IN NIGERIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: A STUDY OF SELECTED WORKS OF AKACHI ADIMORA-EZEIGBO AND MABEL SEGUN

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NOVEMBER, 2017

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P13AREN8082

A THESIS SUBMITED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS (M.A) DEGREE IN LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES
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NOVEMBER, 2017

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this Dissertation entitled "Projection of the Girl-Child in Nigerian Children's Literature: A Study of selected Works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun" has been written by me in the Department of English and Literary Studies under the supervision of Prof. Ezekiel Solomon Akuso and Dr Edward Abah. Information derived for the literature have been duly acknowledged in the text and list of references provided. No part of this thesis has been previously presented elsewhere for another degree or diploma at this or any other institution.

Ifedayo Adebukola OJO
P13AREN8082

_____ _____

Signature Date

CERTIFICATION

This dissertation entitled "Projection of the Girl-Child in Nigerian Children's Literature: A Study of selected Works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun" by Ifedayo Adebukola OJO meets the regulations governing the award of the Degree of Master of Art in Literature of Ahmadu Bello University and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

Prof. Ezekiel Solomon Akuso Chairman, Supervisory Committee	_____ Signature	_____ Date
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Prof. T. Y. Surakat Head, Department of English and Literary Studies	_____ Signature	_____ Date
Professor Kabiru Bala Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies	_____ Signature	_____ Date

DEDICATION

To my family

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate God Almighty for His mercies and compassion, for the strength and success throughout this programme. To Him be all the glory, honour and adoration, Amen. I also want to sincerely appreciate my supervisors, Prof. Ezekiel Solomon Akuso (a father and a mentor) for his support, time and advice which contributed towards the success of this work. My sincere appreciation also goes to Dr Edward Abah for his tireless efforts towards the completion of this work. I am immensely grateful. I am thankful to Mr. Ode Ekpeme, Mallam Abdullmumini, Steven Ajinomoh and Maria for taking their time to go through my work and give corrections where needed, all your tireless and needful contributions are appreciated. Also, profound appreciation goes to all other lecturers, who taught me in one way or the other during my M.A. programme. I appreciate you all for the knowledge impacted.

I appreciate my parents, Mr. Issac Kolawole Ojo and Engineer Mrs. Esther Yemisi Ojo for their financial and moral support. Thanks for being the best and greatest parents. I pray that the good Lord bless you and continuously bring joy and happiness into your lives. To my second family, Mr and Mrs Josiah Akisokeji, I appreciate you for your prayers and moral support during this programme. To my brothers and sisters, I love you all for being there for me. To my two nieces (Annabel Ojo and Precious Agbeja) and nephew (Kolawole Ojo Jr.3) through whose angelic mind eyes I could view the world differently, may you grow in God's wisdom and knowledge. To my one and only Mr. Babatunde Taiye Adefusi, I am grateful to God to have someone like you in my life. My spring of joy and bubble of happiness, may your path be green and rich. Thanks for your words of encouragement, advice and motivation even when I was discouraged.

Appreciation goes to my course mates and class mates for your motivation and advice towards the success of this research. To my friends and room mates, you are duly acknowledged for your positive advice and motivations toward the success of this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

The thrust of this dissertation examines the projection of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature, using Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice* alongside Mabel Segun's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*. The research aims at exploring new ways to reintegrate the girl-child into private and public sphere that is devoid of stereotype and under representation. As a result of this, liberal feminist theory is used to question the underline assumption of the projection of girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature. This research employs the use of qualitative research method of gathering information. This method enables the researcher to discover that the manner in which the girl-child is portrayed has either positive or negative impact on the child reader's approach, consciousness, perception and disposition of gender appropriate behaviour. In addition, it is discovered that children who are very impressionable should be exposed early in life to the kind of literature that is aimed at bringing out the best in the girl-child irrespective of cultural background or upbringing. However, this research provides alternative role models who can inspire the child-reader to be productive and adopt an egalitarian attitude. Furthermore, that children's literature is a powerful tool used to create improving social awareness regarding the girl-child's ability and potentials. To this end, this research projects that the girl-child is also an indispensable being that could contribute toward the positive development of the Nigerian nation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

The place of a girl-child in the Nigerian society has influenced literary interest. This is why, some scholars and writers like Adimora-Ezeigbo, Segun Mabel, Ameh Teresa Oyibo, among others have continued to express interest in themes that border on the representation of the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature. In line with the mimetic demands on literature, Nigerian children's literature often depicts the social limitations that the children are confronted with especially on the basis of gender roles prescribed by the society. Being a product of a patriarchal structure, most often, the girl-child is often imbued with varying experience(s) of discrimination. In recent times, there appears to be a gradual shift in the way and manner a girl-child is being treated. As a result of this, some Nigerian children's literature writers, being a product of the society, reflect the girl-child shifting roles in their literary texts. As a current process, some writers of Nigerian children's literature have adjusted their literary lenses to focus on alternative reading and presentation of the girl-child. This is brought into lime light through a creative rejection of underrepresentation and marginalisation of the girl-child's character and capabilities.

Issues that surround the maltreatment of the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature have become prevalent fields that need to be taken into consideration. These motifs indirectly have impact on the development of 'new' Nigerian children's literature. In line with this discovery, there is an on-going quest by some writers of Nigerian children's literature to portray the girl-child in a new light. This research taps into this on-going quest to examine the projection

of girl-child in Nigerian children's literature, by drawing inferences from selected works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun.

The interest of this research stems from the understanding that children are intelligent, thoughtful and tactical human beings who often have insight into the world around them. Hunt (2005:1-2) posits that just as children's books do not exist in a vacuum (they have real, argumentative readers and visible, practical, consequential uses)…childhood is an important phase in our lives (as is almost universally acknowledged), and that children are vulnerable, susceptible, and must be protected from manipulation. The words of Hunt buttresses the fact that, literature is not left out of the several endeavours that shape the life of a child. It regularly reflects culture, norms and traditions of any particular society it seeks to project to the child-reader. This could be easily carried out through the use of simple languages, illustrations and pictures. These aforestated tools can easily make a child identify with the girl-child in children's literary texts. In addition, children's literature is a genre that is instrumental in challenging the hegemonic views of the girl-child. It embroils projecting the girl-child in divergent ways. This is made visible through what children read and see in the course of reading their literature(s).

Nigerian children's literature consistently shapes the thinking or view of Nigerian children towards the girl (ren) gender. It develops them into a strong and competent member(s) of the Nigerian society. As such, there is the need for an early exposure of a child-reader to new trends in showcasing the potentials of the girl-child. This will aid the child-reader to find suitable role model(s) and change thinking pattern. All aforesaid indicate that, it is important to consider how children's literature writers have tried to carve out emerging roles for the girl-child. Hence, the place and importance of the girl-child within the context of Nigerian children's literature is a matter that requires a critical look.

1.2 Background to the Study

Children's literature in Nigeria may be described as a male-centred art. This could be partly true because, most early Nigerian children's literature describe the roles of the girl-child sometimes as, silent, played down and deprived. These attributes are painted with the use of undesirable imagery, illustrations and dictions. This research delves into mainstream children's literature to capture broken images of the girl-child that are discriminatory and marginalising.

The Beijing's Declaration and Platform for Action (1995:166) attests to the discriminatory and marginalised roles of the girl-child that:

> In many countries, available indicators show that the girl child is discriminated against from the earliest stages of life, through her childhood and into adulthood… girls are often treated as inferior and are socialised to put themselves last, thus undermining their self-esteem. Discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream…

The above quotation buttresses the fact that from time immemorial the girl-child is faced with discrimination and treated as inferior at different stages in life. This is also applicable and traceable to the Nigerian society and its children's literature. The Nigerian girl-child is being treated as inferior and regarded as a second-class citizen in various phases of life. This ranges from private to public sphere. These discriminations and image of inferiority tend to undermine her self-esteem and worth, thereby having an adverse effect on her personality. Some of these adverse effect include deprivation and marginalisation. Sometimes, these mannerisms could create exclusion from social, political, economic, cultural and religious activities of the Nigerian society. These traits are incorporated into children's literature. Consequently, these negative attributes and maltreatment of the girl-child might have adverse effect on the child-reader. Thereby promoting a variety of conflicting or confusing messages and illustrations about the role of a girl-child.

Despite the negative picture of the girl-child in traditional children's literature, earlier writers of Nigerian children's literature tries to maintain the societal balance in the statuesque of the girl-child. This presupposes that the early depiction of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature is not categorically bad, but little is said to project the girl-child in novel ways. Typically, some early writers of children's literature pay little attention to the "new worth" of the girl-child.

In Nigeria, traditional patriarchal ideologies relegate the girl-child to the background. These ideologies are further intensified and made visible through the marginal and stereotypical portrayal of the character and experiences of the girl-child in children's literature. This could be part of the reasons why some early forms of children's literature discourage female (girl-child) heroism. Donelson and Nilsen (1980:285) trace the place of the girl-child in children's literature from the earliest tradition of storytelling thus:

> Female heroism has been devalued ever since the emergence of hunting oral narratives…. Whenever men returned from hunting they would narrate their adventures of killing dangerous animals to their wives and children. Consequently, these hunting stories ended up as heroic tales. Such tales were exclusively about masculine encounters because women's roles are to give birth, stay at home with their children, and provide an audience for men's stories.

Donelson and Nilsen contribute to the perception that girl-children and women's activities are marginalised and insignificant. Early forms of children's literature tend to glorify males/boys while girl-child roles(s) are directly or indirectly captured as docile, passive, unintelligent, and dependent amongst others. These less heroic nature and roles of the girl-child are imported from oral traditions into written Nigerian children's literature.

Patriarchy system as a way of life, repeatedly nurtures and develops various roles for the girl-child in the society and the literary space. In the patriarchal system, the girl-child is faced

with discrimination, forceful marriage, marginalisation in education, minimal empowerment and employment opportunities. Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2015:60) acknowledges that:

> The different ways of socializing the two genders are in accordance with Nigerian culture which prepares them quite in time for the various roles they are expected to play as adults. Part of the result has been that the male child is equipped with skills that enable him to grapple with and be properly equipped for the socio-economic, political and religious matters which will put him on a stronger footing for challenges ahead. On the contrary, the girl child is knitted with housekeeping skills which prepare her to cope with the rearing of children and taking care of her future husband. She is trained to understand that her "glory" lies in marriage, without which she will become a societal mis-fit... (The woman's prestige, glory, and beauty are dependent upon her husband/marriage).

Ezenwa-Ohaeto brings to the fore a comparative analysis of the role of boy-child and girl-child in a typical patriarchal Nigerian society. The aforementioned comparison made by Ezenwa-Ohaeto points to the different roles that are ascribed and taught to both genders as they grow into adulthood. The male-child is taught skills that will help him combat socio-economic, political, religious issues and challenges ahead. While the female/ girl-child is restricted to the domestic corners of the patriarchal tradition. These domestic spheres include housekeeping, rearing children, marriage and taking care of their husbands and children. These activities suggest that, in life, marriage is the height of a girl-child's attainment. Hence, these activities are considered as the only options available to her. It is presumed that failure to comply, places her at the risk of being considered an outcast.

Mohammad (2017:60) in an M.A dissertation supports Ezenwa-Ohaeto's claims thus:

> Women are generally expected to fulfil the reproductive role of being mothers as well as caring for other family members while men are associated with productive roles. This gender division of labour tends to appear natural but it is culturally and socially constructed. Women are not given same opportunities in life as men in terms of distribution of power and resources. The attempt to redress the issue of gender equality and equity has led to the rise of feminism as a movement. Some feminists use the concept of patriarchy to explain the systematic subordination of women in terms of women's reproductive roles, sexual violence and capitalist exploitation.

Mohammad expresses generally that in the patriarchal world, women are skilfully expected to fulfil the reproductive role and care for others. While the male figure is assigned to be useful in all aspects without being restricted. To Mohammad, this shows gender as a division of workforce that promotes acceptable cultural terms and social basis. Mohammad shows her disfavour that women are not given same opportunities in politics and economic system as men. Mohammed suggests that the challenge to promote impartiality led to the rise of feminism. Mohammed highlights one of the arguments that led to the birth of feminism. Feminists in feminism movement believe that patriarchy subjugates women which is reflective in the use of violence, exploitation and marginalised roles allotted respectively. Mohammed gives a glimpse of women experiences in a patriarchal world, but fails to recognise the role of the girl-child in particular. The girl-child in the argument is treated alongside adult women folks. This limits the chances for the girl-child's voice to be heard in the argument. Inspite of all these arguments, some feminists such as liberal feminist also argue against the choices and actions that condition the girl-child in a patriarchal socio-cultural system.

Anti-Defamation League (2013:1) confirms that there are bias and stereotypical messages that are induced into children's literature which may have an adverse effect on a child-reader.

> Unfortunately, not all Children's literature conveys the messages that we want young people to learn. Books often contain the same stereotypes and biases of other media and because children are interested in a story's plot and characters, it is unlikely that they will know or consider whether a book includes racist, sexist or other stereotypical messages. If young children are repeatedly exposed to biased representations through words and pictures, there is a danger that such distortions will become a part of their thinking, especially if reinforced by societal biases.

The position of Anti-Defamation League shows that children's literature promotes the stereotyping of the girl-child character(s). Judging from the aforestated, traditional children's literature often portrays a stereotypical representation of the girl-child through the use of words

and pictures that create bias views to the child-reader. Writers of these children books are not differently considered either, nor left out of these accusations. The fact that these writers are products of the same biases that are reflected in their literature. Children stereotypical books may be dangerous to the child-reader when repeatedly exposed to it. These stereotypical literary books may work against children's self-esteem, thinking and further deepen the child-reader's view of the girl-child. In all, children's literature is not left out because it provides a viable platform for challenging the degrading and silence image of the girl-child.

Furthermore, cultural practices contribute and influence the traditional roles and experiences of the girl-child. In this regard, Halderman (2000:194) explains that the expectations and appropriate gender role behaviours of children are as deeply embedded in culture and society, as our expectations that the sun will rise in the morning and set in the evening. As a result, Halderman describes the girl-child thus: girls' gender typical behaviour mimics conventional 'masculine' characteristic and that, generally, society endorses masculine behaviours more readily than feminine behaviours. "It therefore follows that the more socially desirable the behaviour, the less likely it is to become the focus of gender atypically therapies". Halderman's view proves that girl-child characters are being marginalised and it may have a negative social influence on the child reader(s). Halderman is of the opinion that, socially accepted behaviours are less criticised, common, usual and normal way of life, which may not necessarily be gender discriminatory. Brinkman et.al (2011:758) opine that the dearth of female characters teaches both sexes that girls are less worthy than boys. Other researchers have conducted their investigations based on the fact that children's literature provides girls and boys with standards of masculinity and feminity. Some offer socially sanctioned behavioural models that children may imitate and present a basic model for understanding oneself and others.

Brinkman et.al reiterate the notion that girls are often treated as beings of less worth than their male counterparts.

Cultural pressure makes girls succumb to traditional gender roles. These include being lady like, dependent and being the 'perfect girl'. These characteristics limit their sense of mastery and autonomy. In fact, research suggests that the loss of self-esteem often seen in adolescent girls, can be directly linked to their experiences of gender prejudice. Brinkman et.al acknowledge the fact that the girl-child faces limitations in the society and children's literature. In addition, Brinkman et.al analyse results of some investigation carried out by other researchers in which they drew inferences and conclusions. Brinkman et.al believe that children's literature teaches girls and boys about standard behaviour as it relates to their sexes. Some of these standards revolve around limiting the girl-child's autonomy, freedom, thinking and esteem.

Today, the gradual use of positive portrayal of the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature, has become a favourite subject for critical scrutiny and interpretation. Different attempts are still being made by different writers of children's literature to eliminate stereotypes and sexism. The changing trend in the projections of the girl-child in children's literary scene, to some extent depicts her in a non-traditional role. On the other hand, it may be believed that any other qualities contrary to the traditional stereotypes may be considered as anomalies. Lehr (2001:193) notes that many children's texts tend to show that the strong willed, intelligent, self-managing, disobedient female heroes are anomalies. Lehr's position on the new girl-child roles insinuate that her actions and choices contrary to the stereotypical characteristics may be considered as unacceptable to the given norms and values of the society. These further contribute to submerging and silencing roles and traits of the girl-child character. However, there is the need to empower the girl-child with powerful projecting character traits. These would make the

girl-child fit into the tasks of modern development. These could prepare the child-reader to be determined, resilient to combat and face persistent biases experienced by the girl-child.

Due to persistence in oppression and subordination of the girl-child character(s), writers of Nigerian children's literature have seen the need to gradually eliminate negative patriarchal practices in this type of literature. Some of them have considered the need to develop early strategies to educate the girl-child through literary materials. These considerations build in the child-readers new notion about the ability, personality and perception of the girl-child. This is perhaps why Ezenwato-Ohaeto (2016:65) postulated the theory of "CHLIGEEPISM'S" which is premised on the efficacy of children's literature in the struggle against the negative aspects of patriarchy in Nigeria. The idea is to the opposition of negative aspects of patriarchy which involve all the feminist movements, (except radical feminism and some aspect of snail-sense feminism). Paraphrasing the words of Ezenwato-Ohaeto, this theory supports the creation of strong, reliable female characters by the writers of children's literature. Children's fiction should beget female (girl-child) characters, who have achieved greatness in spite of the tough patriarchal environment they grow. Also, female (girl-child) characters who are not only specialists in home chores, home making, caregiving to their husbands and rearing of babies, but characters who are also great nation builders, specialists in their chosen professions. In addition, girl-child who made great discoveries and contributions that bring changes in their society.

Some children's literature writers believe in the improvement of the image of the girl-child because, the child-reader may aspire to emulate the girl-child character(s) that have attained greatness in their chosen fields. In addition, the child-reader may learn that domestic and house chores are not only limited to girls or female characters. Ezenwato-Ohaeto (2016:65) buttresses thus:

> The presumption is that if writers of children's literature adopt gender relations that depict …good relationship, shared responsibility…progressive values and norms, tolerance and the negative effects of gender stereotyping, gender preference and dispossession or deprivation of people's right in our society) values as themes in their works, as they tell stories about life, about gender equality an eradication of patriarchy, our children will imbibe and internalise these virtues and appreciate them as values and perceive them as way of life and as part of their developmental experiences. While the female children will aspire to be like those female characters that have achieved greatness in their chosen fields and the males understand that house chores are not meant for girls alone and that they are all shareholders in the family asset(s) whether the girls choose to get married or not, the society will be a better place to live in.

Ezenwato-Ohaeto echoes that before now, many Nigerian children's literature writers have relegated the girl-child to the background. They often project the boy-child as heroic, brave, independent, active, and intelligent. The girl-child is depicted as an observer, a cheerer, a domestic attendant, etc.

In view of the foregoing, Ezenwato-Ohaeto is of the opinion that writers of children literature should aim at promoting equality, shared responsibilities, limit gender preferences, and eradicate patriarchal norms and values that limit the girl-child potentials. Ezenwato-Ohaeto believes that children learn from what they read and it may become their way of life. To Ezenwato-Ohaeto girls and boys are joint stakeholders in the society. Hence, they should not be restricted. Ezenwato-Ohaeto rejects the belief that marriage is the height of a girl-child's aspiration. He believes that the girl-child can also be an unalienable asset to the society.

Some children's literature writers have tried to influence the perception of the child-reader. They project girl-child characters who are self-developed and have full potentials to promote intelligent skills. As such, children literature is an important tool that helps to mend the future of the child reader. It also reshapes the perception of children about the girl-child. Gazda (2015:9-10) attests to this when he states that:

> Children's literature, specifically, can change children into thinking that their actions are wrong or unhealthy simply because they are girls instead of boys or vice versa. How can a simple children's book do this? The actions of the characters in the stories really shape how girls and boys perceive their own actions, as well as the actions of their peers. The fine lines that society expects us never to cross sometimes show up in the smallest of subtleties on a page, and other times, in much more obviously sexist spread.

Gazda's attestation implies that action of characters, use of language and illustrations use by some writers depict a reformed image(s) of the girl-child in some children's literature. These devices may suggest that the figure of the rebranded girl-child are conceived within and outside the storyline.

To this end, the transformative portrayal of the girl-child also lies in the bid to create new and positive role model characters to the child-reader. Law et.al (2000:4) posit that:

> Books that celebrate courageous women and girls who are portrayed not simply as 'spunky' or 'feisty', but are brave, confident female actively shaping their own destinies and breaking barriers to defy stereotypes and societal limitations. Girls need books that will help them recognise, understand, and resist systematic sexism around them, to claim their voices, and to be self-possessed.

This postulation made by Law et.al recognises the fact that, children are affected by the way and manner the girl-child and women are represented in books. It is indeed necessary to imbue the girl-child with realistic and strong character. Law et.al believe that these break barriers, undue stereotypes and limitation make the girl-child to recognise, understand and resist any stereotype and sexism in reality. In addition, female child-readers need books that will make them combat chauvinism, have a positive voice, become independent and self-confident.

In order to provide more insight into the background of this study, it is pertinent to know about the authors, their works and the texts under study. Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo is a lecturer, writer, essayist and administrator. Adimora-Ezeigbo (2016: blog) reveals that:

> She was born and raised in Eastern Nigeria but now lives in Lagos. She also lived in different parts of the country-east, north, and west. She has travelled extensively in Africa and Europe and in the United States of America which has

> contributed to her reading tours. She is partially raised in a rural environment and in the city; she combines these two (2) factors to serve as background and setting for her children's stories.

Adimora-Ezeigbo is one of the current practitioners of creative writing in Nigeria. Although, she is largely unknown by many readers. Oloko (2008:2) opines that:

> In terms of total output proportionate with her period of practice so far, Adimora-Ezeigbo emerges easily as one of the productive current practitioners of creative writing in Nigeria. Yet, she is largely unknown to many readers, much less to the exotic corpus with dependable opinions that could determine her place in the canon. The vagaries of Nigerian publishing and the absence of a viable reading culture in the country have limited the distribution of her work to the literature classrooms of the nation's universities where that featured in under graduate courses in Gender Studies and other similar programmes of reductive readings mounted on 'new' writers who, writing from the point of view of gender and what it means to women, are too often perceived as challenging established modes of representation.

Oloko is of the opinion that Adimora-Ezeigbo is one of the dynamic creative practitioners in Nigeria. Her works are restricted to the academic parlance because of the dying reading culture in Nigeria (most especially the Nigerian universities). Most of her works are basically for children but her works for adult gain prominence and are used for an undergraduate course such as gender studies. This is because in most of her works; she writes from the point of view of gender and challenges the age long tradition and orthodox representation.

As gathered from akachiezeigbo.org/biography.html (2015 n.pag.), she is a member of the Editorial Board of two newspapers in Lagos which are *The Independent* (1992-1995) and *The Post Express* (1997-1999) where she wrote editorial feature articles and maintained regular columns. She also held administrative posts at the University of Lagos as Sub-Dean of the Faculty of Arts (for two years) between1992-1994 and also acting Head of English Department in 1997/1998. Her achievements include being a National Treasurer of the Association of Nigerian Authors from 1995-1997, Vice President of Women Writers of Nigeria (WRITA),

Member of The International PEN, PEN Nigeria, Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) and Women Writers Association of Nigeria (WRITA).

Adimora-Ezeigbo shows her preference for writing children's literature. Oloko (2008:2) who explains that:

> Yet the area in which Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi has demonstrated greater prolificacy is in her writing for young readers. Her titles in the genre include the following: *The Buried Treasure* (1992), *The Prize* (1994), *Alani The Trouble Maker and Other Stories* (2003), *Whisker the Brave Cat* (2005), *Red One and the Wizard of Mula* (2005), *Snake Child and Star Baby* (2006), *Ezezemale and The Tree Spirit* (2006) and *My Cousin Sammy* (2007). *The Buried Treasure* and *The Prize* have been translated into two major Africa languages, Swahili and Xhosa. The frequency at which these narratives have been turned out clearly reveals that for now, Adimora-Ezeigbo is preoccupied with writing for children and the young.

Adimora-Ezeigbo wrote literature books for adults but she is more preoccupied with writing children's stories, and poetry. In addition, two of her children's stories, as mentioned above, have been translated into other languages like Swahili and Xhosa. Her works are derived from representations of traditional and non-traditional literary perspectives. They are reader friendly and deal with current state of affairs. Oloko (2008:10) adds that with a survey of some children's narrative of the writer, in which Osita Ezenwanebe reports Adimora-Ezeigbo's 'Judicious employment of her literary talents to suits the special needs of children.

The Prize is one of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's creative children books. The plot summary of Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* has to do with a story of a thirteen years old clever, intelligent and smart girl named Onyema. She struggles against stereotype and deprivation from her immediate family, school and community. Onyema went through hardship, pains and humiliation to realise her dream. This is made possible by assistance from people who believe in her ability. These people are; Mrs. Agu and Teacher, Mr. Nwiboko. Onyema eventually surmounts the pressure of the patriarchy syndrome of male dominance and restrictions. She does

this through her determination, hard work, and perseverance. Onyema eventually wins the scholarship into secondary school. At such a tender age of thirteen, her father wants her to marry to a rich merchant. She stood up to the challenge and charge, to do what she want. Onyema's determined and resilient act lives up to it to the end of the story.

Seyi's Strong Voice is one of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo children's literary books. The story in *Seyi's Strong Voice* revolves round Seyi, an eleven year old girl. Seyi is brave and intelligent. She goes all out to help her family reclaim their image(s). Seyi is determined to free her family from stigmatisation brought upon them by her father's alignment. This alignment subsequently led to his death. She challenges the religious and societal statuesque that stigmatise her family and other people living with HIV and AIDS. She tries to promote an egalitarian society which is devoid of discrimination based on sex and alignment. At last, Seyi becomes a strong voice people could reckon with despite her age.

Mabel Segun is another author that has contribute positively to the field of children's literature. She is also known as Aig-Imoukeuede or Mabel Jolaose. Mabel Segun is one of the pioneers of Nigerian children's literature. She is a multi-talented pioneer in several fields such as sports, general and educational broadcasting, editing, teaching and creative writing for adult and children. Although little attention is given to her literary works, Aiyejina in Otukumefor and Nwodo (1989:132) attest that:

> The critical attention given to Mabel Segun to date has been grossly disproportionate to her creative output. This critical neglect is consequent on a number of reasons, one being the fact that literary criticism in Nigeria is still subsequently a male affair and more often than not, only a nodding acknowledgement is granted to the female writers…her substantial output in the area of Children's literature also remains unacknowledged by critics who are generally, and unfortunately, apathetic about Children's literature.

One of the reasons why her works seem to be less popular is because the Nigerian literary world is considered to be men's affair and the females are less recognised. This makes her writings for children to be partially less recognised and treated with levity.

She is the founder and a one-time President of Children's Literature Association of Nigeria (CLAN), Chairman of International Year of the Child (IYC), Member in the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), etc. According to edoworld.net/Mabel Segun.html titled *Mabel Segun* (2010:n.pag)

> Mabel Segun has written, Co-authored and edited eleven children's books including the classic autobiography *My Father's Daughter* and its Sequel, *My Mother's Daughter* both of which have formed the subject of university theses and literary articles in Nigeria and overseas. …her stories and poems have been published in over 30 anthologies in Nigeria and abroad. They have been translated into German, Danish, Norwegian, Greek and Serbo Croat. Two of her children books have been translated into Swahili and Arabic, respectively…. Segun is regarded as an expert in Children's literature as well as the doyen champion of Children literature in Nigeria through her Literary and academic writings and on account of promotional activities of children….Mabel Segun works have secured her a place in Nigerian literature with contributions spanning decades and covering the major literary genre of children literature, poetry, prose and the essay. Her legacy and accomplishment as one of the pioneer female writers in Nigeria and champion of Children's literature have been widely acknowledged by the literary and academic community through numerous awards and distinctions, the most recent being the LNG Nigeria prize for Literature.

Segun Mabel has contributed immensely to the field of children's literature through her works. Some of her works include *My Father's Daughter* (1965), *Friends, Nigerians, Countrymen* (1971), *Under the Mango Tree* (co-authored) (1980), *Youth Day Parade* (1983), *My Mother's Daughter* (1985), *Olu and the Broken Statue* (1985), *Conflict and Other Poems* (1986). These enlisted books written by Segun Mabel, are observe to have made considerable contributions to the writing and emergence of children literature, as well as adult literature. As an expert in children's literary field, her works in this arena have earned her considerable recognition. Also, most of her children books are drawn from traditional and non-traditional literary (ranging from

stories, poetry, essays, etc.) perspectives, to promote children's activities. They are child-reader friendly. Most of the books deal with a transitional stage between an animist past and technological future. Some of these books capture other current situations of the Nigerian society. Segun Mabel is one of the prominent pioneers who have the drive to promote children's literature. To crown her diligence in the children's literary parlance, earns her quite a number of awards.

Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* is an autobiographical story. It is a story that captures the experience of a young smart, intelligent, inquisitive, adventurous girl named Mabel. She grows up in a Christian family in a Nigerian community. Mabel is strong willed, with this, she pushes her way through the patriarchal structure to make her will known. Her self-will is carried out to the latter without being hindered. Her interactions with other characters reports the story of Titi. Titi almost became pray to cultural practice and tradition of early marriage. At the long run, Titi devices a means to runaway rather than to be married to a man at such a tender age. Hence, the death of Mabel's father marks a turning point in her life style as a child.

The story in Segun Mabel's *My Mother's Daughter* is a continuation of *My Father's Daughter*. The story continues from the demise of Mabel's father. Mabel and her brother had to stay with different relatives to survive their trying times. She waded through joy, fear, pains and sorrow of traditional and modern life styles in order to rise to the top. Thus, it is a typical childhood story and transformative responses of the girl-child roles and attributes in a changing Nigerian society.

In a nutshell, there is an interplay on how Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun use their creative literary arts to project the girl-child. Hence, this research takes into cognisance the representations and experiences of the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature.

1.3 The Concept of Children's Literature

Children's literature is a socio-cultural and psychological construct that has continued to evolve over the years. It was shaped and is still being shaped by the economic, historical, political and social factors that exist in the society. There have been various attempts by different scholars to give a clear cut definition of the term "children's literature". Some of these scholars include Hunt, Oberstein, The Nigerian Teachers Institution, Townsend and Osazee among others. These attempt made by different scholars to define children's literature, have met with different obstacles that militate against having a single codified definition. Mohammed (2013:141) assents that there is almost no single widely acceptable definition of children's literature. This is perhaps owing to its multi-faceted nature and the problem of delimitation between adults and children as well as genres. Oberstein (1996:17) points out that one of the problems in defining children's literature arises from the fact that, some books meant for Adult literature are read by children and vice versa. Some writers seem not to give a clear cut definition of the concept of children's literature, and its distinctive sub-genres that make up the genre. In addition, some critics and writers believe that some books and literature are meant to be read by children or read to them and some are not.

In the light of Mohammed and Oberstein's view, some selected definitions are used in this research. Definitions given by Townsend, Oberstein, Mohammad, and Osazee show the different attempts by scholars to define children's literature. Each definition has its distinctive short coming. In the end, a suggestive definition of what constitutes the term "Nigerian children's literature" is proffered.

The concept of literature as defined by Townsend (1990:60) are all works of imagination which are transmitted primarily by means of written words or spoken narratives; which are novels, stories and poetry with the addition of those works of non-fiction which by the quality of style or insight may be said to offer experience of a literary nature. In explaining what literature offers, Townsend (Ibid) says that literature is above all enjoyment. Townsend believes that literature enhances creative pleasure and thinking. It could be transmitted through oral or written means in prosaic form, drama, verse or non-fiction like essay, biographies to mention but a few. It also gives pleasure, entertainment and serves as raw materials of life experiences. This stretches one's imagination, deepens one's experience and heightens the awareness of the reader. The above definition of literature can be applicable to the salient points that make up the term called "children's literature".

Several scholars have tried to define children's literature by drawing inferences from the holistic concept of literature. Definitions of children's literature by these scholars are derived from children's apparatus, audience, worldview, interest and purpose. Oberstein (1996:17) defines children's literature as a category of books, the existence of which absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children. This definition pays particular attention to the audience of this type of literature, which are basically children. This definition is in line with what Hunt in Hawkins-Dady (1996:131) rightly says that, it is one of the literature defined in term of its audience. Hunt shows that the role of the child- reader is crucial and significant in the creation, interpretation and distinction of a good writer of this genre (both in content and style). Hence, Oberstein and Hunt's definitions did not give definite purpose of children's literature. That is, what this type of literature sets out to do. As a result of this, the

audience who are basically children is not connected with the aim or purpose of this kind of literature.

Another definition of children's literature is stated in The Nigerian Teachers Institution Handbook (2000: Cycles3; Module 10:298) cited in Mohammad (2013:141). Its posits that children's literature is a literature written or told to the very young- fairy tales, nursery rhymes, songs, school stories, adventure stories, family stories, legends, myths and so on. This definition of children's literature states that this literature is meant for the very young. It could be in a written or oral form; which may be told in a formal (schools) or an informal (at home or playground) setting. It is use to entertain or educate young minds. Hence, this definition tries to incorporate formal and educational stories into children's literature. In addition, it gives specific purpose of the genre to its audience- who are relatively children. This definition did not take cognisance of young adult. These young adults are by all means regarded as children.

In another instance, Osazee (1991:74) tries to define children's literature from the African perspective as she focuses on African context. Osazee defines children's literature as:

> That piece of literary creation which draws its matter from the African world view and which is written in a language and style the African child can comprehend. It must be seen as promoting African culture and enable the child or the young adult to understand and appreciate his or her environment better and it must give him or her some pleasure.

Osazee projects children's literature as that literary piece that draws inferences from the African world view, languages and style that an African child can easily understand. This helps the child to promote indigenous African ways of life. It enables the child reader to appreciate his or her environment and at the end, it gives pleasure to the child or young adult reader. This does not mean that non-Africans cannot read such literature. Partially, the definition given by Osazee seems to be all encompassing. Its shortcoming is that, it pays particular attention to the African

context of children's literature; rather than children's literature as a whole. This definition serves as a background definition to the concept of "Nigerian children's literature". Nigerian children's literature as the name implies can be referred to as a creative art of a Nigerian or a foreigner who is/ are concerned (directly or indirectly) about children's literary genre. It could be spoken or written literature which draws its subject matter(s) from the Nigerian experiences and ideology or world view. It is written in language(s) and style(s) that the Nigerian child or young adult can easily comprehend; which could foster the promotion of Nigerian culture(s), challenge inadequacies, so that young Nigerian(s) can understand, appreciate their environment, but bearing in mind that it is a medium use to educate and entertain the child-reader.

1.4 Statement of the Research Problem

Over the years, the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature has been misrepresented and projected in a stereotype and degrading manner. This shows that children's literature is sometimes marred with discriminations, exploitation, etc. Nikolajeva (2005:149-150) acknowledges that:

> The interest in the gender aspect of children's literature emerged in the 1960's and '70s, as [art of the general interest in a socio-historical approach to literature. The early studies of children's books from the gender point of view focused on the gender roles: the way boys and girls…were portrayed, as well as how these portrayals reflected the actual situation in the society…..Since male and female stereotypical traits are opposed to each other, it is easy to present a schematic abstract pattern of "masculinity" and "femininity": Men/boys: strong, violent, unemotional, tough, aggressive, competitive, protective, independent and active. While Women/ girls are beautiful, nonviolent, emotional, submissive, sharing, vulnerable, dependent and passive.

These traditional depictions of the girl-child as enumerated by Nikolajeva have a negative effect on young minds, as they are easily influenced by what they read. In recent times, some writers of Nigerian children's literature with varying degrees of success, have attempted to modify

centuries of misrepresentation of the girl-child. As such, this dissertation projects an alternative reading means in rewriting the image of the girl-child.

Thus, children's literature has become a distinctive tool used to help children to become responsible and less discriminatory adults. Generally, It equips them with the right moral values with which the girl-child and young readers can confront the age-long traditional stereotypes. Also, it exposes the decadence of modern life and foster gender equality. This research examines issues that concern the girl-child and choose to adopt liberal feminist theory to interpret selected texts of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun. The liberal feminist theory is used as an analytical tool for this research because it also focuses on girl-child's ability to maintain their equality through their own action and choices. In line with this, therefore, the problematic of this study is premised on the assumption that the worth of vining for space and equality in the literary domain is not only reserved for adult female folks. Other related assumptions are premised on the fact that:

- Children's literature in Nigeria projects girl-child in a stereotypical manner.
- Children's literature writers have used their creative writings to carve an emerging role for the girl-child using the works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun.
- Some writers of Nigerian children's literature have tried to rebrand and recast the place and importance of the girl-child.
- Liberal feminist theory contributes to the projection of the girl-child.

1.5 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to examine the projection of the girl-child through textual interpretation of her innovative potentials and roles in selected works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun.

Objectives of this research are as follows:

- To illustrate that Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun portray a stereotypical image of the girl-child in *The Prize, Seyi's Strong Voice* and *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* respectively.
- To illustrate that Nigerian children's literature writers have used their creative writings to carve an emerging role for the girl-child using the works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun.
- To examine the place and importance of the girl-child within the context of Nigerian children's literature.
- To describe how liberal feminist theory have tried to contribute to the projection of the girl-child through some selected texts of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is significant because children's literature can be regarded as one of the powerful instruments that have shaped and is still shaping the lives of young readers. Children learn a lot from what they read and it helps to develop their skills.

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun's works are selected because they appear to give a fair representation to issues concerning the girl-child in Nigeria. They have tried to show ways of combatting traditional stereotypes of the girl-child within the context of Nigerian children's literature.

Children's literary texts written by Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun under study capture prevalent concerns of the girl-child in urban-cum country settings in Nigerian. Furthermore, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize, Seyi's Strong Voice and* Mabel Segun's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* have been chosen for this research because of their traditional and contemporary approaches regarding issues related to the girl-child in Nigeria. This study is significant because it helps readers have different views about the girl-child and her character in some children literary texts. Thus, it innovatively changes readers' mind set about certain stereotypes. Thereby creating the "perfect" character who can serve as alternative role model(s) to the child-reader and inspire them to be productive and adopt a more egalitarian attitude.

In addition, this research is significant because the manner in which the girl-child is presented in children's literature has an impact on children's attitudes, consciousness, personalities and perceptions of gender-appropriate behaviour in the society. This is because what children read and see in their literature tend to limit or make them identify with the peculiar character(s) and image of their own gender (such as the girl-child).

Furthermore, children's literature plays a significant role in passing on societal norms and values. Fatunde (1996:408) is of the view that literature for young people is meant to guide the child's journey through the complex realities of our world where there is a constant and fierce battle between the forces of good and evil, kindness and cruelty, hatred and love, selfishness and selfless devotion, truth and falsehood. Children's literature teaches children about real life experiences and educates them on ways to live. It may help to condition the child's mind on how to view or read people around their environment and the world at large.

The researcher is of the view that the selected texts can serve as fundamentals tool in sensitizing children about gender differences, preferences and ways to appreciate them respectively (especially girl-child who is the main concern in this research). This research promotes the rewrite of the character of the girl-child from one who is being relegated to an improved one. To show that she could also be regarded as a joint stakeholder in the creative space and nation at large as postulated by Liberal Feminists. As an offshoot of liberal feminism, liberal feminist theory projects an individualistic form which focuses on the girl-child's ability to maintain equality through her actions and choices. These actions and choices are reflected in the selected texts.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation

This research uses Akachi Ezeigbo-Adimora's *The Prize* (1994); *Seyi's Strong Voice* (2011) and Mabel Segun's and *My Father's Daughter* (1965) and *My Mother's Daughter (1987).* These authors and their texts give vivid descriptions of issues and experiences of the girl-child within the context of Nigerian children's literature. Furthermore, both authors depict some emerging roles of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun deploy innovative means to eliminate stereotypes and sexism.

Thus, this study focuses on selected children's text under study, because these texts are easily accessible to young readers. However, these books can be read by children and young adults (adolescents).

1.8 Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research. It is conducted using selected works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* (1994); *Seyi's Strong Voice* (2011) and Mabel Segun's Mabel *My Father's Daughter* (1965) and *My Mother's Daughter (1987)* as sources for primary data. These texts are used to examine the projections of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. Materials for critical analysis and reviews of related literature are library and internet based. Other secondary sources include articles, newspapers, journals and textbooks about children's literature.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The projection of the girl-child in children's literature has generated different arguments, ideas, and explanations by various critics, scholars and writers such as Nikolajeva, Adimora-Ezeigbo, Gooden and Gooden, Little and Segun Mabel among others. The aforesaid serve as a

centre for the review of related literature in this research. Alamu and Olukosi (2008:23) define review of the related literature as the systematic process of searching out, reading, digesting and critically evaluating past research works and studies done in related areas to the researcher's field of interest. In this research, the purpose of review of related literature is to critically and systematically evaluate past research works and studies by different critics and scholars on the projection of the girl-child in children's literature.

Different types of review have been carried out in children's literature. These review are captured by critics and scholars in their various different arguments, criticisms and interpretations of children's literature. These arguments, criticisms and interpretations question problem(s), provide answer(s) and possible solution(s) relating to issues of didacticism, social realities, historical issues, gender, aesthetics, etc. In the course of this research, the researcher review and points out some prevalent issues concerning the projection of the girl-child. The researcher search out contributory factors that led to the relegation and subjugation of the girl-child. Also, ways proffered by critics, scholars and writers for the girl-child to live off misrepresentations in emerging children's story lines. To buttress the critical evaluation, this research uses liberal feminist theory to question the underlying assumptions that surround the projection of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. This is made possible through the creation of awareness and bringing to the forefront the complexities of the girl-child's actions, consciousness and interaction in children's literary world.

2.1.1 The Origin and Development of Children's Literature in Nigeria

Historically, the origin and development of Nigerian children's literature can be trace to the indigenous Nigerian oral traditions. Abate and Pfeiffer cited in Mohammad (2013:140) assert

that: the development of children's literature anywhere in the world follows the basic path… spoken stories, songs and poems. In the beginning, the same tales that adults enjoy were created specifically to educate, instruct and entertain children. Children's literature can be traced back to oral traditions and stories that adults enjoyed and share with children. Mbure (1997:4) agrees with this assertion and describe the function of this genre thus:

> With its multi-faceted genre, children learnt the societal virtues of patience, honesty, obedience, hard work and generosity, among others; they also learnt about such vices as greed, disobedient and lies, and their consequences. The children learnt what society considered good and evil, and how to relate to care for the environment

The opinion of Mbure on oral traditions enable children to learn about societal virtues and vices. The consequences of one's action which either align or contravene the norms of the society. In accordance with Mbure's opinion, Leavy (1995:39) acknowledges that:

> Children grow up listening to these folktales and thus have a deep rooted effect on every child and play a vital role in the making of the ethos and the aesthetics of a person. These tales have texts which carry some or the other cultural context in them. They are moving metaphors which gain new meaning in this context

Leavy's acknowledgement buttresses the fact that the place of oral lore such as folktales could have an effect on a child's code and attitude. These stories are influenced by the cultural practices and context.

In Nigeria, the emergence of children's literature is rooted in some ancient art of oral traditions, with the same stories that are meant for adults. This is illustrated from different spoken stories, myths, legends, songs, and poems used to educate, instruct and entertain children. Although, children's literature of this period is in oral form; but it is also artistic. It employs poetic language which helps to capture and sustain the child's interest. It makes use of repetition, imagery, simile and other stylistic devices to enhance the aesthetic quality of narration, to capture young minds. Children's fiction also helps to make the moral of the story more

memorable through the creative use of language. Akinyemi (2003:167) attests to this fact when he states that:

> Precolonial children's literature was not only valued because of its social focus and performance quality but for its aesthetic character as well. This literature was artistic, for example, it employed poetic language which helped to capture and sustain the child's interest. The oral artist made use of repetition, imagery, simile and other stylistic devices to enhance the aesthetic quality of the narrative.

The oral rendition of this epoch is not only on social performances. It also focuses on the use of artistic language, imagery, figurative expressions, and techniques. These enhance and capture the mind of the young listener.

Economic, historical and social issues were effectively incorporated into young minds. In a similar vein, philosophy of a society towards life and her relationship with others. Also, stories that reflect neighbouring societies are aptly captured in the narratives, poems, songs, riddles, stories and taboos are imbibed in the young minds. Nigerian Teachers Institute (2000, Cycle 3; Module 10:297) cited in Mohammad (2013:141) buttresses that:

> In several Nigerian cultures, for example, there exist folktales such as, why the sky is so far away from the earth; why the rainbow appears in the sky; how the leopard got its claw or why you should not sit on a mortal. The themes and characters in the stories are found in several cultures and region of the Nigerian society. The tales' are archetypes that convey fundamental themes of human desires and feelings across the centuries and over the "kingdoms" and "villages" that makes up the present Nigerian nation.

From the aforesaid, one can argue that oral traditions form the foundation or background of what is known as Nigerian children's literature today. Some of these oral stories, songs, poems are still being used in written Nigerian children's literature. Ogunyemi (2013:8) is of the view that:

> In Nigeria, children's literature is culminated from the oral tradition of the people. It also embodies the natural folktales, folklores of the people at different time. Most writings blend the science fiction with the folkloric tradition of the people to form significant information. In Nigeria, the government approves children's fiction not only on teaching and moral grounds but on the principle of ideology…in Nigeria, the political class encourages stories that develop the minds

> of the children to be subservient to the existing system-obedience to law and order.

Ogunyemi believes that the Nigerian children's literature is derived from the oral traditions of the people. Oral tradition is blended with science fiction to pass significant information to the young. It shapes children and helps them familiarise with the proper code of conduct and ideology. The ideology in oral tradition lean towards the development of children and their literature.

The position of the girl-child is also reflective in oral lore. In this context, oral tradition is seen as an essential part of the socio-cultural activities of the community. Children grow up to listen to these stories; and have deep rooted influence on them. Some of these oral renditions have been accused of being despising and misogynist. It could be believed that prospects from the characters are those of a male-controlled world, in which women and girl-child have a submissive role. Leavy (1995:40) attests that:

> The expectations from the characters are those of a patriarchal world in which the man is expected to perform great deeds and woman (girl-child) has a servile function. She is humiliated as a goose girl or leads a Cinderella like existence in the scullery. A woman (girl-child inclusive) is encouraged to be passive, tread the well-worn path no deviate to the right or left and not to do anything dangerous. She is expected to sit and wait for her prince charming or some gracious man who may lead her out of danger. There lies the success of the heroine in the world of the folktales…. A beautiful girl does not need to act, but to wait patiently until the right man comes her way. That decision of who is right and who is not is decided in most of the cases by male guardians of the girl in question…woman having a mind of her own is not accepted with an open mind by the society as she refuses to be treated as a doormat. Such women are termed rebel by the society.

Leavy agrees that in oral lore, the patriarchal system informs the dictates of the stories. To a large extent, in some of these stories, the women in general, and the girl-child in particular, are encouraged to be downgraded and subservient. They are projected to depend on the male figure to upgrade her status. To Leavy, any girl-child that work against the patriarchal principles is labelled 'rebel'.

Dolsen and Nilsen (1980:285) observe that "female heroism has been devalued ever since the emergence of hunting oral narrative". Dolsen and Nilsen assert that

> Whenever men returned from hunting they would narrate their adventures of killing dangerous animals to their wives as and children. Consequently, these hunting stories ended up as heroic tales. Such tales were exclusively about masculine encounters because women's role was to give birth, stay at home with their children, and provide an audience for men's stories

Dolsen and Nilsen insist on the use of oral heritage as a determining factor that has contributed to the perception that the heroic adventure is an exclusively male territory. Whereas women and girl child activities are marginal and regarded as insignificant. Heroines are being viewed as out of place and contradict their expected social performance. Many African oral narratives glorify the heroic deeds of boys/men. These heroic deeds and acts of valour are transferred to written children's fiction because, many of their stories project the hero as boys/male. While the girls/females are at the mercy of the boys/males

Leavy (1995:42) further illustrates that:

> The history of our society reveals that for ages and ages women were subjugated by men to secondary status and were suppressed in all walks of life… through this folk literature, women expressed themselves and their views and wishes and revealed their identity in various aspects of life… the foolish and gullible wife…victimised girl, are some of the figures that we come across if we look into folktales.

Leavy illustrates that the history reveals age long subjugation of the female folks in all walks of life. In addition, Leavy explains that folk literature helps women and girls express their views, wishes and identity that portray them as foolish, gullible and victims. Leavy's position presupposes that folklore materials and oral rendition show models for girl-child conduct; wherein heroines must undergo series of ordeals, prove her intelligence and resourcefulness. Lundell (1983:243) points out that:

> Female activity… witnessed …with aggression and capable female protagonist. The adventurous and leadership qualities of a folktale heroine are ignored and

> independent characters are also underrepresented. It is important to note that there seems to be … some labelling male is given credit instead of the female in the title. In most of the cases, women are ignored as far as giving credit to the title. Here an animal or something else will find a place in the title than a woman with all her specialty or peculiarity. This kind of gender discrimination is noticed in the libelling of the type and motif index of the folktales.

Lundel is of the view that in portraying female protagonist (the girl-child inclusive), some qualities may be deliberately ignored and underrepresented. To Lundel, this discrimination is reflective in the use of titles, and motifs in oral tales. The girl-child in oral tales is not adequately represented like her male counterpart. Animals and non-living seem to have an edge over the girl-child.

In some study of folklores and tales, there is the recurrent impression that the girl-child and her male counterpart in most cases are not treated equally. Bottigheimer (1993:267) observes that: the study of folklore in general and folktales and fairy tales, in particular, give us the impression that women and men are in most of the cases not treated equally. One and the same action can under some situation label a girl as naughty and a boy as good. In agreement to Bottigheimer, the girl child is treated differently and oral tradition seem to give countless picture of girls in tales to be beautiful. Till date, same qualities are not expected of boys. Adding to this, the kind of affronts the girl-child receives have tendency to give disable standard in the ways both young sex are treated and relay in folklores.

Despite the stereotypes inherent in this oral genre, the girl-child is inclined to be very verse. The girl-child is seen to be portrayed like her other women folks in socio-economic positions. Leavy (1995:43-44) claims that:

> The woman is seen in all social positions and classes, from the queen and princess to the scullery maid, beggar woman, and demoness to the Goddess, intelligent old woman (or girl) powerful mother etc. We find women playing all sorts of different roles in the family: child, young girl, a sister, bride, loving mother…. The spectrum of their outward appearances ranges from stunning beauty to

> unbelievable ugliness, of their intelligence to the one who is unbelievably stupid, to the riddle princess from whom none of her suitors is a match intellectually. There is the servile, patient, modest woman, the hardworking and the lazy, the fertile and the childless woman, the cruel and the cunning woman. Her moral qualities can be a help to others…. Fundamental character traits of the woman, which are often decisive for the plot of the story, are her unwavering loyalty, unflinching selflessness and self-sacrifice, her long suffering determination. These are the qualities that are required of the wife who wants to rescue her husband or from the sister who wants to save her brother… female characters whose attributes are grounded in the feminity schema lead happy lives if their behaviour revolves around beauty, passivity and dependence on outside forces. This is so implicated in the narrative that it constitutes a cause and effect relationship and the drastic consequences of breaching this formula imply a misogynistic view of women.

To a large extent, Leavy's claim is particular about women. Leavy's view buttresses that in the process of attaining womanhood, the girl-child is not left out. This shows that the age of the girl-child marks an important stage in attaining womanhood. The girl-child alongside other women folks have verse roles in folklores. These are actually commendable because they give many creative roles to the girl-child compared to her male counterpart. Leavy's claim shows that the girl-child is also significant in children's literary space.

Recent discourses on oral lore recognises the enduring variables that are prevalent in oral tradition. The increasing participation of women in academia helps to broaden intellectual inquiry in this discipline. This has ushered in novel perspectives into many old questions in oral lore and narratives. This novel perspective could be integrated into the children's literature. This promotes recognition and appreciation of girls/women and boys/men standpoints. According to Bacchilega (1993:11), folk narratives are … sites of competing historically and socially framed desires…(they) … continue to play a privileged function in the reproduction of various social construct including gender and narrative. Oral tradition could communicate messages regarding how the girl-child should conform to their social roles and sometimes warn about the

repercussion of violating cultural norms. In the present day, there is articulation for the girl-child to resist male dominance, present alternative social interpretations through oral tradition.

To this end, oral tradition is not restricted to a particular group or sex but tends to cut across culture, classes, sex and gender. Consequently, writers of children literature try to strike balance between oral tradition and burning issues of the day of the Nigerian children's world. Despite the positive impact of oral lore in the emergence and development of Nigerian children's literature, the place of oral renditions in children's literature still create a gap of gender disparity.

Furthermore, the origin and development of Nigerian children's literature are perceived to have a close tie with the Western world (Europe). Adimora-Ezeigbo (2011:2) traces the importation of western children books to Nigeria thus:

> Children's literature is a literary genre which caters for the interest of children, through many books in this category are enjoyed by adults. Children's literature was first imported into Nigeria from Europe, specifically the United Kingdom and later the USA. Before Nigerian Children read books written by Nigerians, they had read the classics from Europe-the famous folktales and fairy tales collected and popularised by the German Academics, the Brothers Grimm, and the Danish author and poet, Hans Christian Anderson. Other famous Children's author is C.S Lewis (British), Mark Twain (American) Enid Blyton and so many others including the renowned contemporary British author, J.K. Rowling who wrote the famous and best-selling Harry Potter books. There is no doubt what writing for children has been a serious business in the West for decades if not centuries. Indeed reading materials of the young and the production of it are viewed with all seriousness in the West

Adimora-Ezeigbo is of the opinion that children's literature in Nigeria is tied to the Western world. This western world includes countries like the United Kingdom and United State. Children writers of some of these European counties are the Grimms, Hans Christian, Lewis, Mark Tawin, Enid Blyton, Rowling, etc. The advent of classic-European children's literature has direct or an indirect link to colonization on the Niger-Area (Nigeria). In the course of colonialism, the British government in Nigeria established schools and introduced the British

curriculum. The literature that was read in schools was entirely British. At this time, children's literature had flourished extensively in the West than in Nigeria.

According to Mohammed (2013:142), Nigeria children's literature was greatly influenced by colonization. The introduction of writing skills and writing materials (print) to the Nigerian shore contribute to the growth and development of children's literature in Nigeria. The western world serves as a basis for "modern civilisation" and cannot be excluded in its totality. This does not mean that indigenous means and mode of writing is not in existence. Children literature in Nigeria developed gradually alongside contact with or the arrival of the European missionaries and the Sudan Arabs respectively. The missionaries set up printing facilities which mainly printed evangelical materials and in turn distributed them to new converts. Books used in European schools were also used by Nigerian students (children) without modification. Gbilekaa (1997:50) posits that

> Apart from the rich oral tradition through which a good number of stories for children evolved, suitable literature relevant to the lives of the children, particularly those who went to school was not a priority. British children books that were used in Nigerian schools and for leisure reading include *Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare*, novels by Charles Dickens and other European writers dominated the scene.

Osazee (2004:2) adds that supplemented books used in European schools were imported into African (Nigerian) schools without modifications.

Adimora-Ezeigbo, Mohammed, Gbilekaa and Osazee's arguments on the effect of colonialism on Nigerian children's literature are germane. As indeed the submission that it is also an offshoot of oral art forms earlier discussed. This does not deny the fact that Nigerian children's literature in its oral art forms is pushed into extinction. Indigenous Nigerian oral stories for children are still told to the Nigerian child (ren). However, despite the changing epoch

from precolonial to the colonial era, the Nigerian child still enjoys the oral lore that this genre captures.

The introduction of foreign children's literature is noted to typical depiction of foreign cultures and worldviews. Achebe quoted in Osazee (2004:2) claims that:

> Before 1960 Nigerian child read nothing but British children's books and had to be left to figure out what was meant by Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square and the Thames. The poems he was forced to memorize talked about bleak and chilly mid-winter, snowflakes, men who galloped by whenever the moon and the stars were out, great ports and swarming cities, and of course the pied pier-subjects and images which convey no meaning and no feeling to the average Nigerian (African) child in his natural environment.

Achebe is of the opinion that children's literature of this period was based on foreign cultures. Nigerian children could not easily identify themselves with characters and setting in the books. Ngugi (2000:64) laments that like colonial literature, most of the European children's literature failed to evoke and bring out an authentic, genuine African spirit and also failed to formulate the sort of image that children and young people needed at that time. These children needed image(s) that were not imported and could be readily emulated by them. Although, Ngugi talks about the Kenyan and African perception of foreign children's books. It is also applicable to the Nigerian context. These foreign children's literature make it difficult for Nigerian child to appreciate the literary materials. Children's literature that were being used were different from what is obtain in the Nigerian the culture and environment.

Furthermore, with the use of unfamiliar character, images and setting as reflected in the foreign children's literature. Khorana (1994: xiv), argues that:

> This kind of literature sought to expose and explain the primitiveness and savagery of the black man. It served the express purpose of teaching the white society that Africans were no better than animals. This kind of literature was used as propaganda, either to boost or to destroy the image and dignity of the African people. Children were also introduced to the kind of literature that perpetuated myth and misconceptions about the geography, social organisation, people's

> culture and civilization of the African by stereotypical themes, characters and plots in books about Africa.

Khorana believes that the colonialist children's literature is biased or one sided. They project the African (Nigerian) people as inferior, ignorant, and elevate or promote the white as superior "god" statutes. There by giving a misconception about the people's geography, social organisation, culture, etc. to Khorana, the foreign children's literature encourages stereotypical themes and characters about Africa (Nigeria inclusive). Ngugi (1978:13) acknowledges that:

> This kind of literature demonstrated ignorance and lack of local experience on the part of the European writers. Through this kind of literature, children were conditioned to regard the non-white population of the world as composed not only of inferior but of conquered people who were destined to remain subject to the economic and social domination of those who have dominated them.

Ngugi acknowledges that this literature is seen as a total disregard for Africans (Nigerians) who have their own indigenous literature before contact with the West. Ngugi further admits that Europeans try to prescribe their kind of literature to the Nigerian child. European children's literature ignores the experience(s) of the Nigerian child and world view. Projecting his or her (Nigerian) people as a conquered group who are inferior to those that rule them.

Colonial children's literature is written in English and the place of the indigenous oral traditions and languages had been relegated to the background. Hence, the English language is seen as superior to indigenous languages. This period is described by Alembi (2007:15) as:

> A period of constructing and suffocating the African (Nigerian) oral literature. The suffocation also happened at the language level. That all the books were in English means the children were conditioned to see English as a superior language. Conversely, they were made to see their own languages as inferior- and speaking in them was a mark of inferiority.

Alembi explains that at this period, indigenous oral traditions seem to suffer neglect and rejection. This is made possible because virtually all books used by children were written in the language of the colonisers –English. Children were conditioned and brainwashed to see the English language as superior to their indigenous languages.

Western children's literature reflects the Eurocentric nature of the colonialist because they project western values and ideology (superior) while the indigenous African (Nigerian) languages and traditions are considered as inferior. To Gundu in Emenyonu Ernest et.al (1990:196):

> The Nigerian land and climate are portrayed as being hostile and infested with many killer-diseases that had been responsible for the death of many whites. The Whiteman, on the other hand, is painted as a man endowed with intelligence, perseverance and humanitarian feelings. In spite of the atmospheric inclemency, he preserves and eventually succeeds to bring trade and civilisation to the "dark people and land"

Gundu points out that some features of some of the European children's literature used in Nigeria. European children's literature glorifies the Whiteman and their civilising mission during the colonial administration. These stories further deepen the inferiority syndrome of the Nigerian people at the expense of the Europeans. Gundu further reveals that several of such stories were told to children for the purpose of scaring them from materialism and secularism which are objects of Christian condemnation. Some of the stories teach moral lessons on liberation from the clutches of destructive power and material things.

During this era, there is a shift in children's literature from the "colonial mission" oriented to indigenous subject content. These are reflected in the literary works used in primary schools. In the development of this literature for children, the content and style of these stories have improved. These children's literature include familiar issues of relevance which are largely drawn from already known physical and social environment. Didactic messages gotten from this literature are geared toward the Nigerian child. These new type of children's literature project the Nigerian geo-cultural milieu. They give hints about adolescent and adult life (such as discouragement from laziness, drunkenness, perseverance, dedication, hard work, etc.). The

content of Nigerian children's literature from various regions of Nigeria also metamorphosed from colonialist mission to indigenous contents.

In an attempt to salvage the "bad situation", Abraham cited in Ejiofor: (2002:102) in the period 1800-1875, the first generation of literate west Africans made a significant contribution to the study of their languages. Hence, since then very little has been done by the West. This failure to continue an extended linguistic study is particularly disappointing. This assertion by Abraham is peculiar to the Nigerian situation, but some Nigerian writers of children's literature (ranging from Northern, Southern and the Western part of Nigeria) have tried to write children's literature in indigenous languages. Till date, most Nigerian children's literature is still written in English. Examples of literature written in indigenous languages include Chinedu Ofomata's "Okwu Ndu (Abu Umuaka)" (a collection of Igbo poems), D.O Fagunwa who wrote *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole, Aliyu Da Fadimatu* (1960), etc. In a similar vein, in the northern region of Nigeria, according to Umaisha Sumaila (2010. n.pag), written tradition is being introduced to this region in the fifteenth century by the Arab scholars and traders. This led to the adoption of Hausa into Arabic script (Ajami).

To a greater extent, the Nigerian children's literature is influenced by colonization. It began as a protest literature against the colonialists who supposedly used their literature as a process of "civilizing" and "humanizing" Africans. Writers like Achebe, Ekwensi, and Okoro started to write for children. Mohammad (2013:142) posits that:

> This situation propelled writers like Achebe, Ekwensi, Okoro etc. to also write for children, having realised the potency of children's literature in acculturation and education. The realisation has helped to evolve a "national" children's literature with a wide range of stories across various genres. The most dominant of these being biographies of great Nigerian heroes and heroines: Emotan of Benin, Moremi of Ife, Amina of (Zazzau) Zaria, king Jaja of Opobo, Herbert Macaulay among other drama stories and poems with nationalistic themes

Children literature of this epoch mainly seeks to educate and help awaken the spirit of nationalism in children. Mohammed further posits that Nigeria was in dire need of a robust national children's literature programme. The type that would engender cultural awareness, unity and patriotism. The likes of Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi (both of blessed memory) among others wrote significant works for children mainly to educate and help awaken the spirit of nationalism in them. In this regard, great children texts like *Chike and the River*, *Eze goes to School* and *The passport of Mallam Illia* were shining examples. These writers believe that the children's literature produced by colonial masters slighted Nigerians (Africans), as being biased and full of prejudices.

Despite all the negative comments meted out on Colonial children's literature, there are still glimpses of the positive impact it has on the development of Nigerian children's literature. Bertoncini (1989:12) posits that

> There is the need to recognise the works done by numerous missionaries and anthropologists who collected, transcribed, translated, recorded and composed folktales such as folk stories, proverbs, riddles, myths, songs and poems from various regions of Africa.

Bertoncini is of the opinion that despite inadequacies of the colonialist children's literature, some missionaries and anthropologist have tried to collect and preserve oral children's literature. These attempts by missionaries and anthropologists serve as a plus to the development of Nigerian children's literature.

Post-colonial development of children's literature in Nigeria, according to Virginia .W. coincided with the attainment of independence in 1960. Adimora-Ezeigbo (2011:2) attests that:

> It will not be wrong to argue that Nigeria developed under the influence of the Western models. Cyprian Ekwensi was one of the first to write for children and adolescents. Bernth Lindfors stated in his seminal book, folklore in Nigerian literature, that early in his literary career, Ekwesi was not only influenced by western juvenile books but also borrowed from classic like Treasure Island, and

> that this influence is clearly seen in the book, *Juju Rock*, written in 1950 but published in 1966. Ekwensi brought out other significant titles like *The Drummer Boy* (1960), *The Passport of Mallam Illia* (1960) and *The Great Elephant Bird* (1965). Other famous children's authors who wrote for children between the 1970s and 1980s and some of their titles include Chinua Achebe: *Chike and the River* (1966) and *The Drum* (1977); Mabel Segun: *My Father's Daughter* (1985); Flora Nwapa: *Emeka-Driver's Guard* (1971) and *Mammywater* (1979); Eddie Iroh: *Without a Sliver Spoon* (1981) and Dan Fulani: *Sauna and the Drug Peddlers* (1986). More contemporary prolific Children's authors, from the 1990s till date include Anezi Okoro, Olajire Olanlokun and Ifeanyi Ifeogbuna (both died recently), Naiwo Osalion, Dapo Adeleke and Uche Peter Umeze. There are many others that cannot be listed for want of space and time.

Adimora-Ezeigbo acknowledges that the Western models of children's literature influenced Nigerian children's literature. For example, Ekwensi's works (such as *Juju Rock*) were partly influenced by Western juvenile books like *Treasure Island*. Adimora-Ezeigbo claims that few books were written before independence, they were not published until 1960; such works include Cyprian Ekwensi's *Drummer Boy* and *The Passport of Mallam Ilia.* Adimora-Ezeigbo is able to trace the history and development of children's literature in Nigeria. Her short coming is that she did not follow the trend of the application of children's literature to the science world and computer age. The books listed had to do with the moral and psychological development of the child-readers. Nevertheless, the projection of the girl-child is marginally discussed.

In the post-colonial era, the development of children's literature as paraphrased from Dike in Sumaila (2010:1) shows that Nigerian children's literature:

> Is motivated by the need for this literature to adequately reflect indigenous views and realities and also the expansion of education and the need for supplementary reading materials. Most of the supplementary readers are produced for the pre-adolescent age group in senior primary and junior secondary schools and were produced by the African Readers Library of the African Universities Press. According to Dike, it came out with 34 titles between 1962 and 1988. Other series include Nelson Rapid Readers (1965), Longman's Palm Library for the Younger Readers (1968), Oxford University press' Adventures in Africa (1968) and Evans Africa Library (1976) and Indigenous Publishing houses like Onibonje also produced for children. Today, most of the books are published in Britain- such as Heinemann's junior African Writers Series (JAWS) and Heat beat Series. But in

> Nigeria the Lantern Books Division of Literamed Publish Series of fiction for children and youth. Those published abroad still have the Nigerian titles, set in Nigeria but some are scarcely available to the Nigerian child it is intended towards.

Post-colonial Nigerian children's literature writers see the need for Nigerian children's literature to reflect indigenous realities and enhance education. However, Indigenous children's literature is being published in Nigeria (Africa). Some of these literatures are also published abroad with Nigerian titles and settings, but the majority seem to be inaccessible for the Nigerian child reader.

In the 1970s and 80s, the development of children's literature witnessed a boost with the introduction of adventure stories, school stories, school pranks, etc. Dike in Sumaila (2010:2) observes that:

> Development in children's literature was boosted particularly in the 1970s and 1980s when Macmillan's Winner Series brought out its first title in 1978, followed by others, such as the University Press Limited's Rainbow Series. These early works…were mainly based on adventure stories in which the hero or heroes, especially boys, fell into danger and helped bring criminals to book. Examples are Achebe's *Chike and the River*, and Ekwensi's *Juju Rock*. Some had school stories as their subject matter, with the young heroes succeeding in gaining admission into school(for example *Eze Goes to School* by Nzekwu and Crowder) and boarding school children playing their usual pranks (for example *Tales Out of School* by Nwankwo).

There is a little shift from the oral traditional stories to contemporary issues in the society. These new type of children's literature to a large extent is marred with underrepresentation and stereotypes of the girl-child.

Women were not left out in contributing their quota to the development of children's literature in Nigeria. Women writers such as Christee Ajayi, Mabel Segun, Teresa Meniro, Adimora Ezeigbo Akachi, Buchi Emecheta, etc. These women have promoted children's literature and added a number of their works to this field of literature in Nigeria. Children's literature deals with other contemporary issues that are of interest to the young adults. These

could be seen in some works of Dickson Ighiri's *Bloodbath at Lobster Close* (1980), Mohammed Sule's *The Undesirable Element* (1977), Hellen Obvagele's *Evbu My Love* (1980), Akachi Adimora's *The Prize* (1994), *The Buried Treasure* (1992) (Junior African Writers Series) and Teresa Oyinbo Ameh's *The Torn Petal* (2017)etc. Hence, projecting the role of the girl-child in a new light has gradually come into existence. These projections directly or indirectly are devoid of underrepresentation and stereotypes even when subtle stereotypes exist.

Most of the Nigerian children's literature grossly underrepresent the girl-child, but the advent of feminist and more female writers of Nigerian children's literature create room for both male, female protagonists and antagonists. Hence, writers of Nigerian children's literature see the need to create a revolution in the portrayal of female characters and girl-child. Ezeigbo (2011:4-5) states that:

> Unlike in adult literature where the male gender appears to dominate the literary canvass, there is an appreciable balance in the number of male and female authors of children's literature. Apart from veterans like Flora Nwapa, Mabel Segun, Buchi Emecheta, some other women have been in the forefront of producing books for children. In fact, more women seem to write for children than men. The advantage of this development is that more girl children are given agency as protagonists in contemporary children's literature unlike the 1960's and 1970s when most protagonists in children's storybooks were boys. In an article published in Nigeria female writers (1989)-edited by Herrita Otokunafor and Obiageli Nwodo-Charles Nnolim observed that Flora Nwapa, Ifeoma Okoye, Charry Onmu and Tesresa Meninu were "among the group of Nigerian women who are devoted to promoting and encouraging literary awareness in Nigerian children and adolescence"(105). This statement, though correct, is an understatement, for there were other women writing at the time Nnolim seemed unaware of their existence. Space and time do not allow me to provide the names of all these enterprising female writers who wrote in the years following independence as well as a list of their numerous books. However, some of them must be recognised and they are Remi Adedeji, Christie Ajayi, Audrey Ajose, Martina Nwakoby, Ifeoma Okoye, Hellen Ourum, ...Rosina Umelo and Rosemary Uwemedimo. The successors of these matriarchs of children's literature since the 1960s include Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, Promise Ogochukwu

From the above quotation, there tends to be a rewrite of the image of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. There are more female writers in this literary field than their male-counterparts. In recent times, Nigerian children's literature is characterised by a fair representation of the girl-child gender alongside their male counterpart. There are more girl-child as the protagonist, unlike the 1960s and 1970s. One of the critiques of Ezeigbo's contributions is that despite her contributions to this field she did not mention why she included gender studies in her works.

In contemporary Nigerian society, children's literature seems to develop along global changes. The 20th and 21st century are seen as the era of technological advancement which usher in the computer age. Today, however, one cannot separate these ideas from children and their literature. The use of computer and video games, mobile phone chatting, internet browsing, watching television or favourite European football clubs on television etc. As a result of these recent developments and challenges, concerted efforts are being made to include children literature programmes. The advent of new technologies and means of entertainment, reading culture, particularly of children's literature, is gradually being pushed into extinction. Children prefer digital medium and programmes to written text. Attempts have been made by computer game developers to include literature into computer games such as Mario, The Great Gatsby among others. In recent times there is the gradual inclusion of computer typed children's literature online. These include *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Paper Bag Princess*, *Matilda* etc. Despite these improvements, the development of children's literature in computer age has an adverse effect on children because sometimes they are exposed to pornographic sites. Coupled with the fact that it is time consuming. Computers are not accessible to children in the rural areas, but for selected few "children-elite". The role of the girl-child as the protagonist and

her transformative role is gradually being projected in this era, using different medium and online devices.

On the whole, the history, origin and development of Nigerian children's literature can be traced to the stance of the Nigerian society towards childhood. The projections of girl-child roles and children's literature are being influenced by local, state and federal government educational programmes, publishing groups and online sources. Hence, just as society evolves, the history, origin, and development of children's literature and the role of the girl-child in Nigeria children's literature have been influenced by the changing factors and conditions of the Nigerian society.

2.1.2 Conceptualization of the Term Girl- Child

The term 'girl-child' is a compound word that is derived from two independent words. The two independent words are 'girl' and 'child'. Kaur (2005:1-2) traces the etymology of the word 'girl' from the root word and acknowledges that:

> The journey of this word is thought to have begun back in the early 1300s from the Old English word 'gyrle' meaning child or young person. The origin of this word is not entirely known but it is suggested that the English word originated from the ProGermanic word 'gurwilon' but could also be derived from the Norwegian dialectal 'gorre' or the Swedish dialect 'gurre' meaning small child. However, the relationship between all these old European words is abstract. The word 'girl' is mostly considered to come from Germanic roots. Certain words which start with 'g' or 'k' and end in 'r' that is the 'gr' words were associated with small animals, children or immature and worthless creatures. By the late 14th century, the word for girl implied 'female child' and by the mid-15th century, the meaning expanded to a young, unmarried woman.

Kaur's observation provides that the word 'girl' originates from the old English word known to be a child or a young person, animal or immature and worthless creature. In the later part of the 14th century, the meaning of the word 'girl' came to be known as 'a female child'. By the mid-15th century, the term 'girl' encompasses both young and unmarried woman.

Edgar (2004. n.pag.) traces the etymology of the word "child" thus:

> The origin and development of the name 'child' came from the word 'Hildr', of the Norse legend, of the Scandinavian country in the 4th century, it can be traced to the rudimental and interchangeable letters al, el, il, ol. These letters are the parents or producer of many terms and words that express deity, holiness, power, supernatural attributes in all languages and religion. The letters 'il' of the name child is what denotes deity, holiness. The name child at first was an ethnic term meaning deity; it then became a title for royalty (spelled childe). It was used as a title of a king first with Gishelder, the child, in the Norse legend of the Iliad of the Norse in the 4th century. Child means a young man of noble birth. It was used as the equal of prince and Knight by the earliest writers. It was a title held by the first born son of a king or earl until he inherited the title of his ancestors or gained new honours by his own skills, it then became a term referring to all the sons in a family. Later the term became a generic term referring to any child, the young of the human species of either sex.

Edgar traces the etymology and meaning of the term 'child' to the root word in Norse legend of the Scandinavian country. 'Child' is used to denote deity, holiness, power, and spiritual attributes. The term later served as titles for royalty- a young man of noble birth which includes prince and knights. Hence, the word 'child' became a generic term which refers to any child or the young sex of any human.

There are numerous scholars that have tried to define the concept of "girl-child". Some of these scholars are Ponte, Mukhtar *et.al*, Tyoakaa and organisations with their policies such as The National Child Welfare Policy. Some of these aforestated scholars and organisations have tried to define the concept of the 'girl-child' but there exists a problem in finding an exact age range. Their various definitions reveal that there are little discrepancies about the concept, which add to the reasons why there seems to be no single codified definition of the term girl-child. Ponte (2006:2) defines 'girl-children' as "a socially constructed category around female persons between 0 and 18years". Ponte provides a sociological and biological definition of the girl-child. Mukhtar *et.al* in Tyoakaa et.al (2014:1) are of the opinion that the term 'girl-child' refers to "a female between the ages of 6-18 years". Mukhtar *et.al* append a biological meaning to the concept of a girl-child. The National Child Welfare Policy (1989) cited in Ada (2001:48) defines

the girl-child as "a female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age". Offorma cited in Ada posits that girl-child is "a biologic female offspring from birth to (18) years". To Offorma, the girl-child is seen as a stage made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stages of development. The National Child Welfare Policy and Offorma wrap it up with a biological perspective of the term girl-child.

Tyoakaa (2014:1) further defines the term girl-child thus:

> This period is made-up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stages of development. The girl-child is seen as a young female person who would eventually grow into a woman and marry. The gender apartheid places the girl-child in a disadvantaged position, where her potentials are suppressed and self-actualization is not achieved. She, therefore, becomes a victim of a pre-existing socio-cultural male chauvinism. Furthermore, on the account of gender, girl-children are subjected to all multiple forms of oppression, exploitation and discrimination

The concept of the girl-child is traced back to a period ranging from infancy to the late adolescent stage of development. Tyoakaa added that girl-child is a young female who will eventually grow into womanhood. She believes that the girl-child is placed at a disadvantaged position, suppressed, exploited and projected as a victim of male chauvinism. Tyoakaa points out a socio-cultural definition to the concept of 'girl-child'.

These definitions given by different scholars and bodies above suggest that these definitions point toward the same direction and meaning; except Ponte and Tyoakaa who added a sociological and cultural perspective to their definition of the term. There seems to be variance on the bases of age. It can be summarized that the concept "girl-child" is a period made up from birth to childhood, early and late adolescent stage of development. Thus, 'girl-child' can be depicted as a biological, physical, psychological and sociological construct of a young child and an unmarried young female with ages ranging from 0-18 years. The import of the

aforementioned definitions of the girl-child serve as the basis that enhances this research. The context of this research deals with the projection of girl-child in Nigerian children's literature.

Concerns on the projection of the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature stems from the fact that the girl-child battles with constant discriminations, oppressions, exploitations, inequality, underrepresentation and denial. As a member of the society, she is unable to deal adequately and effectively with normal social relations and behaviours. These ugly trends have been in existence from time past and till date. In order to overcome these issues, writers of children's literature and other stakeholders have tried to twist, re-write and rebrand the girl-child image(s).

2.1.3 Mainstream Projection of Girl-child in Children's Literature

Since literature is a reflection of the society, different writers and critics of children's literature. Such as Nikolajeva, Wantuck, Adimora-Ezeigbo, Gooden and Gooden among others with varying degrees have identified the projection of the girl-child in a stereotypical and unequal manner.

Varied projections of the girl-child in children's literature underrepresent her image, performances and activities. Factors that contribute to the traditional representation of the girl-child in children's literature are reflected in the use of illustrations, titles and characterisations. These use of illustrations, titles and characterisations, further deepen portrait of imbalances and stereotype of the traditional girl-child. Weitzman et.al (1972:1141) attest to these facts when they:

> Examined all the Caldecott Medal Winner since the inception of the award in 1938, but conducted an in-depth analysis on 18 winners and honourees from the 5years leading up to 1972 (1966-1971). Together with a representative sample of

> the Children's literature of that time, they also analysed Newbery Award Winner, Little Golden Books which were inexpensive books ($0.39) sold at grocery and general merchandise stores, and etiquette books. The focus of their study was on gender differences in the illustrations, the titles of the books, and the characteristics of the female or male main characters. Some of the imbalances they observed were in the illustrations and titles information. For the illustrations, there were 261 pictures of male compared with 23 pictures of females. When animals with obvious identities were included, the bias was even greater. The ratio of male to female animals was 95:1 (Weitzman et al., 1972:1128). With regard to title information, they found a ratio of 8:1, male to female. Both of these results suggested to them that female characters were "invisible"

The quotation above, expresses Weitzman et.al observations that in children's literature, gender differences exist in the use of illustrations, titles information and characters. Imbalances are observed in the use of illustrations, the use of pictures of females (including the girl-child) to be almost 10% less than the pictures of their male counterpart. They also observe that "close to one-third of our samples of recent Caldecott books, there are no women at all…only two of the 18books were stories about girls".

Traditional views of the girl-child character enforce and promote age-old gender constraints and limitations. Nikolajeva (2005:149) gives a

> Schematic pattern of "masculinity and feminity trait" the boys or men are strong, violent, unemotional, tough, aggressive, competitive, protective, independent and active; while the female/girls or women are beautiful, non-violent, emotional, soft, submissive, sharing, vulnerable, dependent and passive.

This quotation stipulates that the girl-child is considered as less in ability and potentials than her male counterpart. Nikolajeva's pattern shows girls as a dependable entity that needs help from the male folks. Nikolajeva's schematic attributes presents a girl-child as fragile, vulnerable and regarded as a less tangible being. Wantuck (1997:26) lends support that females of all ages are found indoors; they serve, follow, and get rescued while males of all ages are found outside engaging in activities where they are lead and rescue. The roles of females appear to be tedious and limited, yet the roles of males seem to be diverse and attractive. Wantuck contribute to the

girl-child's physical attributes and strength that are replicated in children's literature. Wantuck's position further places the girl-child at a disadvantaged position, while the roles of the boys/males are active and diverse.

Nikolajeva and Wantuck observe that traditional presentation of the girl-child in the society is described in children's literature. In their arguments, they project that the girl-child's image and roles are marred with under representations and inequalities. They give the picture of a traditional outlook and comparative stereotype image of the girl-child as opposed to the boy-child. The girl-child is being presented as weak, vulnerable, restricted, subservient, fragile and suppressed. The girl-child is seen as someone who needs protection from the male/boys in order to be recognised as part of the society. She is presented as a shadow to the boy-child. The girl-child are limited, tedious in action and roles. All these form part of the motifs that contribute to the mainstream projection of girl-child in children's literature.

On the basis of characterisation and picture, it is discovered that boys are active while girls are passive and immobile. Characterisation in children's literature reveals that girls play inside, while boys play in the real world- outdoors. When the girls are permitted to stay outdoor they sit and watch the boys/ male. The girls play traditional feminine roles like the adult women such as pleasing and helping their brothers and fathers. Weitzman et.al (1972:1139) observe that "children learn through children's literature that girls are taught to have low aspirations because there are so few opportunities portrayed and available to them. These story book characters reinforce the traditional girl-child sex role assumptions". These observations attest to the fact that the girl-child character is invisible, inconspicuous and nameless. Findings of Weitzman et.al contribute to the invisibility, relegation and silence that seems to permeate roles and image of the girl-child in mainstream children's literature.

Critics and scholars such as Nikolajeva, Wanuck and Weitzman et.al in various ways have reviewed and proven that classical children's literature has been a product of misplaced development. Their arguments and observations prove that concerted efforts have been made to relegate the girl-child in children's literature. Consequently, early children's literature depicts the habit of the girl-child that is underprivileged, unseen, less distinct, less important and naïve. Pickering (1981:20) observation wraps it up by attesting to the reoccurring pattern typical to all beginnings of canonized children's literature. Thus early children's literature depicts the pattern of the girl-child that seems to be deprived, invisible, and unsophisticated in knowledge and representation as reflected in reality.

2.1.4 Modern Projections of the Girl-Child in Children's Literature

Traditional or classical projection of the girl-child in children's literature has generated vehement criticisms by some critics, scholars and writers such as Gooden and Gooden, Little, Mabel, Adimora-Ezeigbo, Kolawole among others. As a result of these criticisms by new critics, scholars and writers, attempts have been made to rewrite and rebrand the projection of the girl-child in children's literature. The recent positive displays of the girl-child in children's literature try to bend or break away from the traditional rules. This is carried out by the use of gradual blurring of lines between her traditional and modern roles and activities. Some new writers and critics mentioned have shown that the representation of the girl-child changes just like children's literature. Shavit (1986:1) records that:

> Children's literature is very much a cultural construct that continues to evolve over time. Shifts and changes in the genre basically account for the growth and development that has taken place since its emergence, with the historical patterns and stages of development being basically the same in all children's literature.

Some of these changes contribute to the evolvement of children's literature. Little (1980:157) uses rhetorical question to reveal some facts about female (girl-child) changing roles in children's literature thus:

> Why is it difficult to find females as central characters or a female doctor, high ranking civil servants, directors of public service and so on in children's literature? In real life, such persons do exist. Surely it is time for this fact to be centralised in the literature of the novelist in particular.

Little's rhetorical question contributes to the notion that places the girl-child as second class citizen alongside other adult women folks. However, Little's thought-provoking question inform the main crux in projecting the girl-child in children's literature. Little's debate and question contribute to the evolvement of children's literature.

Some writers, illustrators and critics of children's literature are more sensitive to issues regarding the projection of the girl-child. This is comprehended in their use of alternative structures and techniques. These alternative structures and techniques aid some writers, to create opportunities to rebrand the girl-child's image. These are also reproduced in the evolvement of the girl-child's attributes, qualities and roles. Following the footsteps of Weitzman et.al, Grauerholz and Pescosoli also conducted a research in 1989. Grauerholz and Pescosoli (1988:114) hypothesised that:

> There had been a shift to a more equitable distribution of female and male representation in illustrations, books titles, and main characters since Weitzman's 1972 study but they wanted to study this transition by analysing over 200 "easy books" published in the U.S between 1900 and 1984. We were particularly interested in overall trends in the visibility (appearance in the titles) and centrality (appearances as focal characters) of female and male characters. They found gender differences in all the categories they analysed. The male to female ratio in titles was 2:7:1, the male to female ratio for central characters was 3:1, the male

> to female ratio of adult central characters was 4:2:1; and the male to female ratio of animal central characters was 5:8:1.

This implies that the use of illustrations, titles and characters have proven to be more equitable. The means of representing female and male characters in children's books seem to have gradually improved. The girl-child is associated with generic terms known as females. The main emphasis of Grauerholz and Pescosoli is on the use of illustrations, titles, main characters. Also, the emphasis on the illustration of male and female animals as central characters. In another instance, Gooden and Gooden support the fact that there are some fair and gradual non-traditional characteristics/qualities ascribed to the girl-child character(s) in children's literature. Gooden and Gooden in West (2014:11) focus on analysing aspects of illustrations and activities of prominent writers. They sampled 83 books listed as picture books on the American Library Association's (ALA) lists of Notable Children's books. Results suggest more equitable distributions featuring male and females, 1:2:1. Furthermore, their studies on Caldecott winners conclude that these books define gender roles as roles that society teaches are "correct" for boys and girls.

Furthermore, Gooden and Gooden (2001:91) hypothesise that, in modern times, other researchers report an increase in female (girl-child inclusive) representation as main characters in proportion to male (boy-child) characters. Gooden and Gooden reveal that in projecting the girl-child as the central character, they found out that from 1995 to 1999, there is a gradual step towards equality with an increase in the number of women and females as the main character. Hence, one can construe that Gooden and Gooden focus on the general terms which include women and females; rather than the girl-child which the children's books need to capture. They illustrated that the children's literature displays traditional or non-traditional qualities. Gooden and Gooden prove that there are progressive changes in ascribing non-traditional role(s) to the

girl-child. Despite these changes, the boy-child character dominates children literary scene. Similarly, Mathuvi (2012:33) considers

> A study done in 2003 took a look back at the progressive change in the picturization of gender in award-wining picture books for children. The authors concluded that books from the late 1940s and the late 1960s had fewer visible female characters than those from the late 1930s and late 1950s, but that characters in the 1940s and 1960s were less gender stereotyped than the characters from the 1930s and 1950s. The results were interpreted as having a direct correlation with the level of conflict over gender roles during each time period.

In a progressive light, in 2006 Hamilton et.al (2005:145) conducted a 21st century update on gender stereotyping and underrepresentation of female characters in 200 popular children's books. Results show that female characters in picture books are nearly twice as many male characters. Male characters appeared more often in illustrations; while female characters were showcased nurturing dolls and are constantly indoors compared to male characters. Thus, occupations in children's literature were gender stereotyped.

Ghasemi (2014:44) recognises that till date, the girl-child is still projected with stereotypical terms and image(s).

> Recent studies of children's story books have continued to reveal gender stereotypes and inequality in both texts and illustrations of such books (Diekman and Murnen 2004, Anderson and Hamilton, 2005; Hamilton *et al* 2006; Fitzpatrick and Mcpherson 2010; McCabe *et.al* 2011). For instance, Hamilton *et al.* examined 200 popular top selling children picture books published from 2001 to 2006. They found that male characters were present in illustrations and titles 53% more often than female characters (2006). In their study, McCabe *et al.* observed that disparity in the representations of genders have diminished over time, but subtle stereotypes and disparities still exist (2011). They found that, for instance, boys appear as central characters in 26.4% of books, while girls are cast as central characters in 19% of books.

The findings of Grauerholz and Pescosoli, Gooden and Gooden observations, Hamilton et.al arguments, and Ghasemi position have proven that there are relative improvements from the ratio; in the projection of the girl-child in children's literature. They discovered and attested to

the fact that there is a gradual shift, to a more equitable representation of female (girl-child) character in illustrations, titles and characterisations in children's literature. Grauerholz and Pescosoli's examinations show the disparities in children's literature. The results show some curvilinear trend in the ratios of male to female/ boy-child to girl-child in titles. The increase trend in the ratio is shown in the central character roles with a gradual equitable distribution. Ghasemi points out that there are gradual blurring of the lines that demarcate the traditional and modern projection of female characters (including the girl-child). Still, the girl-child among other female characters suffer constant portrait of stereotypical roles, unequal treatment and marginalisation in children's literature.

Most of the critics reviewed in the course of this research, give a general projection of the girl-child alongside other female folks. These critics fail to examine the projection of the girl-child based on multicultural perspective such as different races and ethnicities in children's literature. Emphasis is therefore based on the use of titles, characterisation and illustrations/ pictures. Some of these critics give a general picture of the female characters, while some attempt to single out the projection of the girl-child among other female characters in children's literature. This action of separating the girl-child from older women is not in its entirety. Weitzman et.al, Grauerholz and Pescosoli, Gooden and Gooden, Ghasemi and Hamilton's et.al failure, to carry out their experiments and observations beyond the projection of the girl-child character and role in other multicultural children's literature such as Nigeria necessitates this research.

2.1.5 Projection of the Girl-child in the Nigerian Children's Literature

In Nigeria, children's literature tends to battle with a negative picture of the girl-child like the rest of the world. There seem to be poor records, improper codifications and documentations

on the projection of the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature. Despite that, an attempt has been made by Fayose to give a glimpse of how Nigerian children's literature have depicted the girl-child in the past. Fayose (2016:1):

> There is a sizeable number of children story books by Nigerian authors. Fayose, who compiled a bibliography of children's book published in Nigeria since 1960 for the Nigerian Book Development Council, said in 1986 that she had listed over three hundred titles, many of which were prose fiction. The authors fall into two categories, namely those who rare established novelists but who also writes children's prose fiction, like Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi and Onuora Nzekwu, and those who write exclusively for children, like Kola Onadipe, Christie Ade Ajayi and Kemi Morgan. Some children prose fiction are modern stories like Nzekwu's *Eze Goes to School* (1963) and Christie Ade Ajayi's Me, *Our Naughty Little Brother*. They are stories about children everyday experiences at home and at school put in contexts which they can easily empathise with. The majority of the stories are, however, folktales straight from a traditional culture with slight modifications or are work with a modern setting and more contemporary characters. Such as Kemi Morgan's *How Tortoise Captured the Elephant* (1966), Ekwensi's The Boa Su/to/- (1966) Iroaganachi's *The Sunbird Drum* (1977) and Kola Onadipe's *The Magi Land of the Shadows* (1970). These stories are often set in spirit-land with the supernatural as the prevailing ethos.

Using these texts above, Fayose analyses the projection of the girl-child character in the Nigerian children's texts published in the mid-1980s to the 1990s. Invariably, the presentation of the girl-child in the title of books, illustrations and characters in Nigerian children's literature are biased and silent. During this period, more attention was focused on the male-child, animals and nameless central characters.

Haruna-Banke (2005:2) acknowledges that children's literature reflects issues that border on gender roles. In Haruna-Banke's M.A. dissertation titled; "Gender stereotypes and children's literature in Nigeria". Haruna-Banke examines how children's literature is used to perpetuate gender imbalances. According to Haruna-Banke (2005:10);

> …Children's literature in Nigeria is gender biased and displays imbalances in the representation of textual characters which implicitly gives children messages of what their gender roles are, and gives limitations to what they are capable of.

From the above, it could be argued that Haruna-Banke's major argument is on how characters in Nigerian children's literature are portrayed either stereotypically or unequally. Haruna-Banke is of the view that Nigerian children's literature engages children in stories that display gender biases and imbalances. Haruna-Banke's position seems to be filled with certainties that the projection of one gender over the other, in children's literature is damaging and causes set back. This suggests that Haruna-Banke projects that the use of some techniques in Nigerian children's literature such as characterisation, diction and content may portray the females poorly. To Haruna-Banke, these may influences children adversely. Adams and Laurikietis (1976) sited in Shafii (2015:23) support Haruna-Banke's view by revealing other clichéd characterization that is assigned to women and girls. These roles include maidens and princess who usually must wait passively for a prince to save them and elevate the status of these girls and women. Adam and Laurikietis posit that females are portrayed as docile and incapable of fending for themselves. To this end, Adam and Laurikieti's examine the role characterisation plays in the subjugation of women. In doing this, however, these critics fail to discuss issues that border on the girl-child in novel dimension. While Haruna-Banke solely postulates the effect of the use of negative projection of the women and girl-child character on the child-reader.

Staging of the girl-child character in Nigerian children's literature is relative because the majority of children's writers are females. According to Ashimole in Eemeyonu et.al (1992:78-79):

> The characterization of female figures in Children's books remains the dismissal victim of our national male chauvinistic outlook…we are all the more intrigued by the fact that most Nigerian female writers of repute have at one point or the other written, if not exclusively, for children-Nwapa, Emecheta, Okoye, Nwakoby, Acholonu, Meniru, Onu is therefore at a loss charging female writers of male chauvinism!! It would appear, however, that these writers have internalised societal (male dominated) expectations of African womanhood and as

> a result cannot break the mould of convention. For how else can one justify the sexual stereotyping which is detrimental to the female gender? Paradoxically, these images are conjured by women who themselves are achievers often shouting themselves hoarse about the so called new woman. Thus we have the defeated, hopeless woman. Pictorials, even more forcefully, reinforce these stereotypes.

This quotation presupposes that the girl-child figure like other females in children's literature, is a victim of marginalisation in a male dominated Nigerian society. Majority of the writers of children literature are presumed women. These women who are supposed to be frontiers and champions of the projection of the girl-child in a positive light have contributed in devaluing and relegating the girl-child to the background. The girl-child is pictured as victim and stereotype negatively. They have succeeded in imbibing and internalising the male dominated (patriarchal) syndrome into their works. Thus, some of these writers could not break away from the convention of the Nigerian society.

Paraphrasing Segun in Eling (2001: xii) the representation of women in Nigeria writing, especially by men, lack a basic understanding of the complexity of the problem of sexist oppression. She believes writers should deconstruct gender and the social paradigms that support it, reading beyond adult literature to literature written for children and young people. Segun infers that the representation of women (include girl-child) is in tune with the problem of sexist oppression. Segun believes writers of children's literature should also deconstruct gender and society paradigms on sexism. No wonder, Kolawole (1998:228) notes that male writers in Nigeria present the girl-child as tragic heroines among other females. The girl-child is unable to speak their subaltern position. Bamgbose (2010:108) further explains that:

> The female gender often experiences inhumane acts such as girl-child discrimination, forced marriage, retention of a girl in her paternal family for procreation, widowhood practices, genital mutilation, rape and sexual abuse, wife battering, lack of right to inheritance, leadership discrimination, physical abuse, purdah, marginalisation in education and employment opportunities etc.

Bamgbose explains that female gender such as the girl-child is faced with inhuman treatment, discrimination, forced marriage, restriction, rape, abuse and disregarded in private and public life. These actions and treatments towards the girl-child in the real world are ascribed in to the Nigerian children's literature. Ezeigbo (1999:26) attests to the foregrounding by buttressing the fact that the African (Nigerian inclusive) perception of gender issues have resulted in the perpetuation of female self-effacement and self-erasure which have insidiously demeaned womanhood for a long time. The assertion by Ezeigbo invariably affects the projection of the girl-child in children's literature, thus relegating her to the background.

Opara in Bamgbose (2010:95) observes that even in matriarchal cultures, women are not excluded from the lashes of oppression. Female-gender such as the girl-child is faced with discriminations and forceful marriage. They are also perceived as an object of procreation. They undergo genital mutilations, sexual abuse and battering. Other descriptions of the girl-child display that she has no right to inheritance, political power both at home and in the public arena. The girl-child is being marginalised in her choice of education and employment career. In presenting issues that confront the girl-child, Bamgbose and Opara show that the girl-child is faced with multiple issues that tend to render her as inferior, subjugated, abused, marginalised and oppressed in the patriarchal and matriarchal world.

The import of male chauvinism, patriarchal system, culture and tradition are explored in the projection of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. These aforementioned further contribute to crippling means of projecting the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature. Owomoyela (2001:275) posits that there are familiar traditional misogyny that engenderss subordination of women (and the girl-child). Like the preference of male babies to female ones, the exchange of daughters as mere commodities for the aggrandizement of their (male) parents

and exclusion of female offspring from inheritance. She adds that the exploitation of women (girl-child inclusive) continues even after marriage, in that they act as suppliers of labour in a male dominated economy. This domination syndrome is established in religious, economic, biology and linguistic sphere for the sole purpose of demonstrating male superiority and deemed female inferiority.

Observations made by Segun Mabel, Kolawole, Bamgbose and Ezeigbo, support the fact that there exist stereotypical projections of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. Their observations, posit that the display of the girl-child character in Nigerian children's literature is linked to the socio-cultural, economic, political system of the Nigeria society. Often times, issues relating to the girl-child are treated alongside other females or women in children's literature. Hence, the concern of this research deals with peculiar issues that concern the girl-child as an individual entity.

2.1.6 Criticism of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun's Works on the Girl-child.

Consequently, writers of the Nigerian children's literature such as Akachi, Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun have resorted to new dimensions in projecting the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature. These dimensions as argued by Singh (2009:2) predisposes children not to question existing social relationships. At the same time, however, books containing images that conflict with gender stereotypes provide children the opportunity to re-examine their gender beliefs and assumptions. Bassey and Eton (2012:48) submit that Segun Mabel, for example, has challenged African women into balancing the image that emerges of women in African literature. This argument contributes to the fact that Segun Mabel as an adult and children's literature writer challenges literary writers especially women to strike a balance in

the projection of female folks as well as the girl-child in African literature. This African literature includes Nigerian children's literature.

Ezenwanebe (2015:273) approves Ezeigbo's children's literature because Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi has always concentrated more on the different tactics open to women to negotiate and surmount domination, and enslavement with the elaboration of oppression. Ezenwanebe's position is true because these new tactics and negotiations are projected in thi research. They are needed to surmount domination, enslavement and oppression of the girl-child in the Nigerian children's. Also, Osofisan (2004:39) opines that despite her (Ezeigbo) being vociferous in insisting on the empowerment of women in her condemnation of their marginalisation in a male dominated society, she is not for all that an inconoclast or phalophobist. She protests and denounces, but her goal is negotiation, compromise, and reconciliation. In a similar vein, Adimora-Ezeigbo in an interview with Oluigbo in Oloruntoba-Oju and Oloruntoba-Oju (2013: 2) explains her compromise and negotiation in projecting her female characters (which include the girl-child):

> [My] female characters are not usually combative, but of course they are highly principled characters who know what they want and how to go about it […] My women are strong and very resilient; they are not weaklings, but their strength is not in violence or confrontation but in being principled and self-controlled, in collaborating with other people around them. But of course, if this collaboration brings about confrontation, they will move away and chart out their own survival.

Genrally, Adimora-Ezeigbo focuses on female characters. The girl-child is not left out in compromising, negotiating her way in another dimension to air her views. This is imitated in some of Adimora-Ezeigbo's books such as The *prize, Seyi's Strong Voice, My Little Cousin Sammy, Asa and the Little Stream,* etc. The girl-child characters are highly principled figures, most of them know what they want and how to go about it. They are strong, resilient but do not use violence or confrontations. They have self-control with the support of the people and

characters around them. Adimora-Ezeigbo devises means of making the girl-child walk away when there is/ are any form(s) of confrontations. This will enable the girl-child to survive, air her views, dreams, roles and aspirations etc.

Nwaiwu (2011:42) examines Ezeigbo's works and comes out with a conclusion that:

> Ezeigbo's works are sociological in nature because they deal with the impact of economic and social conditions of a period of characters and events. The novels concern themselves with the culture of her people and their way of life. Above all the social transformations in a particular environment are of great interest

Nwaiwu notes that Ezeigbo's works which include children's literature reflect issues in the Nigerian society. These issues range from economic, social interaction of characters to actual events (such as the projection of the girl-child) in the Nigerian society. These characters and events are seen in the literary world which is mirrored to the young. Most of the works written by Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi are products of her socio-cultural background. In her children's literature, she seems to channel these experiences to project the girl-child in the Nigerian set up. Ezenwanebe in Oloko (2008:270) deduce from a paper presented at a conference thus:

> She bemoans the fact that the marginalisation of the girl-child has found its way into imaginative writing literature for children, thereby subtly preserving and transmitting the obnoxious myths about women as vicious and ignoble in nature so as to sustain their suppression. Ezeigbo sets out to offset the imbalance by giving prominence to the girl-child as protagonists for her captivating stories. She creates strong, assertive, brave and intelligent girls who boldly face the monstrous challenges set up before them, grapples with them defiantly and surmounts them in the end. They are set up as models of womanhood for girls.

Ezenwanebe argues that Ezeigbo acknowledges that the girl-child is being marginalised. To Ezenwanebe, Ezeigbo tries to find ways through her imaginative writings for children to rewrite the imbalanced projection of the girl-child. She did this by portraying the girl-child as a protagonist, strong, brave, clever, and intelligent. The girl-child is presented to be able to confront and overcome challenges. This, in turn, serves as a role model for the girl-child reader.

Furthermore, Ezenwanebe (2008:269):

> Adimora-Ezeigbo is interested in the education of the young. As a teacher, she believes that formal education is indispensable for a successful adult life. She is particularly concerned with the education of the girl-child. Of the … protagonists who struggle to continue their education,…girls and the obstacles are neither personal nor psychological, but man-made, deliberately meant to supress and marginalise women. As a feminist, Adimora-Ezeigbo could not close her eyes to such injustice. Adimora-Ezeigbo is an apostle of gender complementarity, her emphasis on the education of the girl-child is one of the ways she hopes to achieve it in society. …most of Ezeigbo's writing for children can be seen as a response to Glory Kilanko's call on Nigerian writers, educationists and leaders to: educate women (girls) and prepare them for equal opportunities in all spheres of life; to get women out of the service sector into the hard core profession, to eliminate illiteracy among women; and to purge them of inferiority complex, self-doubt and insecurity (Kilanko, 1990:46)

Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi is not only concerned with the formal education of the girl-child. She creates equal opportunities in other spheres of life such as professionalism, eliminates illiteracy and makes the girl-child superior like their male counterparts. She is also interested in the girl-child's character formation and moral training. Adimora-Ezeigbo tries to inculcate good and acceptable morals, character and attitude in the child reader through children's literature. Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi in projecting the girl-child extols virtues of obedience, hard work, courage, determination, resourceful and selflessness. She objects to stubbornness, pride, greed, disobedience and other forms of oppression. The girl-child is presented to be able to overcome the patriarchal obstacles and at the same time have respect for its existing structure.

Another writer of Nigerian children's literature known as Segun Mabel is also concerned with the projection of girl-child in children's literature. Segun Mabel uses autobiographical techniques in some of her stories. She relays stories concerning her upbringing in a certain time in the history of Nigeria. Segun Mabel tries to formulate ideas about what life is worth to the girl-child in a society that is undergoing a change from an animist past. Aiyejina (1998:156-157) posits that:

> Mabel Segun as a writer and promoter of Children's literature is concerned with the recreational and educational value of books in the development of children intellectually, emotionally and culturally…in her autobiographical reader for children, *My Father's Daughter* (1965), she captures the essence of life in a small, rural society at the transitional stage between an animist past and a technological future. Unlike most of the works set in transitional African societies, however, the emphasis in *My Father's Daughter* is not the stock-in-trade culture-clash. Even though she presents evidence of the incursion of Western religious belief and habits, her main focus is on the balance which the community strives to achieve between man and nature, between man and man, regardless of differences in religious or cultural beliefs, and between parents and their offspring.

Segun Mabel's autobiographical books for children such as *My Father's Daughter*, *My Mother's Daughter* project life in an urban-cum country area of the Nigerian society. The life Segun Mabel projects is gradually changing evolving. She projects the clash of culture and religion through the inclusion of western religious beliefs and habits. The use of aesthetics of oral tradition forms part of the texts motifs. She projects balances or otherwise between man and nature, human interaction and relationship between parents and their children (these include the girl-child).

Martini (1997:224-225) posits that:

> The childhood that Mabel Segun cared to present to the reader was as selective as childhoods presented in autobiographies for adults. In contrast to those autobiographies, Segun's work is not really told as the exemplification of an early stage in the development of a now famous person. It is also not told as an example of a feminist approach to writing autobiography, gender conscious in the mode of writing, the subject-matter and implied reader. As an adult autobiography-the story line would be too simple, the plot structure too conventional the distancing too little and too obvious…Segun's first autobiographical book is highly devices, in that it draws in the child-reader without neglecting the adult co-reader.

Martini's assertion may not be totally true because, in recent times, children's literature also includes the sub-genre of autobiographies. Even if Mabel's stories are selective childhood experiences, it is an example of an early stage in the development of a girl-child who is now famous in the Nigerian history. This research opposes Martini's assertion about the feminist approach to writing an autobiography and gender consciousness. The feminist techniques such as

their mode of writing can be applicable to Segun Mabel's texts - *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*. This is necessitated inorder to bring to the fore the girl-child (gender) consciousness in a new light. Segun Mabel uses creative devices such as simple story-lines to draw the child reader's attention to the girl-child without neglecting them.

Critics and writers of children's literature such as Gooden and Gooden, Segun Mabel, Kolawole, Bamgbose, Adimora-Ezeigbo, Singh, Oluigbo to mention a few, have shown that the projection of the girl-child in children's literature is saddled with underrepresentation and inequalities. This research spots some lapses in the course of reviewing works of some of these critics and writers under study. This research picks interest in the projection of the girl-child as an individual entity in the Nigerian children's literature rather than being portrayed alongside adult females. Furthermore, it attempts to show new ways in which the girl-child as an individual is reintegrated, through her struggles to live off her stereotypes in a patriarchal Nigerian society; using its children's literature. In addition, the research tries to divulge that in one way or the other, emerging writers and critics of Nigerian children's literature have turned their pivot search for new and constructive ways to rewrite the image of the girl-child. These new ways are seen in the changing gender motifs of Nigerian children's literature which most writers are silent about.

In the course of this research, an attempt is made to provide the projection of the girl-child from the Nigerian multicultural perspective; as illustrated in Nigeria children's literature. In doing this, the research takes into cognisance factors and issues that influence or affect the girl-child's image. This could be made successful through a mixture of facts and realities, morals and fantasies. These serve as means of instruction and sensitization about the new image of the girl-child. Finally, this research attempts to use liberal Feminists theory as an analytical tool to interpret, rewrite, and derive meaning from the representation and image(s) of the girl-child.

Rather than just focusing solely on general moral benefits derived from reading of Nigerian children's literature.

These reviews have direct or indirect contributions to knowledge because this research shows that there exist changes in the depiction of the girl-child in children's literature. This means that the traditional and modern displays of girls in the Nigerian children's literature are influenced by changing epoch in the Nigerian society. These include evolvements and changes from the traditional way of life to the technological and modern age. This may enable the girl-child to meet up with the social, political and economic challenges in the society. In another instance, the projection of the girl-child in a stereotypical manner may have a negative influence on the psychology, attitude and self-esteem of the child-reader. This research is important to knowledge because it propels an alternative reading to the projection of the girl-child in children's literature. It promotes positive role models to the child-reader. Also, children literature which projects the girl-child in the traditional or alternative medium contributes to building up of a child mental knowledge. This is carried out through what the child-reader sees and reads. Children's literature is an important tool or instrument that helps to prepare or shape children lives from childhood into adulthood. It is a vital instrument that influences children's identity and development.

A major discovery in the course of summarizing critical materials that relate to this study, is that a good number of the controversial books are award winning books. These books have proven to be standards or classics as far as aiding the projection of the girl-child in children's literature is concerned. Some researchers have acknowledged that children's books in the past project stereotyped and underrepresented the girl-child. Others, in recent times, reflect a more positive projection of the girl-child in an alternative mode. Authors and Publishers seem to create

awareness of issues that border on the girl-child. These publishers and authors are on the verge of eliminating the girl-child stereotype and are gradually moving towards a more balanced girl-child representation in children's literature. Some disagree that there is no accurate account of how extensive the improvement has been in other areas such as Nigeria. From all review under study, it is discovered that issues relating to the projection of the girl-child (ren) are not treated as a single entity but sometimes fused with older female or women characters. In the light of this, this research is set out to examine how Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi and Segun, Mabel as writers of Nigerian children's literature have projected issues relating to the girl-child in their literature. In addition, this research is set out to show how their books have affected and still affect the development of the child-reader's perception about gender roles in Nigeria. Furthermore, this research is carried out, in order to make the Nigerian girl-child find her environment, setting and characters reflective in the story line which gives impetus to this dissertation.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Sawnson (2013:1) defines a theoretical framework as the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. Theoretical framework can be seen as a set of principles, significations and account that apply the methodological tool, in reading, analysing, interpreting, derive meaning, and evaluating action(s), style(s) and technique(s) of a produced literary work. This methodological tool gives a deeper meaning to the text. This is why Liberal Feminist theory is used as an analytical framework for this research. Appropriating liberal feminist theory into children's literature questions texts underlying assumptions that projects the girl-child.

Liberal feminists theory preference to issues of the girl-child is most likely to make the researcher and child-reader aware of the girl-child complexities. These are revealed through the analytical discourse of the girl-child's interaction with others characters in the Nigerian children's literature. Hence, it is pertinent to know what liberal feminists theory entails, so as to give more insight into the ideology of liberal feminist theory.

2.2.1 Background Context of Feminist Theory

Feminist theory can be regarded as an extension of feminism into literary, philosophical or theoretical fields. It encapsulates works in different disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, economics, literary criticism, art, history, mass media, sociology, women writings and studies, philosophy and psychoanalysis. This theory aims at understanding and presenting gender inequality, gender politics, power relationship and sexuality. Feminist theory is believed to focus more on the promotion of the girl-child and women's rights and interests. Themes explored in Feminist theory include stereotypes, discriminations, sexual objectifications, patriarchy and oppression.

Stanley and Wise (1983:55) posit that Feminist understanding relies on theoretical constructions about the nature of women's oppression and the part that this oppression plays within social reality more generally. Stanley and Wise's position project that feminist theory is anchored on the role of oppression in literature and reality. Feminist world view sensitises and celebrates the diversity of girl-child and women strengths. Chinn and Wheeler (1985:76) explain the characteristics of feminist research thus: a feminist perspective does not seek to romanticise or idealise these women, but rather to develop insight that allows us to appreciate their struggles, understand their limitations and see their joys and their pains as similar to ours. Different strands of Feminist theories have different worldviews about the oppression of the girl-child and women.

They are bound to a common goal of appreciating the women struggles in general, exposing their joy and pains.

Feminists promote different ways of justice and new possibilities in the literary world and reality. Speedy (1991:191) claims that a woman-centred approach is fundamental to Feminist research, with the aim of illuminating the life context and experiences of women, grounded by their frame of reference, experiences and language. These content and experience could be common oppression faced by a girl-child and women folks. These include struggles and strengths in the course of liberation, causes and forces of women subjugation, oppression and challenges of the forces. Maguire (1996:108) argues that the intent of feminist principle is to encourage women to take action to develop new structures or reshape existing forces so that women can 'live out new ways of being in a relationship with the world. Maguire's argument can be applicable to the portrayal of the girl-child in children's literature. It enables the child reader take action, develop a new structure or reshape existing ones and create new ways of interacting with the world around them.

Feminist and different scholars have divided this movement's history into three "waves". These include: the first wave (who are mainly concerned with women's right to vote), the second wave feminist (who are concerned about legal and social rights for women) and the third wave (which seeks to challenge or avoid what the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity and tries to de-emphasise the experiences of upper middle class white women).

Over the years, several sub movements of feminist ideology have developed. These moments overlap with different types of feminist thoughts and names. The Europeans perspective of feminist include Liberal Feminist, Radical, Socialist, Marxist, the Anarcha-Feminist, Eco-Feminism, Individualist, Libratarian, Post-structural, Post-modern, Multiracial.

While others include: Black Feminism, Womanism, Africana womanism, Motherism, Stiwanism, Snail feminism, Negofeminism, Chicanafeminism and Femalism. These theories attempt to bring about progressive changes in the interest of the girl-child and women. Feminist theory provides a framework by which differences in gender and cultural practise may be incorporated into children's literature. This research takes a liberal feminist standpoint in projecting the girl-child in the Nigerian children's literature.

2.2.2 Feminist Theory and Children's Literature

There are good reasons for appropriating liberal feminist theory to children's literature. One of such reasons is that it interprets children's literature through feminist lens. To Hunt (2005:114),

> Both women's literature and children's literature are devalued and reared as marginal or peripheral by the literary and educational communities. Many of feminism battles are over, but their concern with re-interpreting texts, reclaiming devalued texts; and redirecting Feminist theory to provide a 'welcoming climate for texts by people marginalised by patriarchal colonial societies'.

Hunt explains that children's literature and Women's literature have some similarities. Both kinds of literature deal with an aspect of the girl-child and women being marginalised, degraded, devalued and relegated. These pave way for feminist ideas to be found in the structure of children's literature.

Hook (2000: vii) states her belief that all types of media, including writing and children's books, need to promote feminist ideals. She argues that children's literature is one of the most crucial sites being formed. Feminism has an influence on what the child reads, how it is interpreted and values derived from it. The issue of the girl-child is saddled with the unresolved

problem(s) of equity despite different kinds of literature trying to address them. Feminist theory in children's literature helps children with intellectual understanding and insist on the right projection of girl-child. According to Hunt (2005:116-117):

> They searched for a feminine tradition of 'other' stories: mother, daughter, sister stories (Chodorow (1978), Hirsch (1989)); a preference for survival tactics over honour (Gilligan(1982)); a search for a 'both/and' feminine plot rather than an 'either/or' oedipal plot (Hirch); a preference for multiplicity, plurality, jouissance and valuing of pro-creations, re-creations and beginnings (Cixous (1991), Gallop, Rich); a questioning of rigid male/female gender distinctions (Butler); and an insistence women not white or Anglophone have a voice too (hooks(1992), Spivak. Feminist Children's literature critics also participate in this recovery of a female literary tradition (Clark, Kidd (2000), Myers (1986, 1987, 1991), pace, Paul (1987/1990, 1998), Trites, Vallone (1990, 1991) and Zipes among others).

Hunt believes that feminist theory inclusion in children's literature has widened the girl-child representation to be more than the mother/daughter or father/daughter relations. Feminist theory includes gender politics, reception, translations in the use of language, themes, illustrations, characterisations and so on. These contribute to boosting children's imagination and recreate or re-define power in unpatriarchal terms. Writers of children's literature try to recreate and re-write partly against the rules and are seen as revolutionary. Feminists mould deliberately hero (es) from a visible minority by creating Feminist pro-creative and re-creative hero through the image and projection of the girl-child.

On the whole, feminist inclusion in children's literature seeks to reconstruct gender patterns of childhood reading and ideological constructions of the girl-child. Liberal feminists try to place both genders (boy/girl-child) on equal representation by emphasising adventure, power, honour and public success. For the purpose of this research, special attention is placed on liberal feminist theory as an analytical tool.

2.2.3 History of Liberal Feminist Theory

Liberal feminists draw their world view and ideologies from the Liberals. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2013:1) states that liberals hold that freedom is a fundamental value and that the just state ensures freedom for individuals. To Okin (1989:89), Liberal Feminism is part of, and thus finds its roots in, the larger tradition of Liberal political philosophy, thus we see much Liberal Feminist work inspired by Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill and John Rawls who are figures in this tradition. Generally, Liberal feminism shares the Feminist philosophy that is concern with the understanding of "gender system". Liberal Feminists share these views, and insist on freedom for the girl-child and women. There are two basic kinds of Liberal Feminism. The first is called Liberal feminism which deals with philosophical literature while the second is known as Classical-Liberal feminism or Libertarian feminism that promulgates freedom from coercive interference.

Liberal feminism is an individualistic form of Feminist theory, which focuses on women's ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. According to http://media.scc.losrios.edu/pitmang/MajorFeministTheories.doc(2016:1), Liberal feminist theory arose from social contract theories of the 16^{th} and 17^{th} centuries. It is based on the values of rationality and reason, liberty, and equality. Liberal feminist came into limelight in the U.S. in 1920. Women faced many gender inequalities in the 1960s because society dictated their stereotypical roles as housewives and other domestic roles such as cooking and cleaning. Victims of the belief system focused on finding meaning through husbands, children and lot more. During this epoch, the writing of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* gives a gradual change in gender stereotypical outlook in line with the civil rights movement.

Liberal feminists drew parallels between systemic race discrimination and sex discrimination. Groups such as the National Organization for Women, the National Women's Political Caucus, and the Women's Equity Action League were all created at that time to further develop women and the girl-child's rights in the U.S. These groups have worked for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment or "Constitutional Equity Amendment". Liberal feminists have the belief that ensures that men/boys and women/girls are treated as equals. Feminists focus their agitations on some numbers of issues. They include reproduction, equality, personal autonomy, education, equal pay issues, constitutional protection, voting, equal jobs, etc. In the light of these, it is paramount to know some of the proponents of the liberal feminist theory that have contributed immensely to this feminist strand. This is as a result of their contributory tenents that is used to explore this research.

2.2.4 Proponents of Liberal Feminist Theory

Popular Feminist writers associated with this theory include Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor, Harriet Tubman, Helen Taylor. Also, Second Wave Feminists Betty Friedan, Naomi Wolf, Martha Nussbaum, and Gloria Steinem. Others include the Third Wave Feminist Rebecca Walker among others. For the purpose of this research, few of these proponents of liberal feminist theorists are discussed because of time and space. These include Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Betty Friedan, and Martha Nussbaum.

Mary Wollstonecraft is considered one of the proponents of liberal feminist theory. She is a founding mother of feminism. Her famous work is *A Vindication of the Right of Women* (1972) is widely viewed as the first Feminist treatise. She wrote in the classical liberal tradition which

promoted individual rights, especially against the restrictions of political power. Wollstonecraft's primary concern is the rights and status of women against the claim of society and law. In her work, *Thought on the Education of Daughters* (1787), she rejects the traditional method of teaching girls and women who are by nature moral and intellectually equals of the men. She argued for an end to social prejudice against women and girls. In *A Vindication of the Right of Women* (1972), she argues that morality and stability in the public require respect for women, as well as private life. Wollstonecraft assertion is used as the subject of analysis in selected works of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun.

Another proponent of the liberal feminist theory is John Stuart Mill. Though a male, his contribution to this theory is immeasurable. To Szapuove (2006:180)

> John Stuart Mill can be considered as one of the very few exceptions to the androcentric character of Western philosophy, one who stands out from a long tradition that tended more to devalue and marginalise women and issues concerning relations between the sexes, or to keep silent about them, than to develop philosophical ideas and expectations regarding women's subordination and consider gender issues based on the principle of the equality of women and men.

Among the issues raised by Mill are women's rights, women's suffrage and equal access to education for women and girl-child are the most emphasised. He is a strong critic of patriarchy. In *The Subjection of Women* Mill as stated by Eisentein (1984:114) discusses the situation of an

intelligent woman confined by patriarchal institutions and customs that deny her individuality. Mill (1984:261) formulates that:

> [T]he principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes-the legal subordination of one sex to the other-is wrong in itself and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and […] ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power to or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.

Mill believes that any inequality presents a serious barrier to the advancement of an entire society and serves as obstacles to individual progress, improvement and prosperity. He backs equality for human improvement. Mill's sense of equality is described in selected works of Adimora-Ezeigbo and Segun Mabel used in this research.

In a similar vein, Friedan has also contributed significantly to liberal feminist theory. Friedan's liberal feminist goals founded the National Organisation for Women in 1966. Gardiner (2004:37) states that"

> Betty Friedan (1963) and the National Organisation for Women (founded in 1966) believed that changing laws and educating people against erroneous prejudices would remedy gender discrimination, giving women equal opportunities with men to exercise individual choices in life. They sought gender equity through changes in law and childhood socialization. They lobbied for equal treatment of boys and girls in school and wrote children books featuring cooperative boys as well as

resourceful girls. They welcome men into their organisations and encouraged women to enter previously male dominated occupations.

Friedan and her founded organisation are all inclusive, her notion is seen in reflection to the need to remedy the issue of gender discrimination such as boys/girls/man/woman. Her views tend to promote equality in all aspect starting from childhood. In promoting equality from childhood, she wrote children's books that promote equal and cooperative treatment of boys and girls. She believes in encouraging women and girls to enter into male dominated occupation to foster equality. Her socialisation policies indicate that girls and women are as capable as boys and men in any kind of career path. Friedan in her *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) criticises the idea that women and girls could only find fulfilment through marriage, homemaking and childbearing. Friedan's (1974:19) account centred on the suburban housewife with the "problem that has no name". She argues that early marriage and subsequent isolation deprive suburban women of the chance to fulfil their potentials. She also focuses on the plight of women who marry early and make the status of wife and mother as their whole identity.

Another proponent of the liberal feminist theory is Nussbaum (1999a:46) who proposes a profoundly liberal idea. Nussbaum proposes that the idea of the citizen as a free and dignified human being, a maker of choices, with belief that women have their right and choices at their disposal, that can make them autonomous. Nussbaum sensitizes women and men on the injustice of denying women the ability to function on equal grounds. She promotes shared values for both male and female. Nussbaum's idea is applicable to the girl-child. Nussbaum recommends that liberalism can provide the basis for a robust defence of gender equality as a vital point to the human right. Nussbaum (1999:63) attests to the fact that, the primacy of individual has much to

offer women, whose wellbeing are only too frequently sacrificed or subordinated, to the interest of family or the wider community and who have "too rarely been treated as an end in themselves, and too frequently treated as means to the end of others." Nussbaum believes that women (girl-child inclusive) in patriarchal societies have good grounds to distrust habit and tradition. "After all where the voice of tradition speaks, that voice is most often male". She argued that women (and girls) also have the capability to secure, personhood, autonomy, dignity and self-respect through equality.

From the works of Mill, Friedan, Nussbaum, and Wollstonecraft one can sum up that proponents of liberal feminism have common goals. These common goals are directed towards equality of girl-child and women folks in general. Their arguments point out that society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men. Thus this discriminates against girls and women in public and private sphere. Liberal feminists believe that female subordination is rooted in a set of policies, laws and systems constraint that stop women and girls from attaining success like their male counterpart. Their goals are based on gender equality in the public and private sphere through equal access to education, equal pay, ending job sex segregation, better working condition and promoting equality in traditionally male-dominated occupation. They propound that girls and women have same abilities, capacities, and right to the same opportunities as boys/men. They present important liberal feminist programs that have attempted to assure that women and other minority groups (as the girl-child) are not systematically disadvantaged. Liberal feminists wish to achieve gender equity by working within the system, rather than overthrowing the system.

2.2.5 Major Tenets of Liberal Feminist Theory

Major tenets of liberal feminist theory promote the girl-child and women's rights. These tenets give equal opportunities and treatment to women and the girl-child in private and public realm. There are other tenets that are pointed out by liberal feminist theorist but for the purpose of this research, the under listed tenets are used as analytical tools. These tents are sub divided for easy understanding and analysis.

❖ Personal Autonomy: is one of the tenets of liberal feminist. Liberal feminist believe in the ability of a girl-child to live a life of her own choosing. Also, free from violence or threat of violence because the liberal feminists are of the view that it violates the girl-child's dignity. According to Cudd (2006:85), the feminist literature frown against violence against women/ girl-child. Hence tends to document the particular role that violence and the threat of violence play in unfair disempowering and limiting women (and girl-child). Invariably this makes the girl-child do other people's bidding than theirs. McClain (2006:79) posits that liberal feminists hold that the state must protect and promote the development of an autonomous capacity in children especially girls. For example, they hold that child-marriage should be legally prohibited. A typical illustration is carried out in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and Segun Mabel's *Her Father's Daughter.*

Liberal feminists want the girl-child to be free from the limits set by patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic laws that restrict and limit girl-child options on the basis of her interest. That is why Chamber (2008:203) posits that patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic laws steer women into socially preferred ways of life. These are unfair restrictions on women's choice. On the liberal feminist view, women's choices should be guided by their own sense of their self-interest and by their own values. Okin (1989:97) opines that girls participation in families are, especially in the early years non voluntary. The family affects the development of

girls' sense of self-worth, as well as their preferences, and the capacities. Like the capacity for reflection and imagination, on which their ability to live lives of their own choosing depends. The liberal feminists believe that the act of limiting and restricting the girl-child is unfair. They believe the girl-child should make her own choices and be guided by her own sense of self-interest and values.

❖ Egalitarian society: Liberal feminists in their literature tend to uphold the tenets that the girl-child should be entitled to options. Alstott (2004:52) posits that women (as well as girl-child) are entitled to have access to options. Liberal feminist acknowledge that the access of the girl-child to options are unfairly restricted due to economic deprivation and poverty, stereotyping and sex discrimination in education and employment. Alstott's argument does not exclude the girl-child of a well off family. Cudd (2006:234) adds that liberal feminists also point to the way cultural homogeneity unfairly limits women's (girl-child) options- such as stereotyping and discrimination that affects race, ethnic and cultural groups. They believe in the ability of the girl-child to have her own preferences and outlook about life. Meyers (2002:168) buttresses that some liberal feminists emphasize the importance of internal, psychological enabling conditions as well, for example, the ability to assess one's own preferences and imagine life otherwise. This enables the girl-child to identify and promote autonomous enabling conditions and develop what Meyer (2002:168) refers to as "alternative emancipatory imagery" and fashion new ways of being a new woman and what Cuddon (2006:234) sees as a new kind of relationships through experiments in living.

Alstott (2004:113) writes that the egalitarian family is, even in principle, a troubling ideal. Strictly equal sharing seems unduly constraining, not merely because families today deviate from the idea but because free people might want to organise their lives differently. Okin

(1989:99-100) holds that liberal feminists are of the view that girls' interest in developing an autonomous capability requires that families be internally just, that is there should be an equal division of paid and unpaid labour between adults so that families are not characterised by "dependence and domination". Anderson (2009:13) explains that:

> In the face of such injustices, liberals counsel feminists to redirect their claims from the state to those promulgating such unreasonable concepts of the good, and to redirect their activism from a focus on state action to other domains, including civil society, churches and the family. I think this counsel is wise, which is why I am a Liberal Feminist.

Alstott, Okin and Anderson are of the view that, the liberal feminists project or reflect acts that are devoid of dominance and dependency. They are requisite to develop a sense of justice, and any literature contrary may grow girls and boys to believe that girls/women are not entitled to equal citizenship or projection in literature.

Okin adds that another way the state and literature may encourage such egalitarianism is through autonomy-promoting education, especially for girls. Liberal feminists emphasis on the need for access to education by the girl-child. McClain (2006:81) states that the liberal feminists are of the view that girls must receive a formal education free of sexist stereotyping. Llyod (1995:1332) posits that the liberal feminist preaches in their literature the act of ensuring that girls are prepared to be economically independent. This is typified in Ezeigbo's *The Prize and* Segun Mabel's *Her Mother's Daughter* and My *Father's Daughter.*

❖ Equality: Liberal feminists among other tenets champion the course of equality, fairness and justice. Radzik (2002:51) acknowledges that a relationship is fair or just if the benefits that flow from each to the other are on par, that is, if each gives as much as she gets. Invariably, when one has significantly more than the other gives, there seems to exist a denial of her legitimate entitlement to reciprocate. Liberal feminists project in their literature that personal relationships

in traditional heterosexual relationships are often unfair and exploitative to the girl-child and women. Liberal feminists in their literature seem to be more sensitive to avert injustice and device a way out in projecting equality through resourceful means. Cornell (1998: xii) opines that social equality (should be) redefined so as to serve as freedom. Cornell's view tends to make liberal feminists challenge ideas and practices that treat women (girl-child) as second class citizens while leaving relatively unchallenged other areas such as sexuality, reproduction and domestic labour. Liberal feminists want to ensure that boys and girls, men and women are treated as equals in the public and private sphere. Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Seyi's Strong Voice, The Prize* and Segun's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* capture these aforesaid qualities.

❖ The technique of writing: Liberal feminists in their literature device peaceful protest, affirmative action and anti-discriminative campaigns as a mode of airing their views. These techniques characterized works of the selected two authors (Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi and Segun Mabel).

Convincingly, liberal feminist thinking and theory have significantly drawn attention to the projection of the girl-child in children's literature. Liberal feminist theory as an ideology and an aesthetic principle is used in analysing creative works for children. This is because of their innovative attempt to relay and question the girl-child representation in children's literature. For the purpose of this research selected tenets of the liberal feminist theory are used as tools for analysis. These tenets include personal autonomy, egalitarian society, equality and promotion of liberal feminist techniques and style of writing. Part of the reasons why this theory is used as analytical tool is because it has a considerable preference for issues relating to the girl-child. This research uses liberal feminist theory to illustrate how Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun project the girl-child in new ways.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 PROJECTION OF THE GIRL-CHILD IN AKACHI ADIMORA-EZEIGBO'S *THE PRIZE* AND *SEYI'S STRONG VOICE*

3.1 Preamble

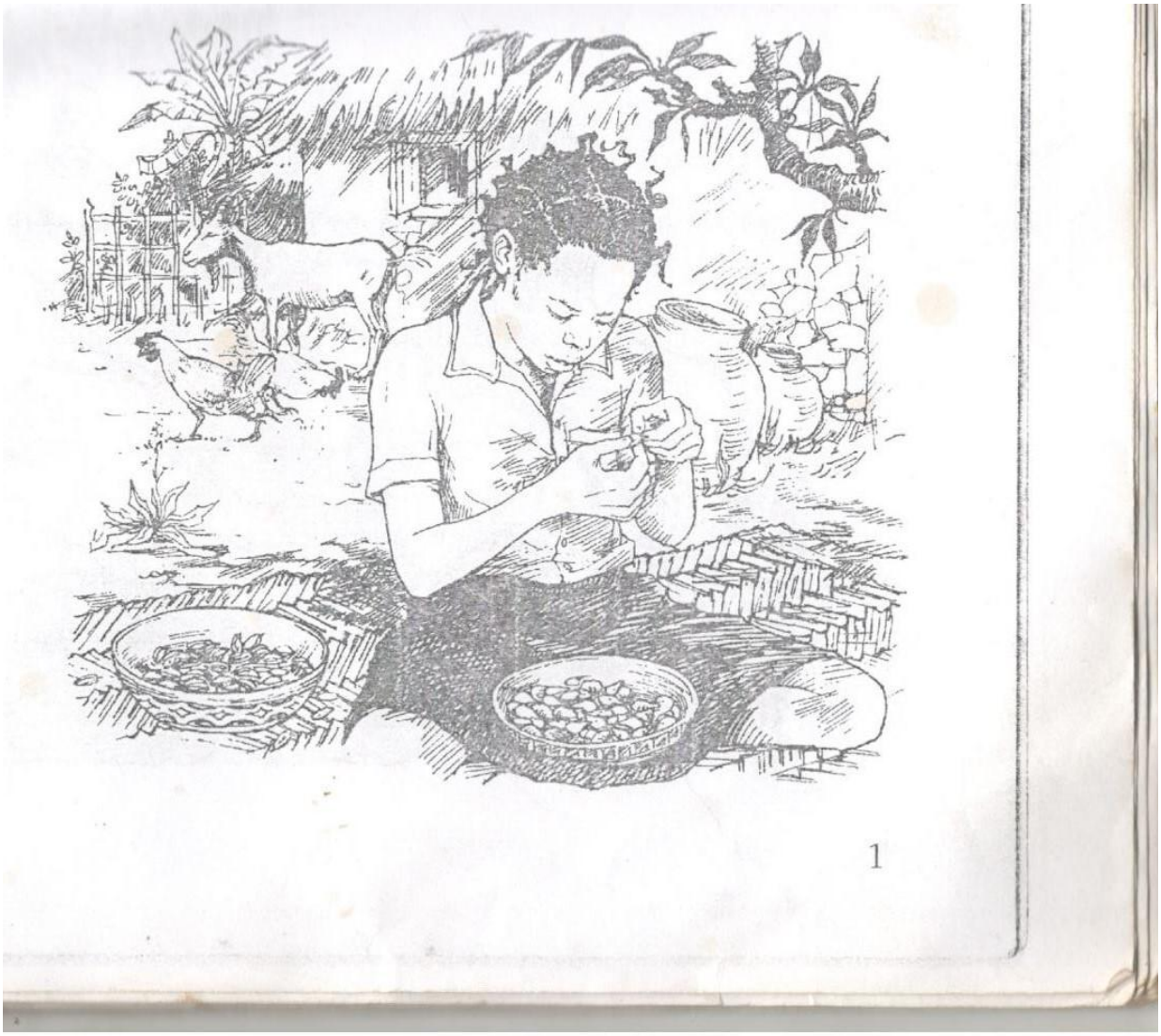
Traditionally, many Nigerian children's literature writers have used their writings to propagate the unequal projection of the girl-child. Some of these writers such as Achebe Chinua, Cyprian Ekwensi and others often project boy-child characters as heroes. While the girl-child characters are displayed as less important or mere observers, who cheer their male(s) achievements. Even in the twenty-first century where some girl-child(ren) try to achieve envious career, dreams and positions in public and private sphere, some writers still portray the girl-child in the traditional folktales era. Attempts have been made by writers like Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo to elevate the girl-child from being inadequately and marginally depicted in the Nigerian children's literary canon. Hence, the use of liberal feminist theory tenets (such as Personal Autonomy, Egalitarian Society, and Equality) as analytical tools to re-present the issues that concern the girl-child in the texts under study.

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's texts, *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice* are used to examine the projection of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. These aforementioned books have been chosen for study because of their interest in capturing vital issues related to the transformative image and roles of the 'new' girl-child in Nigerian children's literature.

3.2 Right to Personal Autonomy of the Girl-child in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice*

Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi uses the omniscient narrative point of view to examine peculiar issues relating to the girl-child in *The prize*. Her portrayal of the girl-child is captured in *The Prize* through the character of Onyema. There are numbers of visible and perceived imbalances because, from the first page of *The Prize*, it is deduced that the Onyema has limited freedom to do her will. Apparently, she is shown to be conditioned and controlled at home

compared to Ogbonnaya her twin brother (of the same age) who decides to play football in the field. This stipulates that Onyema's freedom to decide about her life is restricted. Page one (1) of Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* describes thus: "Onyema sat on a mat in front of her house. She was opening melon seeds for the evening meal. Her twin brother, Ogbonnaya, was in the village. He had gone to play football with his friends". (TP: 1). Her liberty to perform extra-curricular activities is hindered by the patriarchal preference and structure. This is captured in the ability to hinder Onyema from living a life of her choosing. This authorial voice reflects one of the stereotypical image of the girl-child in traditional style. Furthermore, the author intensifies the imbalances and restriction of the girl-child's independence through the use of picture on page one (1) to showcase the perceived lack of personal autonomy of Onyema. This picture is displayed below.



Picture I

Picture I serves the function of creating a setting. In conformity to this, it records a tradition Nigerian socio-cultural settings. It is use to establish the story's location in time and place. Looking closely at the picture, one can suggest that, the time of this action takes place in the evening. This picture is illustrative because, the portraits of animals such as goat and chickens loitering round the house in "a little busy atmosphere". Also, Onyema is still seen in her school uniform carrying out one of the domestic duties. This portrait above creates the

character's mood at the said location at a particular time. It shows Onyema in an unhappy mood. It depicts her weak and tiresome body, as she reluctantly opens the melon seeds. This picture seems to clarify the background of this text. The picture presents clearly a traditional girl-child character. This emphasize the symbolic role of the traditional girl-child. Symbolically, the image depicts that the girl-child's role is to stay at home to prepare food. While the boy-child is not seen in sight. This picture projects that, the boy-child is free from this indoor restriction.

The descriptions in the picture above is in conformity to Norton in Fang's (1996:131) view that:

> Therefore, illustrations in picture books may function in one or more of the following ways. Establish setting, in picture books, as in all literature, setting is used to establish a story's location in time and place, create a mood, clarify historical background if necessary, provide an antagonist, or emphasize symbolic meaning.

Norton views the use of picture as illustration. To Norton, pictures function to establish locale, frame of mind, historical experience, provide antagonist and emphasize symbolic meaning in a text. Norton's view is seemly captured on the picture page.

In order to modify the image of the girl-child, Adimora-Ezeigbo tries to project the girl-child character who could engage in the sport as a recreational activity. Thereby disengaging the traditional belief that hinders the girl-child from participating in sport. Girls-role-in-society.blogspot.com.ng (2016.n.pag) states that, in which feminist identifies how a particular gender has been limited in some certain sporting or recreational activities due to the cultural prerogative of a gender over the other thus:

> According to feminist analysis, in all cultures, girls have been socialized into a gender role, although the degree to which behaviour is innate or environmentally determined is greatly debated. In most cultures and time periods of the world…. girls are less often encouraged to pursue sports, with the exception of the sports that might be considered "feminine"…. They may be prevented from participating

> in many of the same activities that boys participate in at the same age, as a matter of protecting them from perceived outside dangers

Contrary to what feminist stated in girls-role-in-society.blogspot.com.ng (2016.n.pag), Adimora-Ezeigbo uses Seyi in Seyi's *Strong Voice* to transcend sporting activities that is stereotypically determined as feminine. She is presented as a symbol of a modern Nigerian girl-child. Seyi is presented to have her freedom to participate in a football game that is initially regarded as a male affair. Seyi's freedom is confirmed thus:

> Eleven years old Seyi lived in Aguda with her mother and her four years old brother, Jimmy. Their house was one of the many houses in Koko Street. After school, Seyi liked to play in a small garden at the back of her house. Sometimes she played football with her friends. She hoped to join the female football clubs in Lagos when she was old enough. (SSV: 1)

From this quotation, it can be deduced that the writer, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo develops the girl-child through the character of Seyi as a girl who is not restricted from playing football based on her sex. She promotes the freedom of the girl-child to make her choice(s) and desire(s) come true. Seyi could play in the garden after school, to a greater extent, any game of her choice. In addition, she aspires to improve her desire by anticipating to join the female football club in Lagos with her friends. The character of Seyi illustrates that the girl-child is no longer subservient, restricted, dependent or conditioned to other people's bidding. Nor work in the shadow of the male figure such as her father or brother like Onyema does in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize.*

There is a painstaking attribute that conditions the girl-child to follow dictates of the male figure in a patriarchal society. This is intensified by the absence of Onyema's personal autonomy during the discussion (which later turns into an argument) between Mr. Agu (Onyema's Father) and Mr. Nwiboko (Teacher at Ezzikwo Community School):

> Mr. Agu, 'he began,' I came to find out why your daughter hasn't filled in the scholarship forms. She can do very well in the examination'… it's my wish that

> only my son, Ogbonnaya, should fill in the form', he said. 'But Onyema is very clever,' the teacher replied. 'Infact she's the best pupil in mathematics in the class'. 'I don't believe in educating girls beyond primary school,' Mr. Agu said' it's just a waste of time and money' 'But-' began Mr. Nwiboko. 'I have nothing more to say,' Onyema's father said firmly (TP: 2-3)

The discussion between Mr. Agu and Mr. Nwiboko suggest that the girl-child's free will is altered by the patriarchal system (as represented by her father). The argument that erupts in the course of their (Mr. Agu and Mr. Nwiboko) discussions show that Onyema could only make choice(s) concerning her life within the scope of her father's (Mr. Agu) rules and regulations. This could be the reason why Liberal Feminists see the need to proffer an unrestricted personal autonomy to liberate the girl-child from the shackles of patriarchy. In doing this, the liberal feminists try to improve the girl-child statuesque without destroying the existing patriarchal structure. With this, writers such as Adimora-Ezeigbo try to use one of the tenets of Liberal Feminist to rewrite the image of the girl-child in children's literature.

Brake (2004:293) states that patriarchal moralistic laws restrict women's (girl-child's) options on the grounds that certain options should not be available to women because morality forbids women's choosing them -such as sexual expression or family forms. Traces of the presumed dogmatic notion as illustrated by Brake argument is exemplified in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize.* Wherein, "Mr. Agu thundered thus: 'I don't believe in educating girls beyond primary school…it's a waste of time and money" (TP: 3). Adimora-Ezeigbo uses Onyema as an instrumental character to preach anti- discriminatory campaign against the girl-child. As the story unfolds, Onyema succeeded in proving to her father that educating the girl-child is not a waste of time and resources. Rather it could add glamour, prestige to her family members and society at large. By winning the scholarship for Ezzikko Community, Onyema proves that her mother, Mrs. Agu did the right thing. Her mother made a selfless sacrifice and

believe in her daughter's ability and potentials. She endorses that Onyema to be capable of being educated and taking the same scholarship exams like her twin brother without any preferential treatment and discrimination.

In another instance, Onyema's desire to attend extra lessons (sometimes) organised by her class teacher, Mr. Nwiboko is also cut short. Her father insists that she must carry out some domestic chores after school. This hinders the girl-child's free will and other options are not available to Onyema. This ill treatment is meted on most of the girl's in Onyema's class. As illustrated on page eight and nine (8-9) thus:

> Mr. Nwiboko worked very hard with the pupils in Form Six….He even organised extra lessons after school. All boys stayed for the extra lessons, but only a few of the girls could stay. Most of them went home to help their mothers working in the house or selling things in the market. Sometimes Onyema was able to stay for extra lessons. Her mother would come home early to do the work in the house. Her father didn't know about this. He would be angry if he found out. Mr. Agu often told Onyema to do things for him after school. But Ogbonnaya was free to stay for extra lessons. It was always Onyema who fetched water, and gathered firewood and cooked the evening meals. (TP:8-9).

Often times, girls with the character of Onyema and others find it difficult to do whatever they want. These include right and will to attend extra lessons that are being organised by their class teacher, Mr. Nwiboko. While the boys stay for extra classes, few of the girls have this privileges. Some of these girls have to return home to help their mothers in domestic chores or sell things. Onyema's father contributes immensely to hinder her from doing what she desires. He does this by mandating her to come home early to do domestic chores. He gets angry when he discovers that she did not do them. Also, he sends her on other errands after school, which deprives her of the opportunity of attending extra classes like her twin brother. Ogbonnaya, Onyema's twin brother, is at liberty to do whatever he wants such as attending extra lessons without being scolded or threatened like Onyema.

Thus, Ogbonnaya enjoys certain privileges over Onyema because he attends extra lessons and is not exposed to any form of threat or deprivation from his father. Any act that is contrary to Mr. Agu's decision on peculiar issues that concerns Onyema is met with a violent threat or resistance. This is illustrated in the use of language and the actions expressed on the picture displayed on page 22. The picture shows an instance where the threat of violence is being used on Onyema because she arrived late a week before the examination: "One day, a week before the examination, Onyema arrived home late from school. She had stayed to assist some of her friends with mathematics. 'Why are you late?' Mr. Agu asked angrily" (TP: 22). The image on the same page (ibid) further illustrates and made visible the display of the threat of violence on Onyema.



Picture II

The picture above helps to define and develop the character trait in the story. Fang (1996:132) illustrates that

> The characters in picture books must have specific traits that make them appealing to the child reader and that meet the demands of the short format. Since a short story does not normally allow for more fully developed characters, illustrations help develop the characters by depicting situations and emotions immediately familiar and credible to the children. In wordless picture books the depiction and development of characters completely rely on illustrations. In picture storybooks, illustrations can supplement characterization in the text by showing the characters' actions and reactions to one another or giving characters an extra fleshing out.

Fang is of the opinion that pictures in children's stories help to define and develop a particular character trait. To Fang, pictures in this type of literature aids the demand of this short children's stories. The use of pictures helps to provide a fully developed character that words cannot explain. Johnson (1993) in Fang (1996:140) further asserts this point by stating that in picture books, the child reader enters the dual meaning environment an extracts from it an enhanced understanding of linguistic language.

The words of Fang is actually true because, such short stories assist in illustrating familiar situations and emotions. This display of situations and emotions is reflected in the above picture. Mr. Agu displays his angry mood and resentment towards Onyema. The atmosphere is some worth tensed. The picture reveals an unfriendly atmosphere and situation. Mr. Agu's actions and facial expressions show his displeasure towards Onyema after being contravened (especially his orders). Mr. Agu's posture and the angry and unfriendly look on his face, reveals that he is set to mete out violence on Onyema.

On the other hand, the timely intervention of Mrs. Agu, helps Onyema escape the agony of being victimised. The action of Mr. Agu further promotes inferiority and gender preference. Mrs. Agu and Onyema's moody expression and gestures demonstrate that Onyema as a girl-child

is unfairly disempowered and limited. These actions show the indigenous male-controlled structures, orders and its high-minded laws that conditioned the girl-child's will. Cudd (2006:85) buttresses this fact in line with the liberal feminist assumption when he states that:

> Liberal feminists literature recognise violence against women (girl-child) that document the particular role that violence and the threat of violence play in unfairly disempowering and limiting women (girl-child inclusive). Being free of the limits set by patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic laws that restrict and limit women's (girl-child) options on the basis of women's interest.

The above quotation by Cudd suggests that liberal feminists recognise the use of threat of violence against women in general (this include the girl-child). Cudd is of the opinion that liberal feminists literature documents particular roles that show violence and threat of violence against girl-child and women. Consequently, these roles contribute in breeding acts that are bound and dishonour females.

Contrary to the stereotypical roles and image of the girl-child through the character of Onyema, Adimora-Ezeigbo creatively creates a girl-child character (Onyema) who is able to gradually negotiate with courage and painstakingly have her will, desires and aspirations gradually set in motion. She tries to defy the patriarchal rules with the help of her mother Mrs. Agu (Onyema's mother) who purchases the scholarship form. Her mother also contributes indirectly to her emancipation by helping her (Onyema) with some domestic chores. Mrs. Agu does this so that Onyema could attend extra lessons (sometimes) without the knowledge of her husband (Mr. Agu). Similarly, Mrs. Agu comes to Onyema's rescue when Mr. Agu threatens Onyema on page twenty-two (22). She defends her daughter thus:

> Onyema arrived late from school. She had stayed to assist some of her friends with mathematics….Mrs. Agu rushed out of the kitchen. 'It's my fault. I sent her to my sister's house to deliver a message, she' explained. She quickly took Onyema into the house. She didn't want her daughter upset before the examination'. (TP: 22)

This act by Mrs. Agu to defend Onyema has a tendency to encourage her to persevere. Onyema is encouraged to systematically break loose from the restricted autonomy of the patriarchal system and orders. Mrs. Agu decided to come to her daughters rescue in order to free her from further restrictions and unfair conditions that may be meted on her. Mrs. Agu also tries to stabilize her daughter's emotions and make possible a suitable atmosphere that is suitable and conducive to prepare her for the forth-coming examination.

Onyema tries to break even and have her personal aspirations achieved through ceasing every slight opportunities to enhance her liberation and dreams. Page twelve of Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* buttresses this:

> Onyema felt better. She knew her mother was on her side. And Mr. Nwiboko helps her with her mathematics and English. They both wanted her to win a scholarship. Onyema studied very hard whenever she could. She didn't want to disappoint them. On her way to fetch water or firewood, she went over the day's lessons in her mind. (TP: 12)

The girl-child through the character of Onyema is projected to be determined to break the bounds of being undermined and restricted. She does this by being dedicated and hard working to achieve her goals. Onyema's perseverance and endurance on different occasions makes her steadfast to have her will carried out to the latter. These enduring features are respectively displayed on pages twelve 12 and twenty-one (21) in *The Prize*.



Picture III



Picture IV

These pictures in the previous page, tend to relay tales to complement the storyline. According to Broudy (1977:636) “it is a primary source of experience on which all recognition, judgment, and action depend. It furnishes the raw material for concepts and ideas, for creating a world of possibility". Broudy’s assertion is brought into analysis in the text under study. The pictures above may serve as a source of relative experience to a child-reader. These pictures deepen the child reader’s judgment about Onyma’s determination to succeed. They project to the child-reader that, with dedication and hard work, Onyema can prove her father wrong about the traditional role of the girl-child. These pictures provide the concept of equality and personal autonomy of the girl-child.

Picture III and IV describe the girl-child who finds herself in a deplorable condition despite an attempt to fight for her autonomy and equal access to education. This deplorable environment is reflected in the first picture setting which shows Onyema walking through the bush path with her book placed in her hand. Although this reading process may not be convenient for her, she has to struggle to excel in her studies. The second picture also shows Onyema where she had to sit on the floor under the mango tree amidst grasses. Both pictures illustrate Onyema’s resolution to make use of the best of her time. She seizes every available opportunity to study, even under the uncomfortable circumstance to gain and redeem her freedom.

On page twelve (12), Onyema devices every means to stay abreast, to convince her father that she can equally be trained to secondary education level and beyond. Page twenty-one (21) projects that Onyema is determined to convince her father to change his adamant rules ‘May be I’ll get to secondary school’ (TP: 21). Onyema is bent on proving her father’s perception of the

girl-child to wrong by winning the scholarship and prove her new worth. This is perhaps why Okin (1989:97) opines that girls participation in families, especially in the early years is non voluntary. The family affects the development of girls' sense of self-worth, their preferences, and the capacities for reflection and imagination. On which their ability to live a life of their own choosing depends. Okin's observation can interpret Onyema's action in *The Prize* because some of her participation and activities in her immediate family (from such tender age of thirteen) is depicted as non-voluntary. These activities and relationships affect Onyema's self-esteem, self-worth, preferences, ability and thinking. Among other things, they make her feel bored, passive, docile and restricted. Onyema's action and expressions presuppose that, most times, she is being forced into performing duties that are contrary to her desires.

The liberal feminists believe that acts that limit and restrict the girl-child are unfair. This contributes to the fact that the girl-child ought to make her own choices and be guided by her own sense of self-interest and values. Onyema tries to achieve her interest, values and dreams in the end by winning the scholarship that will enable her to attend a secondary school like her twin brother, Ogbonnaya. Nussbaum's (1999:63) position as a liberal feminist attests to the fact that the primacy of an individual has much to offer women, whose wellbeing are only too frequently sacrificed or subordinated to the interest of family or the wider community and who have "too rarely been treated as an end in themselves, and too frequently treated as means to the end of others." Nussbaum believes that women (girl-child inclusive) in patriarchal societies have good grounds to distrust habit and tradition. "After all where the voice of tradition speaks, that voice is most often male". Nussbaum's assertion can be used to project a 'new' girl-child with the character of Onyema in *The Prize*. Onyema champions a new course of interest- to further her

education and become an Engineer. Although, she has to make sacrifices to rise to the peak. She despises being treated as subordinate in the family and wider community. Onyema is exposed to have a distrust for stereotypical roles and opposes (without violence) some of the male voice(s) in order to achieve her dreams and aspirations. She counters the voice of tradition- male voice, which is symbolised by her father and Onyia.

3.3 The Place of the Girl-Child in an Egalitarian Society in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice*

Initial presentations of the girl-child in traditional children's literature lean towards depriving her of entitled options. Liberal Feminists acknowledge that girl-child access to options is unfairly restricted due to economic deprivation and poverty, stereotyping and sex discrimination in education and employment. Alstoff (2004:52) contests this assertion and posits that women (as well as girl-child) are entitled to have access to options. Alstoff and the Liberal feminist notion demonstrate that the girl-child is entitled to options which can alleviate unfair discrimination, stereotypes and inequality. These new ideologies are illustrated in the Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice.*

Mrs. Agu in *The Prize* could be referred to as an apostle of liberal feminism. She came to the rescue of Onyema when she is almost being denied access to further her education (secondary education). Instead of reducing Onyema to the role of a house wife, Mrs. Agu may have noticed these unfair and unjust restrictions. Mrs. Agu reiterated thus: 'All right, my child,' said Mrs. Agu. 'You know I want you to take the scholarship exams with your brother.' (TP: 5). The words of Mrs. Agu suggest an alternative option available to Onyema that is devoid of

unfair restriction due to monetary deprivation or sex stereotype and discrimination in education. This rejects the unfair limitations of the girl-child due to cultural homogeneity of preference of the male-child over the girl-child.

Assistance from other characters create space for Onyema's preference and outlook about life. She laments thus: " 'Mama, I'm tired of my life,' Onyema said suddenly…'But, Mama, I don't want to marry Onyia,' cried Onyema. 'I'll run away if Papa tries to make me marry….Onyema studied very hard whenever she could she didn't want to disappoint them…. 'I'm going to be an engineer…." (TP: 10, 12, 14). Onyema's expresses alternative option by running away to study hard, in a bid to prove her father wrong. Also, to tell her father, through her actions that she is entitled to the equal right to education like Ogbonnaya. She opts to be an engineer instead of being a stereotypical house wife to Onyia.

Meyers (2002:168) buttresses that some liberal feminists emphasise the importance of internal, psychological enabling conditions as well, for example, the ability to assess one's own preferences and imagine life otherwise. Emphasis on the importance of internal, psychological enabling conditions which include the right to own preferences and outlook towards life are seen through the character of Onyema in *The Prize.* She decides to work hard, task her emotions and psychology which makes her active, smart, crafty and resilient. Thereby serving as alternative sources in improving her skills, knowledge and thinking. This is to upgrade her identify and promote her own autonomy enabling conditions. Adimora-Ezeigbo develops a new, free and alternative imagery of the girl-child and fashions new ways of living in the modern world. Adimora-Ezeigbo devices this through a gradual break away from authoritarian, chauvinist and

strait-laced laws of an unjust family and society which controls the girl-child's person. Onyema's activities steer her into a preferred way of life.

McClain (2006:60) acknowledges that liberal feminists hold that the state must not grant preferential treatment to particular family forms. Sexual discrimination of the girl-child based on career, education and employment seems to relegate her to the background. Makama (2014:n.pag.) observes that:

> Girl-child education has been a problem and often giving minimal attention in some rural and urban areas of the country. Whether a girl should be educated or not is an unresolved issue in the latex of most cultures in Nigeria with disparities between the education that boys and girls receive…. The girl's phenomenon is a less attentive issue especially their welfare and role in nation building. Some experts have identified socio-cultural patterns, religious misconceptions, poverty, teenage pregnancy and early marriage as factors militating against girl-child education. Girls in Nigeria are often seen moving around in towns and villages and hawking items of paltry value that hardly justifies the hours spent in the burning sun… the parents of the girl-child especially the mother considers their daughters as tools for generating incomes to the family due to poverty and illiteracy instead of sending them to school at their tender age. Nigeria is one of the countries listed amongst the developing nations, this is so because of her inability to harness her resources towards nation building in other sensitive areas that need special attention like the girl-child education….this is one of the factors that explain the retrogression of Nigeria's development, because it is often said

> that ‘’if you educate a woman, you educate the entire society, while if you educate a man, you educate a person.

In the aforestated, Makama observes that there have been lingering problems concerning the girl-child education in rural and urban Nigeria respectively which has attracted little attention. These problems include whether the girl-child ought to be educated or not, differences in the content of what they learnt in the course of the education they receive such as politics, socio-cultural restriction and practises that limit them. She attests that in a typical Nigerian society be it in the country side or urban centres, girls are mostly seen as a means of generating income especially through hawking instead of sending them to school. She frowns at the fact that the girl-child is deprived of her right to education, and she suggests that educating the girl-child means educating the nation. Makama believes that through these new divisive acts the nation can advance and develop.

Furthermore, Ezeigbo (2012:5) states that there is a preference for male children in all cultures in Nigeria. Consequently, girls are devalued, neglected and denied opportunities open to their male siblings. The result is that boys have undue advantage over girls who have to bear the brunt of house work and domestic duties and often have less access to education. In the past, and even now in many places, she is married off early, and her bride price would be used to train her brother. Ezeigbo further intensifies the ongoing devaluation, neglect of the girl-child and preference of the male child over the girl-child at home and school.

Makama and Ezeigbo’s view respectively are depicted in Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *The Prize.* The text brings to limelight peculiar issues highlighted by Makama and Ezeigbo regarding the

issue of girl-child. The story of Onyema presents the problem of educating the girl-child in the rural-cum urban area of the country as represented by Ezzikwo Community. The story shows there exist disparity in education and career choice of the girl-child against the boys. Onyema's education is affected by the socio-cultural pattern of 'almost forced' early marriage and the patriarchal structure syndrome. These are seen as part of the factors that discourage girl-child's education. Some are involved in domestic activities and hawking, while others are attending extra lessons organised by their class teacher, Mr. Nwiboko:

> Mr. Nwiboko worked very hard with the pupils in Form Six. This was the senior class. Boys and girls in this class would sit the scholarship examinations. He even organised extra lessons, but only a few of the girls could stay. Most of them went home to help their mothers working in the house or selling things in the market…. It was often Onyema who fetched water, and gathered firewood and cooked the evening meals. (TP: 8-9).

Onyema and other girls' action(s) project the stereotypical role of the girl-child. The girl-child is considered as a tool for generating income for the family due to poverty and illiteracy instead of sending them to school at their tender age. She is shown to spend more time performing domestic duties. Thereby increasing the gap between female and male equality in Nigerian children's literature. It perpetuates the myth that education is of no help to the girl-child and that her primary job will be to look after the household chores, get married, have children and then raise them. The picture in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* on page eight and nine (8-9) give good illustration below:



Picture V

Picture V provides a referential cue for the projection of the girl-child in this text. By looking at this picture, it is easier for the child reader to identify the girl-child. Hereby help to create textual harmony. To buttress this analysis, Nikolajeva (2005:226) opines that "in between illustrated texts and wordless picture narratives… a variety of relationships between words and images can be discovered…. Words and pictures tell two different stories, cooperating to create a new meaning; both are indispensable for decoding message". Bodmer (1992:72) further attests that illustration serve to expand, explain, interpret or decorate a written text. The images in Picture V above, intensify the stereotypical duplicate of the girls as portrayed through the picture of Onyema and other girls carrying out various domestic chores. These include cooking, fetching

firewood, water and another girl, who wraps a baby on her back while pouring water into a pot. Most of these activities in the picture above are being carried out while others are attending extra lessons, as such, these display unfair limitations and unequal treatments of the girls.

The pictures help to describe many activities associated with traditional girl-child and aspect of her daily lives. These include the house, the kitchen that the reader can easily identify the setting of the story at a glance of the pictures. Although, these pictures may register negative and stereotypical messages about girls' duty on the child reader. The child reader may grow up with the stereotypical belief that girl-child cannot leave off her domestic roles. These images in this picture may stimulate the child- reader's imagination to interpret and recreate a mental representation of the traditional role of the girl-child in the story. To a large extent, this picture may guide and help the reader(s) to identify and fascinate to the role of the traditional girl-child. In a nutshell, the picture provides a visual and social context for written language. The need to project the girl-child in a new practice.

Writers have tried to create a new dimension to the image of the girl-child that is devoid of stereotypes and sexisms. In an article titled *Save the Children* (2016:1), it is stated that:

> In order to achieve true women empowerment, it is important that we begin with the children. This is because girls of today are women of tomorrow…..the mind-set that a girl is a liability needs to be changed and this requires happening at the grass root level….the role of education is extremely important here and goes a long way in empowering women and the process of education has to begin early in life. More and more girl children need to be sent to school, provided quality

> and holistic education. Numerous benefits come with educating the girls the right way. Educated girl is able to take the right decisions in life…. At the same time, a society in which girls are educated will see less child marriage, decree level of poverty and heighten participation of women in socio-economic processes. Educating a girl has far-reaching impacts. It is rightly said that when a woman is educated, an entire generation benefits from it.

This article propagates actions that will empower girls and change their mind set about being a liability. It shows that it is of immense importance to educate the girl-child in quality and holistic education that is devoid of discriminations and stereotypes. Furthermore, educating the girl-child enables them to make right decisions pertaining their lives. It could reduce child marriage, level of poverty and increases girls and women in socio-economic activities for the nation to benefit. The quotation above can be applicable to the Liberal feminist theorist's perception to promote an egalitarian society, wherein the girl-child is not marginalised and regarded as subservient.

In Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize*, it is obvious that the government scholarship granted to the pupils of Ezzikwo Community School is not based on preference, sexual biases and discrimination. This is illustrated thus:

> Onyema's school was one of the schools in the Ezzikwo Local Government Area. Every year each school sent its cleverest pupils to sit for the scholarship examination. Mr. Eke, the headmaster, spoke to all the final year pupils. 'The government is giving three scholarships this year,' he said. 'We want pupils from

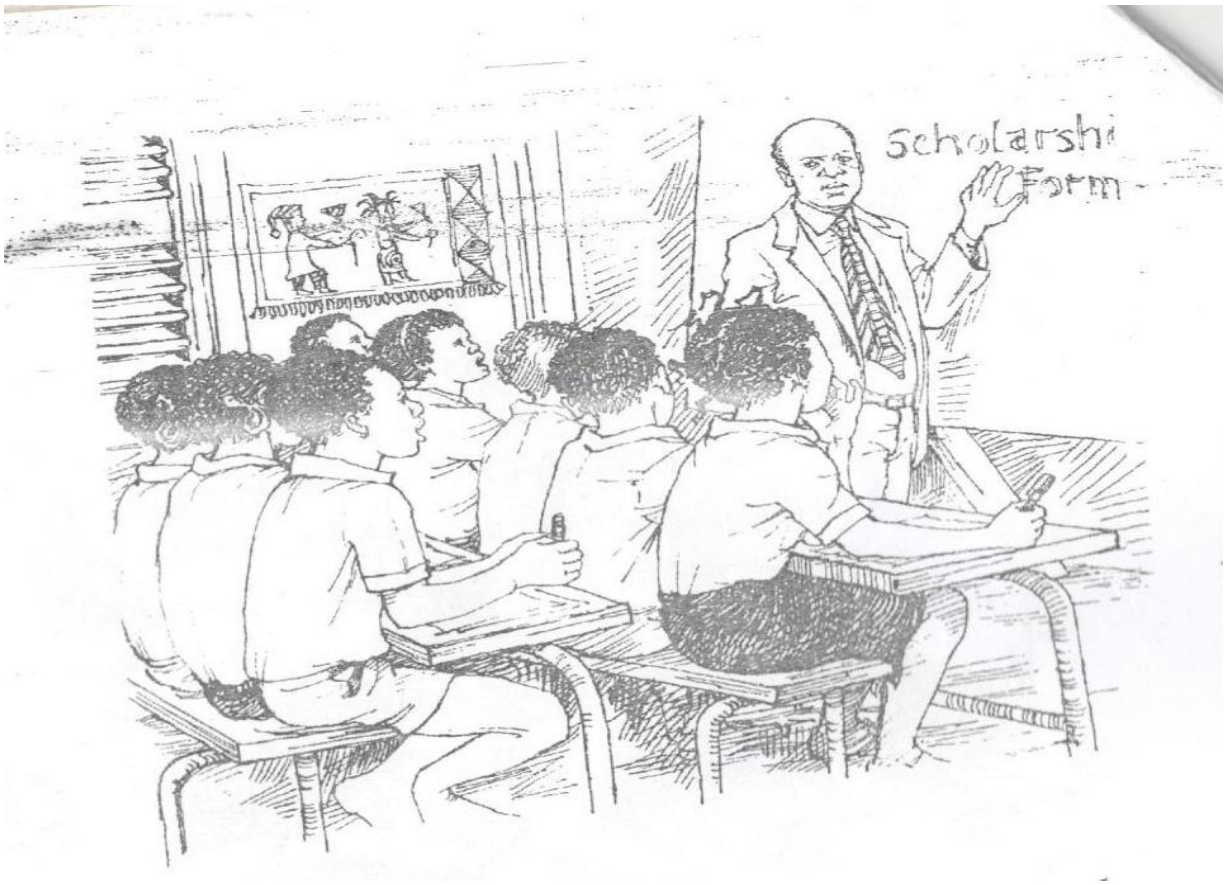
> Ezzikwo Community School to win all three scholarships. I want everyone to work their hardest.' (TP: 7-8)

This quotation explains that the government is delighted in assisting cleverest pupil in Ezzikwo Community School (through scholarship) irrespective of gender. Government interest in encouraging all and sundry to work hard and gain the scholarship does not give preference to any gender. The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995:168 (272)) states that "all barriers must, therefore, be eliminated to enable girls without exception to develop their full potential and skills through equal access to education and training…." *Beijing Declaration and Plat Form for Action* (1995:171(278)) further states that "educate women, men, girls and boys to promote girls' status and encourage them to work towards mutual respect and equal partnership between girls and boys…." *Beijing Declaration and Plat Form for Action* (1995:176 (285)) formulate policies "to help the family…in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles, with particular emphasis on the elimination of intra-family discrimination against the girl-child".

In *The Prize*, the character of Onyema is developed to eliminate barriers meted on girl-child. She is able to develop her full potentials and skills because she is being given an opportunity to have equal access to education and training with her male counterparts (Ogbonnaya and others). This promotes equal status, respect and partnership with her male folks. This is illustrated when Ogbonnaya told Onyema that: "'I'm glad you won, 'Ogbonnaya said. 'You deserve it. The scholarship is the prize for your cleverness and hard work" (TP: 25). The dialogue between Ogbonnaya and Onyema shows the success of Onyema. This dialogue inspires policies that encourage intra-family to eliminate discrimination against the girl-child. It develops

a redefined girl-child by creating a supporting, educative and nurturing roles to improve her status.

Okin (1989:100) adds that another way the state and literature may encourage such egalitarianism is through autonomy-promoting education, especially for girls. Liberal feminists emphasise the need for access to education by the girl-child. The use of the picture in *The Prize*, on page seven (7) tends to promote an egalitarian society. Thereby promoting girl-child access to education. The picture projects a number of girls in attendance with their male counterparts who want to be educated. They are shown sitting in the same class with other boys as they listen to Mr. Eke, the headmaster on the scholarship examination that is free from sexist stereotype, restrictions and preference.



Picture VI

Picture VI helps to capture the child's reader's attention. It teaches about the concept of equality. It develops appreciation and awareness about the changing roles of girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. This is backed by Nikolajeva's (2005:225) words thus:

> In illustrating an existing text,…artists have a number of choices. They can merely provide a visual counterpart of what the text says, without adding anything essential. They can, however, also use the text as a point of departure for a new interpretation, thus creating a new literary work, based on text/image interaction. They supply settings that the words do not mention explicitly.

Adimora-Ezeigbo provides this picture illustration as counterpart to the written words. Adimora-Ezeigbo also uses it as point of departure for new interpretation to the emerging role of the girl-child. This illustration provides the girl-child equal access to education. Hence, creating a literary idea that promotes 'new' image of the girl-child in public arena (in the community). The picture above supply an explicit setting for the written words. Thus, the picture parades Onyema as one of the privileged girls who have access to formal education. This makes her free from the gender stereotypical image of being restricted. McClain (2006:81) states that the liberal feminists are of the view that girls must receive a formal education free of sexist stereotyping. Educating the girl-child makes her economically independent. Llyod (1995:1332) notes that the liberal feminist preaches in their literature the act of ensuring that girls are prepared to be economically independent.

As exemplified in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize,* Onyema's dream to be an engineer is a new aspiration that lean towards making her economically independent and self-reliant. Onyema's action is projected thus:

> Her thoughts made her very unhappy. She couldn't understand why her father wanted her to marry so early. He had told her Onyia was a rich cloth merchant in Kano. Onyema didn't care if he was the richest man in the world. She wanted to

> go to secondary school. 'Papa,' she burst out, suddenly. 'I've told you, I won't be Onyia's wife! I'm going to be an engineer.' (TP: 19)

Onyema's thoughts and actions pose a challenge to the patriarchal system. She projects the need for an egalitarian society wherein the girl-child can be self-reliant irrespective of age, gender, sex or status. Onyema objected to being married off to Onyia, despite the fact that he is rich but she chooses to continue her education. Onyema is likely to be an ambassador of change in the portrayal of the girl-child. Adimora-Ezeigbo exposes the need to challenge and change the archaic mind-set of the patriarchal system in the Nigerian society, which views girls as liabilities dependent, less intelligent, etc. Adimora-Ezeigbo uses the character of Onyema to portray that the girl-child is not at the mercy of the male figure or be regarded as less in preference than boys. Adimora-Ezeigbo in *The Prize* promotes the girl-child's right and chance to nurture her talent and skills so that she can excel in different areas of life.

In Nigeria, child marriage is one of the prevalent issues that is undergoing vehement criticism. Ezeigbo (2012:4) posits that in many parts of Nigeria…girls are often in marriage too early, sometimes at the age of twelve or thirteen to men old enough to be their fathers or grandfathers. Machel (2012:n.pag.) in her blog DFIDC (the UK Department for International Development) on the inaugural International Day for the Girl, welcomes the focus on child marriage as an entry point to achieving universal education, health and economic development worldwide. She argues that only by ending child marriage can girls and women be empowered to the benefit of everyone in the society thus:

> We know that when we empower girls, everybody benefits. Girls who are educated, healthy and free can transform their communities and pass on the benefits to their children, and to their children's children….girls are almost completely ignored. Girls have no status, no protection and no prospects in many families and communities and this is simply the way things are. Inequality is so entrenched that it isn't even questioned….the importance of investing in girls is increasingly understood among policy-makers….focusing specifically on girls'

> education and economic independence, preventing violence against girls and women,…. that there is much progress to be made….girls who marry before they turn 18 are more likely to drop out of school, live in poverty, suffer domestic violence…child marriage is more than a harmful practice that should be tackled in its own right; it is an entry point to all other issues. If we want girls to stay in school, to be safe and healthy, to earn their own income and invest back into their families and communities, we must end child marriage….ending child marriage means changing long traditions and challenging taboos….today, let us give a face and a voice to that girl-child who has been ignored. When at last she is front and centre of our development efforts. It is she who will change the world.

Machel frowns at the extreme level in which the girl-child is under rated. Also, Machel shows bitterness on how inequality is rooted in the girl-child's empowerment, status and prospect among families and community at large. She noted that despite the fact that girls are responsible for passing what they have learnt to their offspring later in life, her positive enhancement is being ignored. She posits that when girls are educated there seems to be an immense benefit derived from it. Furthermore, Machel believes that it is of utmost importance that policy-makers should try to invest positively in girl-child education and economic independence. So as to alleviate the dropout syndrome, prevent violence, a forceful early marriage that seems to be the order of the day. Machel suggests that challenging age long traditions that serve as impediment will help to give a voice to the girl-child. She believes that promoting the positive role of the girl-child will enhance her role as a vital 'device' in the nation's development.

Lending credence to what Machel have said concerning prevalent issues affecting the girl-child and ways to tackle these problems in Nigeria, Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* projects a girl-child through the character of Onyema, who struggles to be educated in order to contribute her quota to the community (by being an engineer). Despite the fact that her father considers educating her as a waste of time and resources, rather he wants her to get married at the tender age of thirteen. Onyema is anticipated to be on the verge of dropping out of school because her father, Mr. Agu does not want her to continue her education to secondary school level. This

shows the level of under rating, inequality, suppression and level of subordination, the girl- child has to go through at home and the community at large. She is almost completely ignored from private and public policies that affect her. She is also seen as a victim of age long tradition.

At the end, her father, Mr. Agu sees the ability in Onyema and believes that she will serve as an agent that will invest into the family and community because of her clever and brilliant performance and talents. Mr. Agu in *The Prize* sees the need to challenge and ignore these long traditions and taboos that relegate the girl-child and refute to force her into early marriage thus: 'well, 'he said, 'Onyia will just have to find himself another wife. My daughter is too clever for him' 'why did Papa change his mind? Onyema asked her mother that evening…. 'He started to laugh. He said you could go to school and marry later- if you were not too clever for the men in the village,' (TP: 26-27). Mr. and Mrs. Agu give a strong voice to the girl-child as represented by Onyema so that she can be educated, independent and contribute her quota to the family and nation at large.

Adimora-Ezeigbo tries to spot-on the imbalances and underrepresentation towards the projection of the girl-child in Nigeria using *The Prize*. In order to promote the girl-child's personal autonomy, equality and create space in an egalitarian society Ezenwanbe (2008:269) opines that:

> Adimora-Ezeigbo is interested in the education of the young. As a teacher, she believes that formal education is indispensable for a successful adult life. She is particularly concerned with the education of the girl-child. Of the … protagonists who struggle to continue their education,…girls and their obstacles are neither personal nor psychological, but man-made, deliberately meant to supress and marginalise women. As a feminist, Adimora-Ezeigbo could not close her eyes to such injustice. Adimora-Ezeigbo is an apostle of gender complementarity, her emphasis on the education of the girl-child is one of the ways she hopes to achieve it in society. …most of Ezeigbo's writing for children can be seen as a response to Glory Kilanko's call on Nigerian writers, educationists and leaders to: educate women (girls) and prepare them for equal opportunities in all spheres of

> life; to get women out of the service sector into the hard core profession, to eliminate illiteracy among women; and to purge them of inferiority complex, self-doubt and insecurity (Kilanko, 1990:46)

Ezenwanbe's position about Adimora's representation of the girl-child in her children's literature gives a paradigm shift. This shift is seen from the stereotypical portraiture of the girl-child who is described as a dependent, subservient, marginalised, lack of personal autonomy, deprived justice in public and private sphere.

Adimora-Ezeigbo may be regarded as a ''Liberal-feminist' because she projects gender complementary roles of the girl-child and her male counterpart. The process of educating the girl-child at an early age, could bring about behavioural changes and provide opportunities that enhance her confidence, personality and career. Hence, Adimora-Ezeigbo through the character of Onyema presents the girl-child who serves as catalyst role that promotes shared growth and development process in an egalitarian society. This could increase productivity, earnings and improve economic performance. It could also elevate the status of the girl-child and consider her to be a respectable member of the family and community.

Adimora-Ezeigbo tries to display another feature that is at par with the traditional image of the girl-child. She accords chance and space to the girl-child to air her views and be empowered to benefit in all a sundry like her male counterparts. In addition, she projects a girl-child who serves as a role model and can contribute in transforming her community by passing values from what she has learnt to her children. The story of Onyema in *The Prize* shows that the girl-child like her male counterparts have a distinctive status and prospect that can enhance meaningful contribution and development to the family and community. In addition, the story in *The Prize* helps to challenge girl-child stereotypes and discriminations.

Furthermore, the quest of projecting the positive image of the girl-child in children's literature is not solely restricted to private life. Anderson (2009:13) posits that:

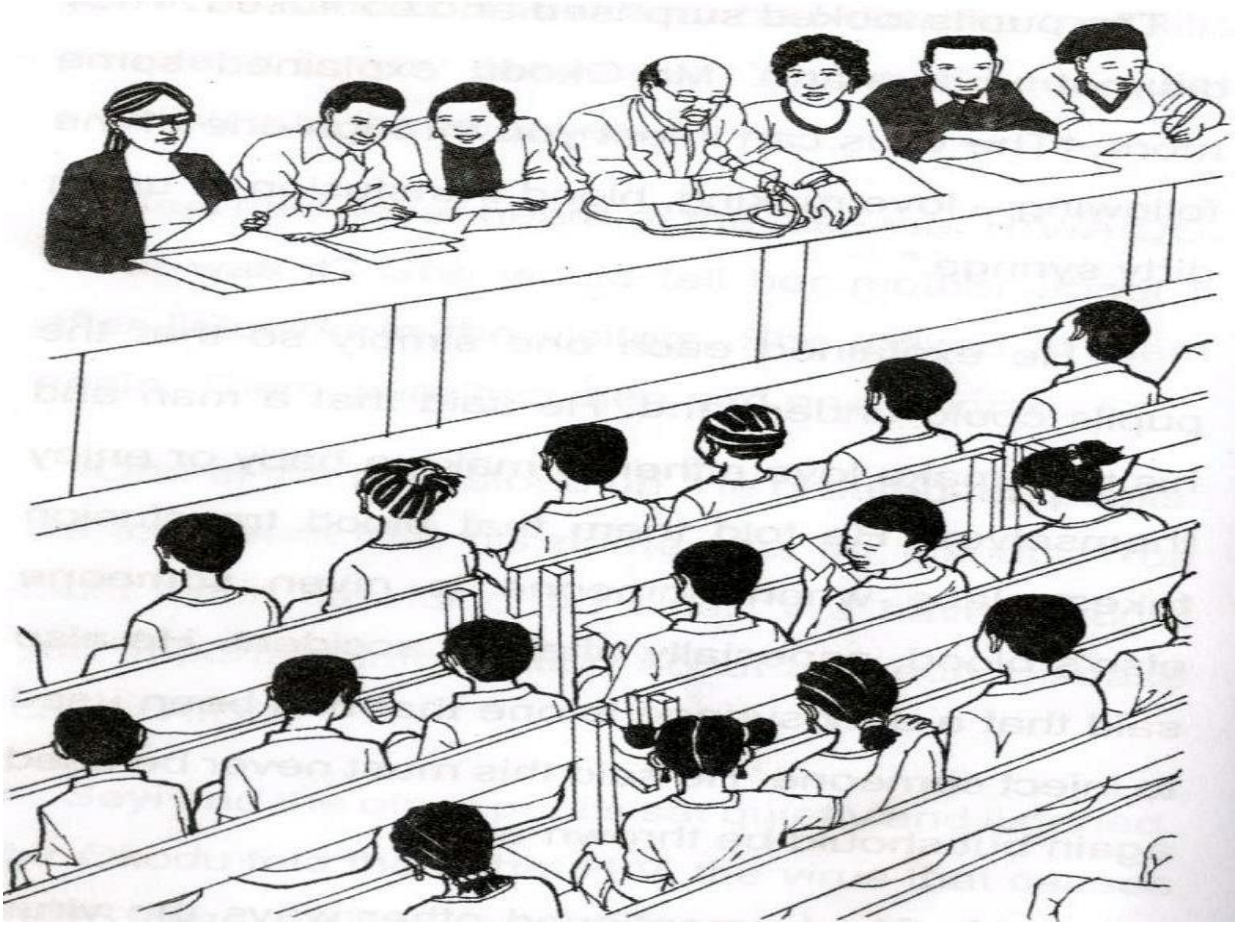
> The plurality of conceptions of the good that are likely to survive in which the state has done all it can be reasonably and justly expected to do include a host of unreasonable conceptions of the good, some of which may well be patriarchal. In the face of such injustices, liberals counsels Feminists to redirect their claims from the state to those promulgating such unreasonable conceptions of the good and to redirect their activism from a focus on state action to other domains, including civil society, churches, and the family. I think this counsel is wise, which is why I am a Liberal Feminist.

Anderson's position as liberal feminist states the fact that Liberals lend advice to liberal feminist to redirect their focus and assertions to activism, frown at injustices. This could be seen in other domains such as public life- civil society, churches, but the family is not left out. Anderson's claim can be applicable in examining the emerging role of the girl-child in children's literature by unveiling different ways girls survive in public life in a patriarchal society. Despite facing injustice, the 'new' girl-child is portrayed in other domains such as civil societies and religious organisations. Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Seyi's Strong Voice* can be referred to as a typical example of Nigerian children's literature that seems to redirect the image of the girl-child in public sphere. This new outlook in other domains of the girl-child life has a tendency to place her on equal footing with her male counterparts and reduce sexism and stereotypes.

Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Seyi's Strong Voice* presents the protagonist, *Seyi* who is brave and intelligent. The story captures issues and events that surround the protagonist's life. These include her immediate family, people she interacts with, environment and places that influence her life. The emerging image of the girl-child through the character of Seyi is depicted from her interest and excitement to meet the visitors who came for a talk on HIV. This contact with the visitors gradually initiated and set Seyi in a rebranded position. She tries to display her intellects

by not being silent and ignored. She participates actively during the talk on HIV and AIDS by asking clever questions concerning people living with such diseases.

In the course of the interactive session, she is not being ignored base on her sex, but the civil societies recognise her potentials. The use of picture on page twenty-four (24) of Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Seyi's Strong Voice* the organisers of the talk on HIV and AIDS recognise the need to respect roles of both sexes. The picture illustrates both sexes as vanguards that will carry on the crusades of change that customarily promote an egalitarian society. The egalitarian society which will be devoid of discrimination based on sex or alignments.



Picture VII

The picture on page twenty-four (24) as reflected on picture VII helps the child-reader to use active imagination and judgement to predict and interpret the unfolding action of equality in this story. Tannen in Fang (1996:135) observes that pictures "contribute to textual coherence. Coherence refers to the extent to which the sequencing or ordering of ideas in a text makes sense to its implied readers and the extent to which the language used in discussing those ideas make the nature of ideas and their relationships apparent". Picture VII Illustration contribute to textual coherence because the use of this picture is well integrated with the written words. Also, the picture provides referential cues for the text. This is seen where both genders are present at the talk programme in the assembly hall in Aguda Primary School. This picture contributes to the fact that the females are not deprived the right to attend the programme; both boys and girls are treated equally. The use of this physical and tangible attributes help Adimora-Ezeigbo to apportion distinctive character qualities on the basis of anatomy that differentiates the boys from the girls. These include hair style, clothes, physique and so on which contribute to the evaluation of the roles and responsibility of the girl-child in public life.

The picture above suggests as the story unfolds, that non-governmental and civil organisation(s) recognise the importance of treating both boys and girls as equal in order to foster and develop an egalitarian society. This gesture may have a direct or indirect influence on the nation's advancement. The need to promote egalitarian society is used as a precursor of change and means to promote their crusade against the killer disease known as HIV and AIDS that is prevalent in the Koko community. The visitors achieved their aims because Seyi and some members of Primary Five and Six pupils established clubs that are devoid of sex stereotyping to champion awareness of the disease called AIDS and HIV thus:

> With the support of some Primary Five and Six pupils of her school, she started another club. This was called the Young Readers Club. They read books about HIV/AIDS to know more about the disease. Seyi and her friends knew that reading was important and was the best way to get information. Not only about AIDS but also about other things (SSV: 47).

The use of omniscient-narrative-point of view by the author projects a girl-child through the character of Seyi who is an agent of change. Seyi is not portrayed as being relegated but champions the crusade against stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS victims. She established the Young Readers Club that is devoid of sexism and stereotypes. Seyi's actions sponsors the need for the girl-child to be self-reliant and plays an active leadership role.

In addition, the dream Seyi had about her father, reveals the reason surrounding his death (being HIV Positive) and the stigma he brought on his family. The interaction between Seyi and her father in the dream land helps to forecast Seyi's development into a new role. The motivation by her dead father makes her strong, tough, competitive, protective, adventurous, independent and active to promote an egalitarian Koko community. Seyi's actions and words of caution to the audience and Pastor of Emmanuel of The New Era Bible Church- promotes the aforementioned qualities of the 'new' girl-child:

> Seyi looked at her mother and got up….she walked right from the back to the front. Looking at the pastor and the people. She said, "But you don't love one another" in this church do you? Nobody cares what happens to anybody here. Nobody loves his neighbour. You make my mummy unhappy because my father died of AIDs and she is HIV positive. You avoid her and reject her (SSV: 38-39)

Seyi's reaction to challenge the congregation depict a transforming process in the life of the girl-child in a typical Christendom (in the Nigerian society). Wherein, she defiles all tradition and speaks to the congregation right in front of Pastor Emmanuel. Seyi challenges the patriarchal hegemony of the church and indirectly promotes an egalitarian society. Her affirmative action breaks the stereotypical picture of the girl-child which may be considered as 'unethical and

disrespectful' for a mere child to address the congregation of adults; as well as the patriarchal structure and religious bodies that is seen as a male affair.

Seyi's actions promote an egalitarian society where everyone is free to air their views and preach; Such as the young and the old irrespective of their sex. Seyi is projected to be brave, confident and courageous, thereby breaking all forms of barrier form against her sex and her age range. She is a representation of the modern Nigerian girl-child who can be used as an agent of change, reintegration and unity. This is brought into the limelight when the author describes the gradual positive change in the church as a result of Seyi's challenge and thought provoking charge to the church. Pastor Emmanuel of The New Era Bible Church attests in *Seyi's Strong Voice* that:

> Seyi's little speech made things happen. It had not been in vain. As her father had said, the people listened. They did not only listen but also did something…according to Pastor Emmanuel, "I have brought you some money donated by some members of our church". He gave her the money which was in an envelope… "You are a very brave girl, 'he said. "Your speech remained the church of its duty as the Shepard of the flock. Thank you. Everyone said God spoke to the church through you" (SSV: 42, 44, and 45).

Seyi's speech and action(s) parade a girl-child who could promote equality irrespective of age, gender or sex. Her act of bravery promotes an egalitarian society that is devoid of discrimination. She could be seen as a forerunner of liberal feminist because Seyi could air her views and mind without being daunted and regarded as a second-class citizen.

In addition, Seyi is projected as being resourceful and independent. These qualities are illustrated in *Seyi's Strong Voice.* She initiates and establishes few projects to help HIV members and families of AIDs victim:

> In the following months, the New Era Bible Church started a few projects to help HIV positive members and the families of Aids victims. More importantly, the church started an awareness campaign to talk to people about the danger of AIDs. They told people about the causes of AIDs and how to avoid being infected. Seyi

> was a member of a new youth club that was formed in the church. It was called the HIV Awareness Club… Seyi did not limit her work to the church (SSV: 46)

Seyi's new qualities and self-worth are not limited to her sex. She makes manifest her independent and resourceful qualities when she initiates the campaign against discrimination of those living with HIV and AIDS in the church. She is a symbol of the girl-child who gives a new face and voice to that girl-child who has been ignored, when she could be at the forefront and heart of the nation and world development.

3.4 Bid for Equal Rights for the Girl-child in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice*

There is the need to treat the girl-child character in Nigerian children's literature with impartiality and integrity. In the light of this, the liberal feminists and their literature, fight for a fair and just treatment for the girl-child. Through the character of Onyema in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize*, it is deduced that Onyema has been unjustly treated despite her labour and sacrifices (at such a tender age) to her family. There seems to be less preference and entitlement to reciprocate her sacrifice. This is exemplified when Onyema's father, Mr. Agu argued with Mr. Nwiboko that: "í don't believe in educating girls beyond primary school, 'Mr. Agu said, 'it's just a waste of time and money.'" (TP:3). From Mr. Agu and Mr. Nwiboko's discussion on page three (3) shows the girl-child through the character of Onyema is unfairly and unjustly treated compared to their male counterpart. Mr. Agu did not refute the claim when he stated that it is a waste of time and resources to finance a girl-child to through secondary (school) Education.

Ogbonnaya echoes this fact when he rejoices with Onyema after she won the scholarship-thus: "'Papa will pay my fees to secondary school, anyway. Remember, he wants me to be a doctor'". (*TP*:25). Ogbonnaya suggests to the child-reader that despite the acclaimed important

role the girl-child plays in the family she is being treated unfairly. Radizk (2002:51) acknowledges that a relationship is fair or just if the benefits that flow from each to the other are on par, that is, if each girl-child gives as much as she gets. Invariably, when one has significantly more than the other gives, then it can be said that there is a denial of her legitimate entitlement to reciprocate. Analysing from the opinion of Radizk, Ogbonnaya tends to 'have it all' from their father's comparism to Onyema. Ogbonnaya gains more favour in decision making, choices of personal autonomy, the time allotted and use of resources, unlike Onyema who suffers from almost denial of choices, restricted decisions, limited time and resources as a result of male preference. The traditional heterosexual relationship between Onyema, her father, (Mr. Agu) and her brother, (Ogbonnaya) is often unfair and exploitative to the girl-child, 'Onyema'.

Liberal feminists have tendencies to make readers sensitive to the adverse injustice meted on the girl-child and ways to resolve it. In *The Prize*, Onyema is brought out of this stereotypical dilemma with the help of her mother, Mrs. Agu. This is done when she decided to pay Onyema's examination fees without the knowledge of her husband, (Mr. Agu). As illustrated on page five (5) and six (6) of Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* thus: "later, Onyema told her mother about her teacher's visit. Mrs. Agu promised to help. "'Oh, thank you, Mama! Exclaimed Onyema, not knowing exactly what her mother would do. 'The form cost ten naira,' Onyema added….' Go back to work now,' Mrs. Agu said. 'I' m going to speak to Mr. Nwiboko" (*TP*: 5-6). Okin (1989:100) acknowledges that: when children are raised within an unjust family setting; families which lack "equality and reciprocity," and are characterised by dependence and domination" they are not likely to develop a requisite sense of justice. The actions of Mrs. Agu have a tendency to promote equality in the family and society at large. Her actions make Onyema reflect on her own preference and make a resourceful choice(s). Okin's argument could

be used to reposition the character of Onyema to the child-reader to believe that girl-child is entitled to fair and just treatment at home or in public.

Cornell (1998: xii) opines that social equality should be redefined so as to serve as freedom. Cornel's position about the need for social equality is put to play through the character of Onyema in *The Prize*. Onyema as a girl-child is presented to reject her stereotypical image of being a second-class citizen and regain her freedom. Onyema's father, Mr. Agu attest to this fact thus: "'my daughter is too clever for him.'…he said you are too clever for the men in the village.'" (TP: 26-27). Mr. Agu's decisive conclusion is in line with the liberal feminist's ideas and practices that challenge the consideration of placing the girl-child as second class. Finally, Onyema, Ogbonnaya alongside her male counterparts are rated and treated as equals at home, school and community at large.

3.5 Techniques used at Projecting the Girl-child in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice*

Adimora-Ezeigbo examines the girl-child in *The Prize* with the character of Onyema and in *Seyi's Strong Voice* with the character of Seyi as an imitation of the Nigerian girl-child experience(s). She creates a girl-child character that has close affinities with Nigerian experiences. Thus Adimora-Ezeigbo finds a suitable way out for the girl-child to be a responsible adult in future. Adimora-Ezeigbo does this by equipping the girl-child character with the right values. With which she can confront the decadence of traditional and modern life by promoting gender complementarity. In Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice,* liberal feminists techniques are used as analytical tools because there are elements such as the device of peaceful protest, affirmative action and anti-discriminative campaigns as a mode of projecting the girl-child (ren) and hearing their views. *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice* are used as a tool

to re-present the girl-child from being underrepresented. These books are used to create awareness about the marginalisation perpetuated against the girl-child in the society and ways to defy them. In *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice,* Adimora-Ezeigbo presents the character of Onyema and Seyi to use their talents and available resources to fight for a better and equal chance in their society.

The choice of setting in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice* suits the themes concerning the projection of the girl-child in Nigerian Children's literature. These settings include home, school and urban-cum country setting. Ezenwanebe (2008:272) posits that:

> The setting is well selected to suit the themes. It is predominantly home and school and urban cum country settings. The family setting is used as a microcosm of the society. The social world of the stories is an evil one which challenges the young protagonists with barriers that at first seem insurmountable.

Ezenwanebe's view can be said to be a replica of girl-child experience. In *The Prize*, Onyema's family and Seyi's family in *Seyi's Strong Voice* are microcosms of the Nigerian society. The social world of the two stories challenge the stereotypical barriers and underrepresentation of the girl-child which at initial stage seems unconquerable. Onyema feels she could not fight her father, but feels resolving to death as an escape route. While Seyi in *Seyi's Strong Voice* feels that exposing her family's alignment in the church will make others discontinue their resentments towards her brother and mother.

The use of linear plots in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice* develop and unfold by contrast in action(s) of the girl-child characters- Onyema and Seyi respectively. *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice* have one main plot respectively, flowing from beginning to end in such a way that captures and sustains the description of the girl-child to the child reader

respectively. In Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize,* Onyema is presented to the reader as being deprived of her autonomy. This limits her to the house to do domestic chores. Her father's figure, who is authoritarian is contrasted by Mrs. Agu who is liberal and believes in egalitarian life. Also, Mr. Nwiboko is juxtaposed with Mr. Agu because of his belief in giving the girl-child equal opportunity to be educated as the boy-child. The girl-child as represented by Onyema is given freedom to let loose her potentials rather than relegating her to the position of a second-class citizen. Mr. Agu and Mr. Nwiboko's differences have a direct or indirect influence on Onyema's life. Mr. Agu and Mr. Nwiboko's figure, condition and improve Onyema's life by creating a new consciousness about the new status of the girl-child in the family and society at large. Mr. Nwiboko and Mrs. Agu create a space for the 'reborn of the 'girl-child character in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize.*

Also in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Seyi's Strong Voice,* the plot flows from beginning to the end -with a journey into the dream land. The dream land enhances the pilot. The dream motivates Seyi to be an activist of an egalitarian society. Seyi's conversation with her father in the dream land steers her into the forefront to fight against HIV/AIDs stigmatization in her family. In order to survive in the world full of discrimination she initiates and establishes clubs that can contribute meaningfully to the life of the young ones. *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice'* s plots move with the change in settings and actions unfold from the conventional girl-child journey of naivety to being wise, negative stereotype to being treated as a responsible member who can contribute her quota to the society. The plot and setting also change from the girl-child description as being ignorant to being knowledgeable, slavery and relegated to being free, treated as equals and liberated.

The language used by Adimora-Ezeigbo Akachi in *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice* present girls to the child reader in a simple and accessible medium. The use of bold writings, illustrations and pictures capture and enhance the projection of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. The traditional and the changing role of the girl-child are analysed in clear terms. Thereby adding meaning to the stereotypical roles and newly ascribed roles of the girl-child.

In Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize,* "Mr. Nwiboko even organised extra lessons, but only a few of the girls could stay. Most of them went home to help their mothers working in the house or selling things in the market…. It was Onyema who often fetched water, and gathered firewood and cooked the evening meals". (TP: 8-9). This projects the stereotypical role of the girl-child through the character of Onyema. While the newly ascribed role could also be deduced from Adimora-Ezeigbo's Seyi's Strong Voice thus:

> Seyi was a member of a new youth club that was formed in the church. It was called the HIV Awareness Club. Seyi and other members of the club spoke to youths about HIV/AIDS. Seyi did not limit her work to the church. With the support of some Primary Five and Six pupils of her school, she started another club. This was called the Young Readers Club. They read books about HIV/AIDS to know more about the disease. Seyi and her friends knew that reading was important and was the best way to get information. Not only about AIDS but also about other things (SSV: 46-47).

Adimora-Ezeigbo in these two books above uses subtle language device of peaceful protest, affirmative action and anti-discriminative campaigns as a mode of projecting the girl-child and hearing their views. In *The Prize* Onyema uses peaceful protest thus 'I'll run away if Papa tries to make me marry.' (pg. 10)-use of peaceful protest. 'I'm going to be an engineer,' she said (pg.14) - affirmative action. 'Papa, 'she burst out, suddenly. I won't be Onyia's wife! I'm going

to be an engineer.'(18)-Anti- discriminative campaign. With these modes, Adimora boosts the girl-child who strives for equality, an egalitarian society and freedom to do her will.

Adimora-Ezeigbo in an interview with Oluigbo in Oloruntoba-Oju and Oloruntoba-Oju (2013: n.pag) explains her compromise and negotiation in projecting her female characters (which include the girl-child):

> [My] female characters are not usually combative, but of course they are highly principled characters who know what they want and how to go about it […] My women are strong and very resilient; they are not weaklings, but their strength is not in violence or confrontation but in being principled and self-controlled, in collaborating with other people around them. But of course, if this collaboration brings about confrontation, they will move away and chart out their own survival.

The use of language and pictures in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice* give pleasure and bright atmosphere to the child reader. They develop the child reader's emotion and imaginative mind. These devices show the girls as resilient, brave, strong, active, non-violent or non-confrontational but principled and have a sense of self control to survive in a male dominated society.

The use of pictures in children's stories enhance peculiar issues concerning the girl-child. They bring abstract or familiar happenings closer to the child-reader. These enable the child-reader to compare issues relating to the girl-child in real life with the literary world. For example, projecting the stereotypical role of the girl-child in *The Prize* through the use of pictures and languages used on Page eight and nine. The child reader is more conversant with the stereotypical role of the girl-child through the character of Onyema. These include the stereotypical roles of cooking, fetching water and firewood on one hand. The new roles which project the girl-child to achieve equality such as attending school with her male counterpart (pg.7) and reading (pg. 21), etc.

Adimora-Ezeigbo's pictures in *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice*, has been able to create and incorporate the experience of a typical Nigerian girl-child into art. Kiefer (1995: 129- 134) observes that:

> In good picture books no single element exist apart from others, rather, the illustrator will use principles of composition to unify elements on each page and on each succeeding page. In arranging the elements on each page, including the printed type, the artist tries to obtain an effective balance between unity and variety and creates certain visual patterns that may be carried on from page to page

Kiefer suggests that pictures and written words are like "Siemens twins". To Kiefer, picture and language unifies the story and encourages coherence in the story line. Kiefer is of the opinion that both pictures and use of language strikes a balance and foster easy understand of the literary text. Adimora-Ezeigbo's use of picture and language is obviously encouraging. Adimora-Ezeigbo unify them to foster coherence in *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice.* Thus, these pictures balance and ease reading to the child-reader.

The author makes use of third person omniscient narrator and foreshadowing. In *The Prize,* the use of omniscient narrator tells the story with the character of the girl-child (Onyema). The narrator tends to follow her in every battle throughout the storyline to ensure that she does what she wants, rather than what her father wants her to do. With this, the author promotes the girl-child's personal autonomy, equality and an egalitarian society as seen in every page of Adimora-Ezeigbo's children books under study. The omniscient narrator gives a report on Onyema's experience as she battles for her views and will to be respected. These techniques help the author to achieve authorial extinction in *The Prize.* The narrator in the story seems objective and convincing. The Omniscient narrator creates the girl-child through two people's form of narrative voice- the narrator and the protagonist.

Foreshadowing is another technique used by Adimora-Ezeigbo in *Seyi's Strong Voice.* The use of foreshadowing contributes immensely to the development of the role of the girl-child through the character of Seyi. Foreshadowing is a literary device in which a writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story. Adimora-Ezeigbo uses foreshadowing when Seyi dreamt about her father and he told her to make sure she speaks up in church on behalf of the family, so as to stop the discrimination against her brother and mother.

> "Seyi, listen to me. I'm sorry about the way I died. But I don't want your mother, Jimmy and you to suffer. You must help your mother. Try and make her happy. I'm sorry for everything. But there is hope. She has the drugs I didn't have. She needs to eat well for the drugs to help her. I want you to speak up in church. You must tell them to help the people who have AIDS and those that are HIV positive like your mother. Don't be afraid to speak the truth. Don't be shy. They will listen to you. Goodbye, Seyi. Goodbye, my child. " (SSV: 33-34).

This scenario between Seyi and her father gives a hint about the development of Seyi's action(s) and character. It makes her a voice of change in an egalitarian society. The use of foreshadowing makes the story objective and as real as possible, promote the reader with a wilful suspension of disbelief. No wonder, Barnet (1975:75) posits that "the foreshadowing that would eliminate surprise or at least, greatly reduce it, and thus destroy a story that has nothing else to offer, is a powerful tool in the hands of the writer of a serious fiction". This hint from Seyi's father tends to end discrimination of the girl-child (Seyi) and stigmatisation of her family members. The use of foreshadowing and the diction enables the author to make use of 'implied author persona' in the story. This is what Baranet (1975:87) means when he posits that …although an author writes a story, someone else tells it.

Dictions are used to subtly project acceptable and unacceptable characters and events concerning the girl-child. Adimora-Ezeigbo's choice of words is part of children's active vocabulary. These choice of words contribute to the tone of the stories and subtly schemes the

girl-child in a positive light. In Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize*, Mr. Onyia wants to marry Onyema, a thirteen year old girl. This act will hinder her from furthering her education into secondary level. Onyema rejects this act of being married off to Onyia. Her description of the Onyia projects her lack of interest thus: "Old and fat and Ugly" (Pg.5).

In projecting the girl-child in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi's Strong Voice*, there is also credence to didactic messages for the child-reader. The child-reader learns from the actions and experiences of the girl-child in the literary world. Virtue is often rewarded and vice is often punished. The presentation of the girl-child as the protagonist with the character of Onyema in *The Prize* and Seyi in *Seyi's Strong Voice,* who are also heroines, Adimora-Ezeigbo creates a girl-child (ren) character(s) that triumph over their stereotypical and discriminatory images and roles and in the end achieve their goals. The child-reader could easily identify with these two protagonists. These two protagonists encourage them to reject stereotypical roles and image(s) that serve as impediments to the girl-child. The protagonists, Onyema and Seyi make use of their personal initiatives to surmount their obstacles. Adimora-Ezeigbo's use of supernatural elements steers Seyi into motion. It creates an optimistic tone to project a new face of the girl-child who could talk in a patriarchal set up without being challenged.

On the whole, Adimora- Ezeigbo projects the girl-child experiences from a typical Nigerian perspective and world view. She knits the Nigerian girl-child experiences through the character of Onyema in *The Prize* and Seyi in *Seyi's Strong Voice* into literature for children. Adimora-Ezeigbo succeeded in creating and projecting a 'new phase' of the girl-child for the child-reader to emulate. Adimora-Ezeigbo creates enabling environment that is devoid of discriminations and stereotypes in public and private spheres. The characters of Onyema (13

years old) and Seyi (11 years old), portray that the girl-child is an important being in Nigerian children's literature and society. The projection of the girl-child in a new light through the character of Onyema and Seyi, is drawn from their interaction with other characters. What these characters do and say about themselves? What other characters say about them? And what the author says about them. Prominent settings which include family, school, church, civil-societies used in the texts form part of the girl-child's life and shape them into adulthood. Thus Adimora-Ezeigbo succeeded in empowering the 'new' girl-child and keeps the child-reader informed about the shifting roles of the girl-child in the new age.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECTION OF THE GIRL-CHILD IN MABEL SEGUN'S *MY FATHER'S DAUGHTER* AND *MY MOTHER'S DAUGHTER*

4.1 Preamble

From inception, most writers of Nigerian children's literature to a large extent have written children's books that perpetuate the relegation of the girl-child. With close references to selected works of Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*, this chapter attests to the positive and dynamic projection of the girl-child. This does not mean that there are no traces of stereotype.

Some critics regard Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* as books meant for adults. One of such critics is Acholonu (1989:65), who opines that "*My Father's Daughter* was to her mind, written, "not for children, but for adult, if not learned audience". Acholonu argues that the book portrays a narrator 'taking a retrospective and commentative look

at her early life and society of which she was part'. This assertion by Acholonu is seemly true that Segun Mabel makes use of a retrospective account of her childhood experiences in her community. Segun Mabel gives recaps of her childhood experiences as a girl-child, she tries to negotiate her positive, selfless space in her family and community. This is carried out alongside other characters in the texts under study. Thus, Mabel serves as a positive role model to the child-reader.

Acholonu may not be totally right about Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* because, the author has decided to write about typical childhood in a recognisable period in the history of her country. Segun Mabel expresses passing ideas about what it means to be a child under particular circumstances, which Martini (1997:220) refers to as:

> The periods of no-return. With a deep sense of impending losses and changes in society linking this genre to early fiction written in Africa (Nigeria) before and after independence, Seem to me to be trying to capture both universal as well as individual insights, past responses of (female) children to environments of threatened peace and tranquillity. They are all examples of writings on the inevitable discontinuities brought about by fast moving political history.

Acholonu and Martini's respective argument provide that Segun Mabel writes her childhood experience (s) in a threatened childhood environment(s). She exposes environment(s) that is/are undergoing changes in political history. Hence Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* depict the changing epoch in relation to thinking and the ability of the girl-child in the course of Nigerian history and Nigerian children's literature. To wrap it up, the description of the girl-child experiences in Nigerian society is depicted in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* and analysed through liberal feminist's lens.

4.2 Issues about the Girl-child's Personal Autonomy in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*

The proposition for personal autonomy of the girl-child in this research has to do with the process and outcome of her independent decisions that influence her choices. Such autonomy could be an enhancement of assets and capabilities that stimulate changes in power distribution and the institutions in the society. Alfano et.al (2010:4) summarize the numerous definitions of autonomy given by different scholars thus:

> Autonomy has been defined variously as 'the ability to influence and control one's environment' (Satilios-Rothschild, 1982), or the 'capacity to obtain information and make decisions about one's private concern and those of one's imitates' (Dyson and Moore (1983a)). Dixson-Mueller (1978) defines it as 'the degree of access to and control over material and social awareness within the family, in the community and in the society at large'

These definitions gathered by Alfano et.al, provide that autonomy has to do with a person's influence and control over the environment. It includes getting information and making decisions concerning ones private and public life, in order to create awareness. It is against this backdrop that the projection of girl-child's personal autonomy in Segun Mabel is explored.

The settings in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* from Akure (Ikare) to (village)-Ikole to (town)-Osogbo and finally Lagos respectively, mirror real life experiences that are peculiar to a growing girl-child in a south western part of Nigeria. This is done by means of retrospective relay of Mabel's childhood experiences of the protagonist. Mabel is portrayed as a representative of a girl-child growing up in a changing Nigerian society. In *My Father's Daughter* at an early age of four, Mabel fights for her freedom to do what she desires and makes her choices. She rejects the clichéd role of being attached to her mother as a girl-child rather she becomes more attached to her father. As a result of this attachment, her father takes her for hunting.

She is depicted as someone who breaks the stereotypical description of the girl-child. The way and manner in which she relates with other characters, what they say about her? and what

she thinks of herself? Makes her reject the stereotypical label of being a mere domestic being, restricted, passive, reserved and unintelligent. Mabel, the protagonist is inquisitive about things around her, such as watching her father's activities while planting yam and other farm activities. Although, Mabel knows her father wouldn't let her do any work at the farm, because of her age and gender. Her father takes his time to explain farming processes to her. The protagonist explains on page twenty-nine and thirty (29-30) thus:

> Father used to take me with him sometimes when he was going to the nearby farm….but above all, I enjoyed watching father bending down his tall frame and putting the pieces of yam into the heaps…although father would not let me do any work on the farm, he took care to explain to me how everything was done…I decided I must have a farm of my own and plant this yam (water yam) there. (MFD: 29-30).

Mabel is treated as someone who is incapable of carrying out any farming activity. Her father reduces her to the position of an onlooker. This does not deter Mabel from accomplishing her dream to have a farm, so that she can plant yams. Rather she uses the medium to learn from her father's farming activities, where she can develop her skills in order to experiment her potentials.

Mabel's determination and zeal offer a new insight to the character of the girl-child who upholds the belief that, in as much as a boy or man can farm, she believes that nothing should stop her from having her personal farm and also plant water yam. Mabel's affirmative actions, adventurous life style, determination and desire makes her have her own farm. She is later joined by Okhen to carry out farming activities on a fallow land. The narrative captures the incident thus:

> Okhen was a girl of about fifteen. I think she was a relation of ours but I am not sure…Okhen was a very cheerful person with a fund of knowledge which made me look up to her as a very wise young person-not as wise as Father, of course. She told me many things which fired my imagination…Okhen and I chose a corner of the farm which Father seldom reached. In fact, there was nothing planted there….Anyway, we got hold of a hoe and dug heaps as we had seen the servants do….The soil was different in colour from that on which Father had

> planted his own yams, but this did not bother us…. I could hardly tear myself away because the thought that I now had my own little farm and was going to grow my own crops made my heart swell with pride and pleasure.…Okhen had to drag me away by the hand and even as I went reluctantly, I was constantly slewing my head round to look at the heaps. They were not as big as Father's but they look all right (MFD: 30-33).

Mabel and Okhen's actions, thoughts and skills are appreciated as a deviation from the stereotypical illustration of the girl-child, who is prevented from farming activities. These girls are described by the author to be active, brilliant, knowledgeable and wise. Their reasoning, despite being girls reshape their thinking and steers them to creatively venture into other fields that shape their life. The girls prove that there is no reason why they should be unnecessarily restricted to the domestic areas of their lives.

Mabel is happy when her desire becomes a reality. With an overwhelming joy and self-satisfaction, she couldn't resist working and spending more time at the farm. Through the character of Mabel, the girl-child is given her freedom to do her will without being totally restricted on the bases of her sex. The use of picture on page 32 of Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* buttresses Mabel and Okhen's breaking the girl-child stereotypical representation jinx.



Picture VIII

The above picture provides a visual restatement of words. It depicts in detail the emerging role of the girl-child. This makes the researcher gains a better understanding of the differences between the traditional and contemporary ways of life that project the girl-child. This is in line with what Johnson (1993) in Fang (1996:140) says about pictures, in picture books the child-reader enters the dual meaning environment and extracts from it and enhances understanding of linguistic language.

Picture VIII meticulously illustrates what the written words say. It gives details to guide the child reader's attention. Nikolajeva (2005:226) observes that:

> In between illustrated texts and wordless picture narratives, however, a variety of relationship between words and images can be discovered. Here are the most essential types of interaction: Symmetrical: words and pictures basically tell the same story repeating what is essentially the same information in different forms of communication. Complementary: words and pictures complement each other's stories and compensate for each other's insufficiencies. Enhancing: pictures significantly enhance (amplify, reinforce) the verbal story, or occasionally the words expand the picture so that different information in the two modes of communication produces a more complex meaning. Counterpointing: words and pictures tell two different stories, cooperating to create a new meaning; both are indispensable for decoding the message.

In analysing Picture VIII above, there exist a variety of relationship between the image and the words. The words and picture basically tell the same story by emphasising the alternative reading and emerging role of the girl-child. The words and pictures are just same medium of communicating the girl-child roles to the child reader. The picture compensates for the words deficiencies. As illustrated in the picture above, the picture clearly shows Mabel on her dream farm. The picture projects her reluctancy to leave the farm. It further displays Okhen and Mabel's heaps of yam cultivated without any supervision.

This picture presents the independency of the girls. Also Okhen's stereotypical role of wrapping their brother on her back did not hinder them from doing their will. This picture projects to the reader that the girl-child is not withdrawn nor constrained. This could suggest to the reader that at the end of the story, the girl-child is free to make her choices. On the other hand, they are indirectly helped to carry out their intentions. Their father's servant provides them with seedlings and crops to plant. This is likely to cultivate in the mind-eyes of the child-reader that the girl-child, if given chances, can express her free will without contravening the rules. Also, that she is free from the patriarchal domination and can do more positive exploit. In addition, she can contributes meaningfully to socio-political and economic status of her family, community and nation at large.

Despite the hiccups, after their active performance on the farm, which of course was contrary to Mabel's expectation, the plants did not germinate well because of inadequate soil nutrients. This brings sadness and disappointment to them. Their attempt and resilient spirit to showcase their talents is a significant deviation from the girl-child unequal representation and restrictions. In addition, Mabel's father's bid to encourage her by giving her a new plot of land to farm further reiterates the girl-child's ability to be at liberty to carry out her wish without being dictated to. Her father encourages her thus: "Tomorrow I'll give you a plot with good loamy soil and you can plant some late maize there" (MFD: 46). This quotation may show that Mabel's father believes in his daughter's ability to indulge in other activities aside domestic chores. Consequently, the gesture by Mabel's father to assist his daughter to realise her dream could be inferred that without the help of the male figure, (her father) that the girl-child, (Mabel) cannot do anything tangible.

In a similar vein, Mabel and Okhen's drive to build a shed on the farm is also a break from the conventional role of the girl-child. Their actions, desires and keen motivation make them inventive, adventurous and self-reliant thus: Okhen said:

> "Let's build a shed" I was delighted with this suggestion for it meant that my brother could be put in the shade while we worked. We had seen our servants build sheds before and we thought it was not a difficult thing to do. …when everything was ready Okhen dig four holes with a cutlass and we put the poles inside with fork of the branches uppermost….we were very pleased with our work…we were in our own little world and nobody could interfere with us (MFD:36-37)

Okhen and Mabel show that irrespective of their gender, they can directly or indirectly carry out what they want without "fear" and reproach. They have their personal tendency to satisfy their will with a sense of determination and fulfilment, by building a shed for shelter. So that they can rest anytime they are tired and also keep their younger brother to play or sleep under it. In spite

of their roles as onlookers, they feel they can do what their father's servant does at the farm such as planting and building of sheds. In the end, they are pleased with their own creation. They develop their own world that cannot be interfered with. Even when the shed fell, they are not discouraged but they try to mentor and motivate their desires despite all odds.

With Mabel and Okhen's actions and display of their determination and learnt skills, they are presented to the child reader with equal treatment. They are placed on equal grounds like every other member of the community without being limited by their age or sex. Also, Mabel's action contests the fact that she can have her way or do her will. She succeeded in being independent due to her active, resilient and intelligent steps taken to be free from stereotypical portraiture of the girl-child.

Furthermore, in *My Mother's Daughter,* Mabel's desire to ride a bicycle is not compromised by her sex. Despite all odds, she is encouraged by the choir master (Mr. Aboderin). He gave her his bicycle to ride home on his behalf. Mabel taught herself to ride a bicycle without anybody's guidance. There are traces of adamant passion by Mabel to carry out her desires. She started with every little opportunity provided to her in order to attempt and unleash her potentials and talent:

> I liked the choirmaster very much, so I decided to relieve him of the burden of the bicycle. One day, I went up to him and asked: "May I wheel the bicycle home for you?" he was delighted. He handed over the bicycle and I pushed it home for him. I did this several times and each time I wondered whether it was easy to ride a bicycle. The temptation became great that one day, I called a passer-by: "please, Sir, could you put me on this bicycle?" the passer by happened to be kind person, though I suppose it was not real kindness to help a child onto a bicycle when it was obvious that she could not ride. Anyway, he did it and, holding onto the handlebars, I rode down the road. I didn't have to use the pedals because the road sloped down. All I had to do was to hang on to the handlebars firmly. It was a most exhilarating ride…little by little, I taught myself to mount the tall bicycle and very soon I was able to ride it, pedalling in the usual way. Oddly enough, I never had a real fall at that time I was teaching myself to ride…. I thought to

> myself: "Not everybody could teach herself to ride. Why, I could ride with only one hand on the handlers. I could even ride with no hand at all on the handlebars. " (MMD: 137-138)

Mabel's desire to ride is not being controlled by anybody, rather her will to ride the bicycle is carried out to the latter. This establishes the fact that her sex is not a hindrance to her riding skills. She portrays that riding a bicycle is not only a male affair. She proves that being a female, she as can ride it just like other men and boys in her community. She expresses bravery, courage, confidence and a never die spirit to match up with the technological advancement in the society, inorder to ease the stress of the modern world.

The privilege accorded to Mabel is quite different from Onyema in Adimora's *The Prize.* Unlike Mabel, Onyema is not given any form of privilege to try other abilities, rather she is being conditioned and dictated to by her father. Except with the intervention of her Mother, Mrs. Agu and her Teacher, Mr. Nwiboko. Often times, Onyema tries to carry out most of her desires such as reading with fear of her father in mind. On the contrary, Mabel is clearly presented to be absolutely free from being afraid of any male figure.

Actions of Okhen and Mabel align with Okin (1989:97) view which states that

> Girl's participation in families is, especially in the early year's non voluntary. The family affects the development of girls' sense of self-worth, as well as their preferences, and the capacities, like the capacity for reflection and imagination, on which their ability to live their dreams depend. The liberal feminists believe that the act of limiting and restricting the girl-child is unfair. They believe the girl-child should make her own choices and be guided by her own sense of self-interest and values.

Okin's opinion, shows that there is a rewritten image of the girl-child through the character of Okhen and Mabel. These girls show a new phase and development in girl's sense of self-worth, preferences and capacities in their reflections and imaginations. They promote their abilities to live a life of their own choosing without being unfairly limited. The male-controlled laws and pattern does not to have much effect on them. These anticipated qualities encourages Mabel and

Okhen to carry out their will and preference. These laws stimulate their capabilities and abilities, as such, guides their sense of self-interest and values.

Challenging the restricted personal autonomy of the girl-child in some aspects of religious and traditional practices. The author shows some sort of discriminations in the age-grade activities of the girls to do their chosen. This illustration is made through what the girls wear to Sunday outing. The author presents that there are discriminations about what the girls wear, due to their religious believes, such as being a Christian, Moslem and Pagan. In addition, the author presents the girl-child, through the character of Mabel, to challenge these restrictions to join other girls for the Sunday outing without consulting or taking permission from anybody. The protagonist stated her thoughts and action thus:

> My one consuming thought now was to take part in the Sunday outing, simply in order to wear a Buba and wrapper. I knew mother would never let me go with the other girls. She would say I was too young. I resolved not to say anything to her but to go on my own.so on Sunday morning, as soon as we had had breakfast, I went into our room and, taking the cover from my bed, folded it into four. This I tied over my day frock as I had no buba and Okhen's would be too large for me. I looked at myself in the mirror and the covering cloth seemed to look all right. Sneaking out by the back door. I went to the main road to wait for others. They had to pass by our gate on their way Moro. I did not have long to wait for soon they came down the road dancing and singing. When they came abreast of me, I joined them. I was the youngest person there- the others were from seven to fifteen years old. But nobody questioned my right to be in their company. I was a privileged person in those days, being 'Pastor's daughter', and normal rules did not apply to me. (MFD: 49-50).

Mabel's decision not to adhere to the community's rules and practises seems to project the girl-child in another light. She neither listen to her parents nor follows the rules of the community. She believes it will stop her from doing what she likes. Mabel decides not to tell her mother nor listen to what her mother would say but resolves to sneak out of the house to join other girls for the Sunday outing. This shows her quest to be independent and be treated as equal like others

irrespective of her age difference. This is illustrated in the picture on page 51 of *My Fathers Daughter* as displayed on the next page.



Picture IX

This picture enhances the freedom of unmarried girls to participate in religious functions. No wonder Berger in Albers (2008:165) agrees that:

> When it comes to reading children's literature, especially by the young readers who often use illustration to read story, art has everything to do with the rest of our lives. Through art and image in children's literature (and other media form), children learn to read characters, events and action; they build assumptions about the world and the people in it through this reading.

Berger suggests that through the use of pictures, children learn to read characters, events, action and build norms about the world and the people. *My Father's Daughter* captures the picture of happy girls matching through the street for a special outing. Mabel decides to join other age grades among the girls, despite the fact that they are older than her. She isn't put off nor constrained from joining them. Although, she is portrayed as a privileged girl, because of her father's role in the community. Through the use of this picture. It can be deduced that Mabel is the youngest of them all. To a large extent, Mabel's action may be regarded as an act of disobedience and stubbornness. The author appears to promote ill morals in this context but this picture further enhances Mabel's emancipation. This promotes her freedom to make her choice and do as she desires irrespective of the opinions and views of her parents, custom and tradition.

Lack of personal freedom of the girl-child is still reflected in religious participations and functions. For instance during the Edi festival, a Christian girl-must not do or act like a Pagan. Mabel rebels again this act by singing one of the songs of the Edi Festival. Her father scolded her through the use of flash back when Mabel recounts the experience thus:

> I remember in my sixth year listening to a group of young girls singing outside the north gate of the Mission Compound. It was a catchy tune they were rendering and I was soon able to imitate them, though the words were meaningless to me. But when I sang it in the house Father got up in terrible anger and asked me where I had learnt such a depraved song. "You must never sing such songs again," he ordered, after I had told him the origin. "You are a Christian girl, not a pagan. If you must sing, sing a hymn" (MFD: 60).

This flash back demonstrates that a Christian through the character of Mabel is not totally free to associate with the pagans. Mabel is being conditioned to sing only hymns as dictated by her father, a patriarchal figure. Mabel shows her displeasure to this discrimination by slightly displaying her desire to sing songs from the pagan extractions of the community.

McClain (2006:79) postulates the belief that liberal feminists hold that the state must protect and promote the development of autonomy capacities in children especially girls. For example, they hold that child-marriage should be legally prohibited. The character of Titi presumed that, the girl-child has limited autonomy to oppose age-long tradition of child-marriage. Often times, the girl-child is used as a commodity to settle family's debt. The argument between Mabel's mother, Titi's father and the Bow-legged man (Titi's betrothed) show the orthodox representation of the girl-child in the narrative thus:

> "Tell her why we've come," the man in the chair growled. The other man continued, "Titi is my daughter. She is betrothed to this gentleman here. They are to get married next moon. But she has run away. She must come back with us." Mother said, "If she does not want to marry him why are you forcing her?" Before Titi's father could answer, the other man jumped up and shouted: "Because she has been betrothed to me ever since she was a child and I have fulfilled all my obligations, and more besides." He turned to his companion and continued "Two seasons ago, didn't I give you two hundred yams when the locusts ate up your farm? And before then didn't I help with your mother's funeral ceremonies? And when your mother was ill, who paid the medicine men? Not to mention the bride-price and customary gifts which I have sent regularly since our betrothal. Deny it before the lady, if you can." The other man said: "I am not denying anything, nor have I ever denied all that you have I ever denied all that you have listed." "Then why is the girl being kept from me?" "No one is keeping her from you" the other man retorted. "I have told you she ran away. Just let me talk to this good lady here, and perhaps she can persuade her to come back with us." Bow-legs looked as if he would burst with anger. "Persuade, indeed!" he shouted. "She doesn't have to be persuaded. She must come back. She belongs to me." (MFD: 115-116)

The dialogue between Mabel's mother, Titi's father and the Bow-legged man (Titi's betrothed) exemplifies the fact that, the traditional girl-child lacks independence. This is could be made manifest from the day she is being conceived. She is being conditioned to follow the patriarchal laws which include child marriage. She has no right to rebel against it. It is portrayed that the girl-child during this changing era, is seen as a common property of a man. She is seen as an entity who doesn't have a say concerning her life.

Often times, the girl-child is forced into 'an unholy' marriage against her consent. The dialogue between Mabel's mother and Titi's father intensify the lack of freedom for Titi to do her preference or decide her future as an individual thus: "…mother asked Titi's father why he didn't pay back the money and yams and save Titi from marrying such a man…. He said: "I am a poor man. I cannot pay back the debt. I'm afraid Titi will have to marry him."(MFD: 116:117). Titi is used as an exchange commodity to settle outstanding debts of her immediate family, despite the fact that it's contrary to her wish. Titi's action is presented as non-voluntary because her father tries to sway her sense of self-worth, preference, capabilities and shape her future by forcing her into an early marriage. Little wonder, liberal feminists want the girl-child to be free from the limits set by patriarchal and moralistic laws. The ability of the girl-child to have her own preferences and outlook about life is brought to limelight, when Mabel points out that the only option available to Titi- is to seek solace in running away.

Titi's option to run away initiates a mark of freedom and resentment towards the old tradition of child-marriage. Titi's act of fleeing shows her displeasure in getting married off to The Bow-Legged Man. This is in tune with the liberal feminists believe that the act of limiting and restricting the girl-child to early marriage is unfair. As such, in order to provide an alternative solution to this prevalent issues, Mabel recount the use of peaceful protest with Titi's act of running away to shows that, the girl-child instead of resolving to violence in making her will and resentments known resolves to run way. This presupposes that the girl-child should be given chances to make her own choices and be guided by her own sense of self-interest and values. Titi's action discourages the girl-chid from being a dogmatic follower of the words and actions of others. The author encourages the child-reader to live a life of own preference. Titi uses a divisive means to reject child marriage.

4.3 The Girl-child as an Activist for an Egalitarian Society in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*

The representation of girl-child in Nigerian children's literature during the era of changing technological advancement, reflects the changing status of the girl-child. This is not to say that there are no traces of the girl-child stereotypical image. Despite these stereotypical roles and sexisms, Segun Mabel has tried to display through her autobiographies for children, (*My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter)* the quest of the girl-child to be heard. This projects her in a new light, rather than being pictured in a stereotypical and discriminatory manner. The girl-child is being displayed to be entitled to other options. These options are devoid of unfair restrictions, deprivation on the bases of sex. This new girl-child imagery appears to be in line with what the liberal feminists uphold in their literature that the girl-child should be entitled to options.

Initially, the girl-child is portrayed to be unfairly restricted due to economic deprivation, stereotype and sexual discrimination in education and employment. In order to have access to options, the girl-child tries to fight this cultural homogeneity that unfairly limit her potentials. Mabel recounts in *My Mother's Daughter* when she frowns at her uncle's attempt to choose her a future career thus:

> Sometimes after I returned from Owo, I overheard uncle and Chief Wife discussing my future one evening. Uncle said, he wanted me to become a nurse when I left elementary school…. Apparently, Uncle did not want me to enter for the examinations. I discovered his reasons later. I did not fancy the career my uncle had chosen for me. What I see of the nurses in the hospital compound did not impress me favourably. Because of their low education and lack of motivations (MMD: 227-228)

Mabel's uncle wants to dictate Mabel's future, but this did not go down well with her. She recounts different reason why she does not like his chosen career. Mabel dislikes the nursing

profession because of illicit behaviours displayed by the nurses and the use of half-baked educated personnel in services of such field. This, she witnessed at the hospital close to her uncle's house.

As shown in Segun Mabel's *My Mother's Daughter*, available options are limited but within this scarce option, government agencies and missionaries through the establishment of schools, try to find a way to fight the unfair restrictions of the girl-child's option to further her education. This is illustrated in *My Mother's Daughter* that despite Mabel's family economic status and hardship after the death of her father. Mabel states the educational choices available to her and the economic implications thus:

> Secondary schools were few and far between, in those days. From Akure to Lagos where they had King's College, Queen's College, the C.M.S Girls' Grammar School and the C.M.S. Girls' School, or any of the few lesser-known schools; or to the Government College, or Kudeti Girls' School, Ibadan. Kudeti was really a kind of primary-cum-secondary modern school. There were not much choice for those interested in acquiring secondary education and even then, they were limited by funds. People in the Akure area were not rich in those days and unless a child got a scholarship to go to these far-off schools, he could only become a pupil teacher (that is, a teacher without teaching qualifications), a nurse or a Clark, on leaving primary school.(MMD:15).

Segun's use of flashback presupposes that there are limited options available to the girl-child in past. The few available school to Mabel include King's College, Queen's College, the C.M.S Girls' Grammar School and the C.M.S. Girls' School, Government College, or Kudeti Girls' School, Ibadan. Despite the available opportunities there seems to be perceived poverty and economic deprivations. Scholarship allotted are given to few privileged children which enables them to go to far-off schools and end up being a Pupil Teacher, Nurse or Clark after leaving primary school.

The girl-child is also being discriminated against, as a result of cultural homogeneity. Her decisions could be hindered as a result of traditional stereotypes and sexisms which are products of some ethnic and cultural groups in Nigeria. For example, Mabel in *My Mother's Daughter* is being asked to hawk *eko* on the street. She has no choice because she is not living with her parents. Failure to do what she is being asked may inquire some wrath. Mabel recalls thus:

> But one day she (second wife) called me, put a tray of eko on my head and asked me to hawk it along the road. I had never done such a thing before. It was alien to the life I had in the Mission Compound where we had seven male servants and some maids…. I felt very miserable. But there was no helping it. I had to hawk the eko….well I felt too ashamed to advertise the eko, so I just walked along the street without saying a word. I returned home about seven in the evening with no single wrap sold. That was the end of the second wife's attempts to turn me into a hawker. (MMD:53-54)

Mabel recalls when her uncle's second wife asked her to hawk in the street. She has no choice because she lives with them and there are no other means of livelihood. She could not refuse the errands. This is buttressed in Makama (2014:1) observation that:

> Girls in Nigeria are often seen moving around in towns and villages and hawking items of paltry value that hardly justifies the hours spent in the burning sun… the parents of the girl-child especially the mother considers their daughters as tools for generating incomes to the family due to poverty and illiteracy instead of sending them to school at their tender age.

This act of hawking is seen as one of the factors that limit potentials of the girl-child. Hence the girl-child through the character of Mabel is being projected in line with Makama's view. Makama observes that girls in Nigeria are often seen around moving from one place to the other hawking in the hot scorching sun, cold or rain. This is a sign of maltreatment. Parents of these

girls especially the mother or "mother figure" like the second wife in *My Mother's Daughter* instructed Mabel to hawk "eko"- pap on the street. Mabel is used as a device to generate income. The time spent on hawking as depicted by the time stipulated by Mabel when she returned home at 7 pm is seen as exploitative. The time she is supposed to spend in class is being hijacked for irrelevant activities and is regarded as dangerous. Mabel's action of not shouting to hawk, but her decision to stay out until late hours without selling any wrap of "eko" is seen as a silent protest against subjugation and girl-child labour. Mabel uses this medium to discourage her Uncle's Second wife from sending her on such errands.

Projecting alternative roles of girl-child in children's literature seek to preach the need for an egalitarian society. This could strengthen autonomy in promoting education, especially for girls. The liberal feminists emphasize the need for equal access to education by girl-child. This is reiterated by Mabel's recollection of her story in *My Mother's Daughter*. Segun reveals obstacles confronting the girl-child who tries to perform excellently in her academics than her male counterpart in school. Mabel describes how she suffered humiliation and battery from her male counterpart, as a result of her brilliant academic performance in school.

> St. David's School, which my uncle's younger children attended, was about one and a half Kilometres from the Hospital Compound. Like most elementary schools, it was co-educational; a fact that was to be a source of trouble to me, for each time I came first in the weekly tests, the boys in my class would waylay me on the way home and give me a beating. I came to dread Friday when our report cards were handed over to us to take home and show our parents or guardians. (MMD: 93)

Mabel the protagonist shows a sense of fear and prejudice to go to school. She is being bullied beaten by the boys in her class. Her success during a weekly test in school has a tendency to serve as impediments because of her sex. This sometimes discourages her from going to school and makes her see her success as an unhappy end in itself. Contrary to Mabel's intents, her

Uncle's second wife, who knows the value of education uses the opportunity to inculcate the values of education in her son, by flogging him anytime he fails his test. This act seems to steer and encourage Mabel to continue to strive for successful academic performance, irrespective of her sex and victimisation from her male counterparts.

Furthermore, girl-child learning processes and school activities are sometimes pilots toward stereotypical fashion. Mabel in *My Mother's Daughter* narrates that:

> Though we girls shared farm work with the boys, when it came to domestic science, we are left alone. I don't remember what the boys did when we were in the domestic science shed-perhaps they put in extra work on the school farm…it was natural for girls in those days to do housework while the boys went scot free. Not that we envy their exception from taking part in the domestic science lessons, During the cookery lessons, we not only prepared they types of food which our parents or guardians would normally prepare at home…. The domestic science lessons were not taken up entirely by cooking. We were also taught how to clean a house, polish furniture and do some laundry. Our teacher was preparing us for the future in the hope that we would make good housewives. She taught us to scrub the flour, holding it by the nearest two corners and dragging it towards our feet. (MMD: 102-103; 105).

The study of domestic science which is solely for the girls portray the stereotypical roles of the girl-child in schools. It is seen as a natural phenomenon for girls to do house chores, while the boys have their freedom. Girls are mandated to undergo domestic science lesson, while the boys are left out. The girls are taught aspects of cookery, cleaning, and laundry. These lessons are meant to prepare the girls as future housewives.

Despite these stereotypical lessons, the girls are subjected to in domestic science. Also, other scientific subjects are made available to the girl-child just like their male counterpart. The change in educational teachings towards the technological advancement of this epoch is reflected through St. David's School which seeks to promote co-education. Thus, scientific subjects are encouraged and provided for both boys and girls. Co-educational schools appear to give parallel impression of the foundation of the National Policy on Education (2004:1) which states that:

> The five main national goals of Nigeria, which have been endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education, are the building of:-
> (a) A free and democratic society;
> (b) A just and egalitarian society;
> (c) A great and dynamic economy;
> (d) A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

These Policies turn the girl-child towards better self-realization, acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance, human relationships, individual and national efficiency. The formal education Mabel is introduced to in *My Mother's Daughter* is partially free from the stereotype. Mabel recaps thus:

> If I have given the impression from what I have written that St. David's School was not a good school, that impression is wrong. Indeed, I cannot think of a better elementary school in those days. The teaching was good and practical…. The subjects we studied were the usual ones, but unlike most other elementary schools, algebra and geometry were studied in Standard Five and Six. They were normally considered to be secondary school subjects in those days. We had a school farm where we raised food crops that provided us with practical experience in nature study. Our nature study teacher would show us different types of seeds-monocotyledonous and dicotyledonous seeds-we learnt all about tubers…. The bulk of the products from the school farm was sold in the market …. Though we girls shared farm work with the boys (MMD: 98,102)

Mabel recounts the formal education she receives in her elementary school, St. David's school. She and other girls offer the same subjects with their male counterparts. These subjects include Algebra, Geometry and Nature study. Training the girl-child in these subjects makes her free from sexist stereotypes and some subjects like nature study makes her economically independent. This illustrates the use of anti-discriminative campaign against girl-child in the Nigerian educational system. This is because there is the belief that educating the girl-child according to Ghebrezghiabiher (2010:1) "will liberate the girl-child from all prejudices and also give her also economic independence". These subjects encourage and give opportunities to the girl-child to pursue scientific and technological training and education. This education may not limit the knowledge that is required for her daily life and opportunities.

Educating girls and boys guide them to promote girls status and encourage them to work towards mutual respect and equal partnership between both sexes. The Beijing Declaration (1995:168(272)) acknowledges that "all barriers must be eliminated to enable girls without exception to develop their full potential and skills through equal access to education and training, nutrition, physical and mental health care and related information". Education empowers the girl-child to identify, promote autonomous enabling conditions and develop her freedom instead of being stereotypically curtailed.

Issues on educating the girl-child could be limited by the economic status of her parents or guardians. In *My Mother's Daughter* Mabel's Uncle sort to stop Mabel from continuing her education because of lack of money. He is less passionate and he cannot allow Mabel's mother to foot the bill. He is scared about what the extended family would say if he allows Mabel's mother to take up such responsibility. Despite the fact that Mabel is a brilliant girl, she is shown to be limited by patriarchal norms and preference. Mabel relays Mr. Falope's acknowledgement of her potentials in *My Mother's Daughter* thus:

> There is a girl called 'Mabel'. I understand she is a very clever girl. Stand up, Mabel'. As I stood up, he continued: "I heard about you in Ifaki. All the girls there would like to know you" I felt very pleased, of course, in spite of the envious scowls of some of the boys, but at the same time, I felt slightly unhappy. What was the use of being bright and clever if you were destined to become a Standard Six Nurse?

Mabel has lost all hopes to further her education and pursue a profession of her own choice. She perceives her brilliance with hopelessness but a dramatic twist came in to play when her Mother and Mr. Fagbewesa, her Father's friend told her what her father has in stock for them:

> He told me he was glad to see me as both he and my mother had been worried about my future. He said my Father had said that he would want all his children to

> be well educated and go to England for further studies. I should explain that in those days there were no universities in Nigeria and anyone who wanted to have education beyond the secondary school level had to go abroad. My Mother was determined to see that my Father's wishes were fulfilled.

This twist buttresses Mabel's quest to further her education. As a girl-child, she is determined to become a prominent person in the society. Also as an individual, she fancied being highly educated as stipulated by her father. She also wants her freedom and emancipation in order to help contribute meaningfully to the development of the country.

The words of Mabel's father in his last wish, concerning his children seems to encourage parents and caregivers to treat girls and boys equally. This is to ensure shared responsibilities between both genders in the family and society at large. Mabel's mother came to her daughter's rescue. Her mother fights the attempt made by Mabel's uncle to abet her education because of lack of finance.

The belief in the ability of the girl-child not to have her own preferences and outlook about life posits an unfair restriction on her. This is illustrated when Mabel decided to speak the truth and stand for justice anytime misunderstanding or fight occurs among her uncle's children. During one of the incidences between the chief wife's second daughter and one of the other children, Mabel recounts in Segun Mabel's *My Mother's Daughter* thus:

> For instance, whenever her second daughter quarrelled with one of the other children, she would halt them in the middle of narrating their conflicting stories and command…. I will hear the truth from her (Mabel-May-Bell). She always tells the truth." And whatever version of the story I gave her was what she judged the case by. This, of course, did not endear me to the other children, who took advantage of our regular walks to and from school to revenge themselves on me. But this did not stop me from speaking the truth next time. (MMD: 49).

This quotation disputes the fact that the girl-child is often treated as inferior, weak, subservient and undermined. According to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995:166(260)):

> Girls are often treated as inferior and are socialised to put themselves last, thus undermining their self-esteem. Discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from social mainstream. Initiatives should be taken to prepare girls to participate actively, effectively and equally with boys at all levels of social, economic, political and cultural leadership.

Mabel in this context is portrayed to be confidence and brave to speak the truth in the face of intimidation. Invariably, her action prepares her to participate actively, effectively and equally with her counterparts. This participation includes social, political and cultural leadership style. She refutes the stereotypical role of being considered as inferior, discriminated against and excluded. Mabel being less intimidated paves way for a just and fair society. She tries to break down the persistent stereotypical label on the girl-child as being fearful and intimidated.

4.4 Techniques used at Projecting the Girl-child in Segun Mable's *My Mother's Daughter* and *My Father's Daughter*

Segun Mabel in *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* uses first person narrative medium to project the girl-child. Mabel as the protagonist recounts her childhood experience in Nigeria between an animist past and a technological future. In presenting motifs concerning girl-child, she predisposes issues of the clash of culture. She creates this awareness by presenting traces of the inclusion of western religious beliefs and habits. Despite the religious differences and cultural beliefs, Mabel tries to balance the relationship between parents and community relationship with the girl-child. She displays that despite all odds she strives to empower and equip herself from an early age.

Mabel as an intelligent character rejects the traditional stereotypes of the girl-child through perseverance, hard work, assertiveness, and determination. In *My Father's Daughter* 'Okhen had to drag me away by the hand and even as I went reluctantly (MFD: 31) and independent qualities. 'I decided I must have a farm of my own and plant this yam there' (MFD: 30) Also the character of Titi in *My Father's Daughter* tries to battle against the stereotypical forceful marriage of the girl-child. Mabel in *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* confronts the changing values of indigenous Nigerian girl-child through her autobiographies. These changes are the result of the transition between an animist past and a technological future. These are ushered in by clash of culture, religion, belief and habits. The strife to promote these balances in the Nigerian children's literature and society. The author, seeks the need to project the girl-child of this era and thereby promoting gender complementarity. Mabel creates as a new phase of the gender issue in children's literature.

In *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*, liberal feminists techniques could be deployed as analytical tools. There are other elements which include the device of peaceful protest, affirmative action and anti-discriminative campaigns as a mode of projecting the girl-children and hearing their views. Children's literature is used as an instrument to uphold a better re-presentation of the girl-child rather than being underrepresented. It creates an awareness about the marginalisation perpetuated against the girl-child in the society and confront them. Mabel in *My Father's Daughter* uses peaceful protest when she wants to try her own creative ability to farm yam. She decided to join Okhen to farm yam without consulting her father, she didn't result in any form of violence but uses affirmative action to get her will carried out.

In the face of victimisation, as revealed in *My Mother's Daughter*, *Mabel* did not result in any form of retaliation, to prevent the boys from beating her any time she performs well in the

test result. Mabel uses affirmative action when she resultantly left the farm. She also plants yam and other seed crops without being deterred by her age and sex. Titi in Segun Mabel in *My Father's Daughter* uses affirmative action when she decided to run away instead of being married off to the bow-leg man as settlement of her father's debt. While the use of anti-discriminative campaign is realised in *My Mother's Daughter* when Mabel decided not to sell any wrap of eko but to return late. This discourages her uncle's second wife from putting her to hawk again.

Also, the use of anti-discriminative campaign is used in the promotion of the girl-child education and the need to be taught other scientific courses other than just domestic science that prepares them as future wives thus: though we girls shared farm work with the boys, when it came to domestic science, we were left alone…(MMD:102). The training of the girl-child (ren) in scientific subjects such as Algebra, Nature science, etc also places them on equal grounds like their male counterparts. It establishes that the girl-child can have equal opportunity to be educated and not be discriminated against the basis of her gender. Through the character of Mabel and Titi, the girl-child is being taught to use her talents and resources to fight for a better and equivalent chance in her society.

Choice of settings in *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* are based on where the author grew up and places that influenced her life. These settings also reflect the themes that relate to the representation of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. These settings include home, school and rural-urban setting. Her family, school and community settings are used as a microcosm of the Nigerian society. The social world of the stories strives for the challenges the stereotypical portraiture of the girl-child through the character of the young

protagonists, Mabel and how she is able to combat them. In addition, the use of picture sets out the time and place.

The plots in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* tries to develop and unfold by contrast in action(s) of the girl-child characters- Mabel and Titi respectively. These two stories have one main plot, flowing from beginning to end. Although, it may be inferred that *My Mother's Daughter* is a continuation of *My Father's Daughter*. This is because stories in *My Mother's Daughter* actually continues the storyline of the latter (life after the death of Mabel's Father). The stories are reported in such a way that captures and sustains the projection of the girl-child to the child-reader. Paraphrasing Martinin (1997:224) "the childhood that Mabel Segun cared to present to the reader was as selective as childhoods presented in autobiographies for adults". The storyline is simple, conventional and draws narrative devices that attract the child-reader. In addition, the use of pictures directly or indirectly tends to extend the plot. Parts of the storyline is unfolded through the use of pictures.

In *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*, Mabel is presented to the child reader as a free, confident girl who does anything she wants without restrictions base on her sexual characteristics. There appears to be limited form of discrimination or stereotyping ascribed to her at home. Her parents have no reason to deprive her choice(s) and will and not limit her solely to the domestic angle. Mabel's family is symbolic of patriarchal structure, her father who is a patriarchal figure, appears to be liberal. This is in contrast with Mr. Agu who is authoritarian in Adimora's *The Prize*. Most of the male figures in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* give the impression to be liberal except the bow-legged man who wanted to marry Titi and the school boys respectively.

Other men initiate the belief in giving the girl-child equal opportunities as the male-child so as to enable her to carry out her desires, and promote a sense of equality. Despite some traces of discrimination on the part of Mabel because of her age, she is still portrayed as a girl who is free to unleash her potentials to the latter. In *My Mother's Daughter,* the boys in her class try to bully her. Their actions did not deter her from staying at the top. She also has access to equal education and that makes her self-reliant. She does other subjects that are scientific rather than just domestic science. This improving girl-child character through the projection of Mabel, may create an awareness about the struggling projection of the girl-child in a new light. Showing the girl-child that is active, confident, intelligent, brave, autonomous, and adventurous, rather than being passive, weak, subservient, emotional, etc. Hence, the plots in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* move from the unknown to known, deprived stereotyped to equality and being liberated.

On the basis of characterization, Segun Mabel's girl-child characters are similar to Adimora-Ezeigbo's characters Onyema in *The Prize* and Seyi in *Seyi's Strong Voice.* Both characters use subtle language device of peaceful protest, affirmative action and anti-discriminative campaigns as a mode of projecting the girl-child and hearing their views. Like Adimora-Ezeigbo, Segun Mabel tries to compromise and negotiate the female-child characters. Paraphrasing Adimora-Ezeigbo's interview with Oluigbo in Oloruntoba-Oju and Oloruntoba-Oju (2013: n.pag) thus:

> Projecting them (girls) as not combative, but of course, they are highly principled characters who know what they want and how to go about it. The girls are strong and very resilient; they are not weaklings, but their strength is not in violence or confrontation but in being principled and self-controlled, in collaborating with other people around them. But of course, if this collaboration brings about confrontation, they will move away and chart out their own survival.

According to Peirce and Edward in Clark and Higonnet (1999:80) whether girls and boys used distinctive styles of conflict resolution in their stories. Their major finding was that boys used more violent resolutions (for example fighting and shooting) than did girls, who showed their characters using reasoning and analysis to settle conflicts.

The use of pictures reveals specific girl-child (ren) traits. These could make the books appealing to the child-reader and meets the demands of the short format of the story. The pictures help to develop girl-child's characters by depicting situations and emotions. These supplement characterisation in the text, thus showing the girl-child's actions and reactions to one another. Also, it helps to define and develop the traits of the girl-child protagonist in the storyline. Mabel and Adimora-Ezeigbo use these techniques in bringing out the 'new girl-child' character in Nigerian children's literature. No wonder (Shafii: 2015:30) indicates that:

> The level of individual understanding is highly dependent on the mental picture of any object or particular thing to serve as a visible (visual) sample. Thus, it is not in doubt that the child's art or literary form is inevitable of pictorial criteria, which in all ways pronounces the textual inscriptions from page to page. Through the textual and photographic, literature can be independently used in the literary field, the blend of the two and especially the illustrative pictures make up a unique whole. However, the level of literary taste, anticipation and expectation of children's literature differ as far as the reader's brain, which is not fully developed like that of the adult.

Shafii believes that the use of pictures is of dominant importance to the child reader. To Shafii, the child-reader's brain can easily capture the details of the literary book, unlike the adult.

The use of bold writings, language, illustrations and pictures capture and enhance the projection of the girl-child in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*. The use of language, illustrations, writings and pictures state the stereotypical roles of the girl-child and her roles in a society that is undergoing changes from animist past to a technological future. These techniques used by Segun Mabel in *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's*

Daughter give pleasure and bright atmosphere to the child reader. They develop the child reader's emotion, imaginative mind and sustain his or her interest in the girl-child character. The use of pictures and language in Segun Mabel's selected children's stories enhance peculiar issues concerning the girl-child. It makes the child reader to easily identify with the girl-child. The use of pictures and language in the books bring abstract or familiar happenings about the girl-child closer to the child reader. In addition to this, Mitchell (1986:44) concludes that the relationship between pictures and accompanying texts is 'a complex one of mutual translation, interpretation, illustration and enlightenment'. For example projecting the non-stereotypical role of Mabel on the farm with Okhen in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter.* The use of pictures and languages used on page thirty-two (32) these characters try to open the child reader's mind-eye to the new role of the girl-child and her struggle for equality in an egalitarian society.

As such, the use of pictures is not left out among the techniques that aid the projection of the girl-child in the selected text used in this research. Although, the use of pictures may distract children's attention from the print. It could also hinder their word identification and acquisition of written language, the contributions of the pictures to the overall development of the projection of the girl-child's behaviour seems to be overwhelmingly influenced. The use of pictures can entice children to read and interact with the text. They motivate child reader to name or find hidden characters or predicate the next point of action. It creates, stimulates and promotes children's thinking and creativity about the projection of the girl-child in the text under study. This makes the child reader easily associate the girl-chid picture characters to the real life girl-child experiences.

The use of language in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* helps the author to depict the experience of a typical Nigerian girl-child through art. The author does this through the first person narrative point of view "I" to recount her selective child-hood experience. In *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter,* the use of first person narrator tells the story with the girl-child/author (Mabel). In her attempt to showcase her individual struggle to be independent and self-reliant. She seems to follow her heart and makes others seemingly bow to her wish. Mabel is not to be treated as a stereotypical girl but a rebranded girl-child in an egalitarian society. This technique helps the author to achieve authorial extinction in *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter.* The use of first person narrative voice, the story achieves makes objectivity and somewhat present character and actions of the girl-child as convincing to the reader. It creates a single narrative voice but reflects on other characters activities that make up the storyline.

Segun Mabel uses diction to subtly project the girl-child in an acceptable and unacceptable manner. Her choice of words is part of children's active vocabulary. This has contribute immensely to the tone of the stories and it subtly projects the girl-child in a positive light. For example, in *My Father's Daughter*, Mabel describes her action when she took to the backdoor to join other girls; sneaking out of the back door I went to the main road to wait for others…when they came abreast of me, I joined them…but nobody questioned my right to be in their company(MFD: 50). This caption describes Mabel's objection to being deprived of her personal autonomy. She decided to make a way out to liberate herself from being restricted from doing her wish. Also, in her description of Titi's betrothed husband, projects her rejection of the forceful child marriage syndrome that seems to limits the girl-child potentials:

> The other man, the one who had struck me dumb, was very ugly. He was short and dumpy with a pair of incredible bow legs. The legs curved so much that a child could have passed between them. His face was bloated and tiny eyes like those of a snake peered from under his bushy eye brows…because the fineries were a great contrast to his ugliness (MFD113).

Mabel expresses dislike for the bow-legged man despite his wealthy personality.

Despite the rejection of some stereotypical roles and events in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter and My Mother's Daughter*, there are still elements of didacticisms. These didactic messages aid the child-reader to do what is right and shun wrong doings. The child reader learns from Mabel and Titi's actions and experiences so as to make them responsible citizens of the country. Credence can be lent to Law et.al (2012:4) they opine that:

> Books that celebrate courageous women and girls who are portrayed not simply as 'Spunky' or 'feisty', but are brave, confident, females actively shape their own destinies and breaking barriers to defy stereotypes and societal limitations. Girls need books that will help them to recognise, understand and resist systematic sexism around them to claim their voices, and to be self-possessed.

Segun Mabel creates girl-child through character(s) like Mabel, the protagonist and Titi that champion(s) the course of the 'new girl-child 'who refused to bend to the whims and caprices of patriarchal domination. Rather, they want to be treated as an individual entity who has a say and right to be treated equally like the male counterparts. These two characters battle the stereotypical projection of the girl-child at home, school and even in their communities respectively. Both characters build in the child reader to learn to celebrate girls in a new dimension. Also see them as brave, confident, intelligent and can shape their own destinies. Mabel and Titi two characters make the child reader break the barrier that defiles the girl-child projection in children's literature. It creates an optimistic tone that may propel the child reader to learn from the girls, within the scope of the patriarchal structure.

Furthermore, these stories encourage the girl-child reader to stay focused. After the death of Mabel's father, she lost the peaceful, organised and serene life at the personage and had to live

with different relations, from one location to another such as town-Akure (Ikare), to village-Ikole and town-Osogbo. These stories teach the reader to confront any situation they find themselves peacefully. That, in order to succeed, one must be hardworking, understanding, friendly, caring and loving to other people. Also, they teach that to be successful in life, patient and perseveres are needed to succeed. The young mind is encouraged to be studious and competitive in an academic career like Mabel with her male counterpart, so as to obtain a better position in the society. This achievement will not only be limited to the boys but the girls can also find a space at the herm of affairs. Stories in My Father's Daughter and My Mother's Daughter discourage the use of violence, such as beating and bullying which are seen as barbaric and an uncivilized behaviour, but encourage the use of dialogue rather than resorting to violence or war. These stories teach children to learn to speak the truth like Mabel, without fear or favour. Furthermore, it teaches the child reader to preserve his or her indigenous culture and traditions but discourages black magic. It also teaches the girl-child to match up with the technological advancement and not see her sex as a hindrance to learn or use the facilities of the modern world.

In all, Segun Mabel tries to amicably bridge the gap between the modern and traditional life of the girl child in the society. She projects that the girl-child should be allowed to dialogue and negotiate her space in public and private domains. However, culture and tradition should be upheld, protected for future posterity just like Mabel did. Segun promotes the benefit of shared responsibilities irrespective of gender. She emphasizes the need for the girl-child to achieve her aim and be highly educated, in order to contribute meaningfully to the society, country and world at large.

Segun Mabel in *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter* aims at identifying stories with girl-child characters who exceed their world in positive ways. She empowers the girl-child through her personal story using characters such as Mabel and Titi to create alternative ways of behaviours and roles. Mabel uses her autobiographies to create an indispensable and authentic girl-child characters in the stories, as suitable role models for young girls. She devises a creative means of liberating the girl-child from the prejudices of the society and make her see the need to be productive and independent within the patriarchal structure. These stories redirect the activism of the girl-child to focus on other domains rather than being stereotyped, limited and considered as a second class citizen.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the projection of the girl-child in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* (1994) and *Seyi's Strong Voice* (2011) alongside Segun's *My Father's Daughter* (1965) and *My Mother's Daughter* (1987). These books could be seen as models of Nigerian children's literature and as an extension of a literary genre that project the girl-child. These literary texts bringing to forefront peculiar experiences, issues, and traits that redefine the girl-child character(s) in children's literature. This research uses works of these authors to rewrite, re-present, reshape and focus on the new roles and experiences of the girl-child in positive dimension. This is far from the traditional stereotypes and presentations of the girl-child.

The significance of this study is embedded in the fact that both Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun's children's narratives offer a glimpse of the girl-child experiences in Nigerian children's literature. They also depict children's literature as one of the powerful instruments for creating social awareness regarding issues concerning the girl-chid. Their books directly or indirectly develop and shape young minds towards building an alternative image(s) of the girl-child especially from being considered as less important. The study of these books spots out alternative reading, to the known stereotypical and sexist outlook of the girl-child, and her experiences in a new light as propagated by liberal feminist theorists.

This research illustrates that from time past, there had been constant negative projections of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. This is made manifest because Nigerian children literature writers participate in, and are creators of the projection of the girl-child. However, some children's literature writers have tried, through their consciousness to carve emerging roles for the girls. As such, the dissertation gives critical attention to the place and importance of the girl-child within the Nigerian context.

This study is text based and qualitative, drawing references from library and internet materials for its analysis. In achieving this, resources ranging from books, magazines, articles, journals and internet materials such as blogs are used. The study is limited to the analysis of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* (1994) and *Seyi's Strong Voice* (2011) alongside Mabel Segun's *My Father's Daughter* (1965) and *My Mother's Daughter* (1987) with specific focus on how both writers have used children stories and autobiographies respectively to capture day to day experiences of the Nigerian girl-child. Both authors have tried to state the girl-child challenges and problem. To a large extent, they have also tried to provide alternative solutions to rewriting the girl-child image which is free from stereotypes, patriarchal dependence and

dominations.

Furthermore, in this dissertation, the researcher discovers that the four texts analysed are typical Nigerian children's literary books that project the girl-child in an evolving light. The use of liberal feminist's theory enhances this research because, it explores some issues that concern the girl-child. These issues are reflected in some of their tenets that try to change the dogmatic perception of the girl-child, thereby re-writing and re-presenting the girl-child through the bid for equality, personal autonomy and an egalitarian society. All these are brought to the fore to show how Adimora-Ezeigbo and Segun Mabel have succeeded in using the liberal feminist's tenets to redefine the image of the girl-child.

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun demonstrate their concern about the girl-child by portraying socio-cultural and physical stereotypical problems dominant in the Nigeria society. They have tried to describe the re-presentation of the girl-child in the midst of a struggle to be liberated by showing her new abilities and potentials like her male counterparts without destroying the existing patriarchal structure(s). Although there seems to be some subtle sexism, stereotypes and unequal privileges allotted to the girl-child, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's selected works describe the girl-child through the character of the protagonist(s) to have a voice. Her girls, Onyema and Seyi at the end of the stories are being heard. They carry out their wills in reasonable ways without causing any rancour. The girl-child is portrayed to have potentials like their male counterparts in her family, school, religious groups and community at large. The protagonists, Onyema and Seyi dispute the fact that they are not just commodity of exchange or being relegated and trampled up on but a being that can contribute meaningfully to the nation's building.

While Segun Mabel intensifies the new image of the girl-child who is active, brave, strong, resilient, and self-reliant. She projects a picture of a girl-child who can contribute her quota to the family and community at large. Segun Mabel does this through the promotion of the girl-child choices and will to be independent and self-reliant. Despite the death of her father and the socio-economic condition, Mabel finds herself, she still pushes on. Mabel projects a girl-child that has equal opportunities like her male-counterparts even in the face of bullying, victimisation and forced marriage (Titi being betrothed to The Bow Legged man). These girl-child characters (Mabel and Titi) are strong willed. They carry out their biddings to the end of the story. At the end of these stories, all unfair and unjust treatment meted on the girl-child in private and public sphere are refuted.

These girl-child characters in the texts under study have created new identities for themselves. They have tried to forge new roles and activities in public and private sphere in Nigeria's patriarchal structure without being subjugated. They are presented as people who can also contribute their quota to the positive development of the nation at large. These texts project that the cultural upbringing of girls should not serve as an impediment to her abilities and potentials. The authors point out through their creative characters that, the Nigerian girl-child is a product of the multifaceted culture in which she needs to be up-to-date with the modern happenings. Thus, girl-child characters in these texts strive from naivety to knowledge. In the end, they are free and treated as a respectable member of their society. With an emphasis on the texts under study, this research rewrites the popular notion that the girl-child is a second class citizen or less important in the Nigerian cultural milieu. These texts reveal the improving conditions of the girl-child as she struggles for a better self and privileges in the Nigerian

patriarchal society. These improved conditions are reflective through characters like Onyema and Seyi in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi Strong Voice*, and Mabel and Titi in Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*.

Finally, both writers in their texts express the view that the girl-child is able to devise new ability, potential and role that place her on equal footing with her male counterpart. This changes the stereotype and underrepresentation of her character in children's literature. This study promotes a redefined image of the girl-child in Nigerian children's literature. Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Mabel Segun's books can serve as one of the tools that inform, educate and empower young ones concerning positive image and abilities of the girl-child in the society. Hence, these books examine sensitive issues like equal treatment of the girl-child, freedom to do her will without dancing to the tune and dictates of patriarchal figure. The authors promote the zeal of self-reliance in the girl-child, which indirectly makes her free from subjugation, dependency syndrome and domination to mention a few. Adimora-Ezeigbo and Segun have tried to provide some enabling knowledge on how the girl- child can combat these stereotypes without resorting to violence or over stepping her bounds of the culture she finds herself. Adimora-Ezeigbo and Segun have tried to describe the girl-child in the midst of struggles to show her new abilities and potentials without destroying the existing patriarchal structure(s). All these are part of what constitute the major issues that concern the projection of the girl-child in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Prize* and *Seyi Strong Voice*, and Segun Mabel's *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter.*

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