THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY IN SELECTED NIGERIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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B.A. ENGLISH (ACU), M.A LITERATURE (IBADAN)

A Thesis in the Department of English

Submitted to the Faculty of Arts

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

of the

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

APRIL 2021

Certification

I certify that this work was carried out by Mr. S.J Ayodabo in the Department of English, University of Ibadan, under my supervision.

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Dedication

To the memory of grandpa, who never stopped asking

For my dad, who inspired me,

and my mom, who kept me going.

Acknowledgements

My PhD journey has been both exciting, yet challenging, and throughout this process I have been offered much kindness, guidance, and encouragement from some very special individuals. This dissertation would not have been completed without their support, and I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all those who assisted me through this process.

First of all, I must thank the Almighty God in whom I believe for his grace in guiding me against many odds. Without God's unwavering blessings, this project would not have been possible.

I would like to render my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor OlutoyinB. Jegede, whose painstaking guidance and critical panache has brought this PhD thesis to a successful completion. Her relentless encouragement, prodding, suggestions, patience, and critical responses have kept this project in firm shape. Professor Jegede has proved to be an excellent supervisor and I should admit that I am a lucky student to have passed through her immeasurable intellectual guidance.

My appreciation also goes to the staff in the Department of English, mostly Professor Ayo Kehinde, Professor Babatunde Omobowale, Dr. Ayo Osinsanwo, Dr. Charles Akinseteand Dr. Kazeem Adebiyi-Adelabu, thePost Graduate Cordinator, for their relentless effort during the programm. In addition, I am thankful to the late Mr. Victor, the department clerk for his usual feed back. May his soul rest in peace.

I would like to thank my parents: Professor and Mrs. Ayodabo, who encouraged me to persevere and supported me in more ways than I can ever describe. You taught me not to take short cuts, kept me focused. Without your support I would truly be lost.

To my siblings; Bola, Banji and Deborah Ayodabo and my brother, Tayo Ayodabo, I say thank you. To my wife, Olufisayo (Arike): who has devotedly stayed with me through this difficult journey. I would not have made it through this process without you and I am so lucky to be married to somebody so patient and understanding.

To my friends and colleagues who offered so much support and guidance, thank you. A special appreciations goes to Dr. Ezekiel Olajimbitiwho has been a forthright editor and a thoughtful tutor. You always found solutions to my roadblocks, and you generously offered your time and support despite everything that was on your plate. OlaniyiBewaji: you always found the sense and strength in my scattered thoughts. To Dr. Olugbenga Onile; you saw the importance in my project and always encouraged me to keep going. I cherish your friendship and look forward to supporting one another as we continue our professional journeys.

Many thanks to the other friends and colleagues, particularly Dr. Abiodun Olofinsao, Dr. Thompson Ewata, Dr. Adedeji Olawale, Dr. James Obadeyi, Dr. Tokunbo Ayoola, Mrs. Ayodeji Ogunyemi, Dr. GaniuBamgbose, and Mr. Abiodun Macaulay, for their endless support and motivation throughout the journey.

I also wish to thank the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), New York, USA for their financial generosity at the later stage in pursuing this project, through the African Humanities Programme (AHP) fellowship.

Abstract

Masculinity, a socially constructed set of qualities, behaviours and roles associated with boys and men, is entrenched in promoting patriarchal domination. Existing studies on masculinity in Nigerian literature have focused mostly on adult fiction, with little attention paid to how masculinity is constructed in Nigerian children's literature. This study was, therefore, designed to examine the construction of masculinity in the selected narratives, with a view to establishing the portrayal of male dominance and gender inequality.

Raewyn Connell's Hegemonic Masculinity and Carl Jung's Archetypal Theory were adopted as framework. The interpretative design was used. Six narratives: ChineloIfezulike's*Chima Laughs Last* (Chima), Essien Ako's*The Adventures of Akpan Akan Uto*(The Adventures), Ifeanyi Ifoegbuna's*Folake and Her Four Brothers* (Folake), Anthonia Ekpa's*EdidemEyambaand the Edikang-Ikong Soup* (Edidem), Ikechukwu Ebonogwu's*The Champion of Echidime* (The Champion) and Richard Osifo's*Murphy the Prankster* (Murphy) were purposively selected due to their representation of masculinity. The texts were subjected to textual analysis.

The texts portray hegemonic masculinity through oral traditions, images and symbols. Oral traditions such as praise poetry, war songs and dance, wrestling and drums in *Edidem, The Champion, Folake* and *The Adventures* are presented as recurrent archetypes embedded in the collective unconscious, reflecting dominant manly qualities, behaviours and roles within cultural context. Traditional manly qualities such as strength, toughness, competition and the projection of self-prideare reinforced as masculine values. In order to justify these qualities as necessary for men, women are portrayed as meek, weak, and constantly in need of protection. The texts also draw upon recurring literary archetypal images in order to portray prevailing sociocultural attitudes towards masculinity. Boys, presented through the hero archetype, exhibit qualities such as emotional control in *Chima*, stoicism in *The Adventures*, and toughness in *Folake*. Any indication of weakness is condemned, and directly linked to femininity. Men, in *Folake* and *The Adventures,* presented through the father archetype, portray husbands as domineering, and fathers as emotionally detached from their children. As a result of these negative images, men are given social importance, while women are relegated despite playing central roles in the narratives. This further constructs men in dominant positions. Male models such as friends, uncles and teachers in *Chima* and *The Champion* are also portrayed as archetypal father-figures who convey masculine standards for boys through teasing, bullying and masculine testing. This is the process of socializing boys into manhood. Symbols of the male body such as the physique and phallus; animals like lion and leopard, and agricultural products such as yam and cassava in *Murphy*, *Folake*, *Chima* and *Edidem* are also constructed to embody virility, procreation, wealth, strength, endurance and heroism.

Masculinity, as portrayed through oral traditions, images and symbols in the selected narratives, establishes male dominance, female subjugation and gender inequality.

Keywords: Children's Literature, Nigerian literature, Hegemonic masculinity, Gender inequality.

Word count: 458

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1.Background to the Study

Children's literature is essential to the development of children in the society. It helps stimulate children's imagination of their society. This is because it helps themhave a deeper understanding of the cultural values and norms of the society. As such, children's literatureis significant in ensuring a smooth transition from childhood into adulthood. Okolie (1998 quoted in Muleka 2001), for instance, opines that in the beginning, there was childhood and childhood made man or woman. This means that childhood is important to the development of children. Therefore, literature has positive effects on the future of children. Many scholars like Tucker (1976), Benton and Fox (1987), and Muleka (2001) among others, have acknowledged the roles of literature to the growth of children in society. They submit that children project through their behaviour what they have read, and through such projections, one determines the kind of image they form out of the story. Literature continues to play this important role in the lives of children, despite the dominant influenceof media platforms suchas internet, games, and television on them. Hence, it is pertinent to note that children are not only impacted on by what they see and watch, but also by what they read.

From the foregoing, literature can also influence the way children perceive their own gender and eventhat of the opposite sex. Though it is assumed that children'sliterature iswritten for children at the age when gender is perceived not to be relevant to their age (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2013). This statement may not be apparent, but notions which suggest and strengthen rigid gender behaviours, attributes and roles exist within literature written for children. Martin and Halverson (1981) suggest that based on gender schema theory, children develop gender attitudes in the early years. In support of the feminist views on gender awareness in children, Sandra Bem, an American psychologist specializing in gender studies, has reportedthat by the age of four or five, children have already formed sex typing documentations in their mind (1983:598).

Bussy and Bandura (1992), drawing on social cognitive theory, also suggest that gender development in children's literature involves their own perception and understanding of the differences between males and females. A prominent influence in this process is that books are a major vehicle for handing down norms and traditions (good or bad) from one generation to another, including the universal yoke of gender stereotypes. Moreover, literature appears to have a long-lasting effect because it can be read and reread. Given itsinfluence, it is often argued that young children are particularly vulnerable to such stereotypical messages, in that they are undergoing some process in the making of their gender identities, and literature expose them to social expectations of masculine and feminine gender roles. To this end, there should be some interest in the depiction of male characters in children's literature, their gender roles as well as cultural practices that promote gender stereotypes.

This study, therefore, examines the relationship between masculinity and children's literature in Nigeria. The study explores the significance of this relationship to the role of literature as a medium for constructing or entrenching the notions of masculinity, thereby aiding male dominance, female oppression and gender inequality in society. This study observes that masculinity is currently becoming a significant aspect of gender studies in Africa. For many years, the dominance of women in gender studies has improved women's agency, however, such lopsided approach continues to expand the gap in the understanding of men. Hence, recent studies have pointedout many facts about masculinity, which also include male crisis –the loss ofpower and their privileged positions, within the context of family, education and work. It is this sense of powerlessness, meaningless and uncertainty that isresponsible for violence, crime and other related issues. For instance, Bernies, Connell and Eide (2000) submitthat the 20th century witnessed over 100 million deaths due to war and related activities. They aver that men are the ones who almost exclusively take decisions that lead to armed conflict and war. They also maintain that the weight of evidence in domestic violence, rape, and other criminal activities isalarming. Therefore, there is a need to investigate issues that have contributed to these rising wave of violence, and possibly come up with definitesuggestions.

This study also observes that children's literaturehas the potential to contribute to the above masculine crisis. In Nigeria, literature written for children is gender biased, and

displays imbalances in the representation of its male characters which implicitly reinforces the dominant status of men, while, at the same time,diminishesthe social relevance of women. In most contemporary children's literaturein Nigeria, male characters, including children, are seen going on dangerous adventures and neglecting home chores, thereby conforming to the dominant prototype of manly, violent, vigorous, aggressive, less emotional and competitive masculinity. Unfortunately, these social constructs continue to appear in contemporary children's literature as norms.In addition, male characters are taken for granted by scholars, who have examined gender issues, in children's literature, in Nigeria, while females' stereotypical representations are, in contrast, probed and challenged. Perhaps, it is the case that the pervasive, dominant presence of male characters in children's literature has somewhat culminated in the study of their depiction in contrast with female characters. Hence, male characters have not really been analysed as separate subject. One may see that thecharacterisation of boys in some critical sense hardly interrogates the complicationinvolved in what it means to be a man in children's literature. Research in gender studies and other domains of related interest demonstratesthat gender labeling isharmful to girls, because, itlimits girls'opportunities for development, but, as observed in literature, less scholarly interest is directed to the effect of gender labeling to boys (Hamilton et al, 2006). Although attributes such as strength, ferocity, and assertiveness are desirable, however, characterizing boys according to rigid stereotypes may also reduce a range of emotions, such as tenderness and nurturing, apparently reserved for girls.

This manner of gender constructions impactsboy's behaviours and perceptions of gender-appropriate behaviour in the society. Fox (1993) believes that such representation can be so insidious that it silently leads boys to accept the way they see and read the world, thereby strengthening the society's gendered nature.As a result, children are likely not to question existing social relationships. The effects can be significantly dangerous to the self-respect, emotional development, physical and mental health of children who have the tendency to mould their behaviours around what they read. Also, such massages can affect the emotional and psychological development of the children, in a way that they will be forced to believe that they must act in appropriate ways in the society.

Finally, this study is based on the assumption that children's literature is gaining importance in literary circles where reading materials for children are observed with more importance around the world. It is from these reading materials that children learn many of the societal values, which include gender identities, roles and behaviours. Because today's boy will become tomorrow's man, their nurture, upbringing and education are very vital to the society in which they are born. It is in this light that this research concerns itself with the kinds of messages that society and literary materials throw at them as well as the effect of such on their gender relations in the larger society.

The central focus of this study, therefore, is to examine how masculinity is constructed in contemporary Nigerian children's literature,with a view to establishing the portrayal of male dominance and gender inequality.It examines how masculinity is portrayed through the male characters, their roles as well as attributes that promote male dominance, female subjugation and gender imbalance in Nigeria.

1.1.1 Gender and Masculinity: An Overview

Gender is a cumulative of the roles, attributes and features ascribed to males and females in a given society. Despite biological differences between women and men, various societies ascribe different sets of expectations and roles based on the biological differences. From childhood till death, human beings partake in maintaining and displaying the gender constructions they have imbibed. Although, the differences in activities of women and men often change with time, some societies have ascribed certain roles only to a particular gender. For instance, due to the physical and tough nature of males, they are assigned roles similar to these body characteristics and as a result seen as brave, resilient, violent, and unemotional. On the other hand, the society views females as submissive, loving, emotional and selfless and are assigned roles that are based on these perceived nature.This differences give right to certain roles and privileges being enjoyed by men at the expense of women. Therefore, in most societies, men enjoy certain privileges not because they earn them but because they are born male. Being born male thus qualifies the male subject, and gives uninterrupted access to the fathers.

This means that in any society, the two things that identify a man are his biological attributes and the masculine perpetuation of those biological attributes, also known as

masculinity. Whitehead (2002:4) explains that "masculinity speaks of those practices and ways of being that serve to validate a masculine subject's sense of itself as a male, boy, or man". In another view, its definition is a proof of two negatives: that one is not feminine or a girl, and that one is not gay. Also, Creig (2000) maintains that masculinity is a biological destiny used to refer to the innate qualities and properties of men that distinguish them from women. On the other hand, Reynolds (2002) views masculinity as a set of ideological and cultural practices, rather than a given biological. Rather than masculinity being what it means to be a man, masculinity serves as a set of assumptions about what men are like; these assumptions are most frequently placed on those with male bodies (Reynolds, 2002). Malin (2005:3) also describes masculinity as "an invisible but very real social construction", because people often do not think of dominant identities as actual identities. Therefore, the masculinity of a man validates his connection to the patriarchal world. It sets him against other men in the society. For many men and women, masculinity also means being in control at all times. It means taking charge, having self-control and the world around you. The power to control can be got through words, money, or through the use of physical force, and each man's power bears his own personal stamp.

Despite these privileges, all men do not experience power equally. This is because masculinity by its very nature is neither a homogenous nor even a stable category of analysis; not only are there multiple masculinities that are themselves constantly subject to change, but the manifestation of masculinity itself is produced in relation to several other categories such as class, age, economic status, sex, race etc, and it acquires meaning only in specific socio-historical contexts. The Australian sociologist, Robert W. Connell,in 2005, notes that there are variations of masculinity.For instance, it has been argued that men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up, but are something they are acculturated to and made up of social behavioural codes, which they learn to replicate culturally (Beynon, 2002). The basis for this argument is that while the male body is common to all men (even though it is found in various dimensions, shapes and appearances), there are numerous forms and expressions of masculinity (Beynon, 2002). In addition, the combined influence of migration, globalization, feminism and the gay movement have further exploded the conception of a uniform masculinity, while even sexuality is no longer held to be fixed or innate (Beynon, 2002). Also, different societies have different

ways of measuring the standards of men. In other words, it immediately becomes obvious that masculinity, when linked to culture, history, and other factors, isdiverse, mobile, not even stable.In relation to this, pinning masculinity to any particular conceptualization becomes very difficult. This is even more instructive when Connell (2005) observes that there is not a single, particular conception of masculinity that can be gleaned consistently through history and in particular cultures, religion, race, and social class. Cornell (2005) avers that masculinity refers to the multiple ways that manhood is socially defined across historical and cultural contexts and the power differences which exist between different versions of manhood.

Connell in her book *Masculinities* (2005) highlights the different types of masculinities that exist within the society, and they include hegemonic masculinity, subordinated masculinity, marginalized and complicit masculinity. Connell (2005:37-38) asserts:

> We must recognize the relations between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance, and subordination. These relations are constructed through relations that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit, and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity.

Hegemony, Connell's first category of masculinity, refers to a cultural dynamic by which a male group holds a leading position in social life. This group is generally exalted and built on cultural ideals and institutional power (Cornell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity, she explains, is the totality of gender practice that legitimizes patriarchy, and is considered the ultimate form of masculinity. It is also seen as the form of practice that allows for the dominance of men over women. Connell maintains that hegemonic masculinity embodies the most honoured way of being a man, and it requires all other men to emulate or position themselves in relation to it, even if they cannot exhibit traits of hegemonic masculinity.

The second type of masculinity identified by Connell is subordinated masculinity. Connell maintains that subordinated masculinitycomprises men whose behaviours are considered feminine of which gay masculinity is the most prominent. Beynon (2002) explains that the influence of feminism and the gay movement has exploded the concept of a uniform masculinity, and even sexuality is no longer held to be fixed or innate. This means thathegemonic masculinity has been demystified by these influences.According to Connell (1992:736) "erotic contact between men was

expelled from the legitimate repertoire of dominant groups of men, and hegemonic masculinity was thus redefined as explicitly and exclusively heterosexual".Connell futher maintains that:

> To many people, homosexuality is a negation of hegemonic masculinity, and homosexual men must be effeminate. Given that assumption, antagonism toward homosexual men is used to define masculinity", a stance Herek (1986:563) summed up in the proposition that "to be 'a man' in contemporary American society is to be homophobic - that is, to be hostile toward homosexual persons in general and gay men in particularly (1992:736)

Another type of men that falls within this category is Androgynous men, who exhibit the mixture of masculine and feminine features into avague form. These men express their identity with regard to gender identity, sexual identity, or sexual lifestyle.

Closely related to subordinated masculinity is marginalized masculinity which is constructed along the lines of class and race. This is usually identified with issues like colonialism, slavery, racism, capitalism and the like.An example of men categorized under this type areblack men, who were defined based on skin colourduring slave trade, and colonial imposition by European societies who popularized their supremacy by describingthemselves a superior race.

Another category of masculinity identified by Connell is complicit masculinity which"refers to the extension and institutionalization of a male power group under mutual agreements" (Mahtab*et al*, 2016:114).Complicit masculinity is constructed in ways that recognize the patriarchal dividend, without the strains or possibility of becoming patriarchal front line troops (Connell, 1995). Complicit masculinity, therefore, include men who help the hegemony dominate in the society by not necessalrily complaining about men's dominance, but instead enjoy hegemony by being quiet. Gómez and Fernando (2007:118) argue that "hegemony is not actually effective if a careful and strategic plan is not well designed to guarantee power control. That is why complicity is a cautious conspiracy, and it is one of the main important factors in the power of masculinity", because it refers to the "process in which the exercise of power by the dominant bloc over other blocs is maintained, not only by force or coercion but also by consent" (Gramsci, 1999:10). Complicit masculinity also benefits from the patriarchal dividend as other masculinities but they construct their own masculinity without tensions or risks. By being complicit, such

men indirectly benefit from the patriarchal dividend accruing from gender discrimination and oppressive structures which disadvantage largely women (Connell, 1987; 2005). Connell calls them the slacker version of hegemonic masculinity. For instance, in a context in which violence against women is endemic, men who are not actually violent against their wives but are silent on such violence perpetrated by other men are likely to be charged as complicit. They are complicit because they enjoy indirectly from the generally oppressive system which regulates women's lives (Gqola, 2015).

The exposition above validates the claim that the expression of masculinity is not unified, and that it is subject to change, especially according to age, class, race and location. However, one type of masculinity that is exalted in any society is hegemonic masculinity as it legitimizes the dominance of men over women and other men in the society. This study will also highlight the dominance of hegemonic masculinity, despite the existence of other forms of masculinities in the society. The study, therefore, examinesthe construction of hegemonic masculinity, through the discourses of patriarchy, violence, bravery, male child preference, emotional control and heteronormativity. The study embraces earlier assertions that children's literature operates as a contested terrain where male domination is constructed, produced and maintained (Bereska, 1999; Nodelman, 2002; Wannamaker, 2006).

1.1.2 Definitions of Children's Literature

African children get introduced to both oral and written literature: oral literature first, and, later, written literature. Just like literature, there isn't a single accepted definition of children's literature. The reason is because children's literature has been defined from different perspectives. Some of the scholarly definitions have focused on technical, conceptual, political and terminological aspects (Chitando, 2009). Children's literature may be defined as literature written for children. However, this definition is limited because books written for, or about children, may not necessarily be for children, as they may be used to perpetuate some adult ideologies (Oberstein, 1996:17; Townsend, 1990:61). Another definition is that Children's literature "refers to books written for children up to twelve or thirteen years of age" (Schmidt, 1965: 61). This definition also suggests that children above thirteen are not considered children, and this may not be a correct assumption, especially within many African

countries. One may also argue that children's literature is literature with a child narrator - a definition that again may not be deemed comprehensive of what children's literature is, given that the presence of a child narrator or character does not guarantee that the book is for children, particularly in instances when the content sounds adult-oriented. This is why Muponde (2004) argues that there has to be a difference between 'children's literature' and 'children in literature' in order to avoid conceptual limitations. Questions such as: who is the writer of children's literature, who is a child, and whether a child is defined in terms of the number of years, further complicate the discussion. For example, a definition that is guided by age, expressed in number of years may be limited, in view of the fact that different societies have different interpretations of who can be considered a child. Another debate in the field of children's literature is on who produces children's literature. Many assume that adults produce children's literature. This could have been true in the past but children now produce some literature for themselves and other children, such as stories and plays. So assuming that children's literature is produced solely by adults will be an erroneous assumption. This debate on who produces children's literature is delved into by Hunt (2009:13), and he asks "Do these texts belong to children or they are simply aimed at. them?" Unfortunately, he does not give any answers. In adding their voice to this debate, Maybin and Watson (2009:3) write, ―What children's literature is remains an area for continuing debate, centered on the conception of children's literature itself. The term appears to be an oxymoron: how can books which are written by adults, published and disseminated by adults, and largely bought by adults be appropriately called children's literature? Rudd (2006) extends the target of children's literature to adults as well. He writes that, "Adults are as caught up in this discourse as children, engaging dialogically with it (writing/reading it), just as children themselves engage with many 'adult' discourses. But it is how these texts are read and used that will determine their success as 'children's literature'; how fruitfully they are seen to negotiate this hybrid, or border country" (Rudd, 2006:26).

From the discussionsabove, it is obvious that the definition of children's literature remains debatable. However, there is a need to examine some definitions to find a way to harmonise them in this study.

Wilson-Tagoe (1992) defines children's literature as a book that addresses the concern and needs of children. Similarly, according to Oberstein (1996:17), children's

literature is “a category of books, the existence of which absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: Children”. For Tomlinson and Brown (2005:3), it is defined as a good story book with a wide topical range that is “relevant for the pleasurable experience of children from birth to adolescence”. Anderson (2005:2) also sees children’s literature as all creative works with a literary value written for children. Fayose (1991:74) is specific in her meaning of children’s literature because of her emphases on African children. She sees it as:

> That piece of literary creation which draws its subject 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 Young adult to understand and appreciate his or her environment better and it must give him or her some pleasure.(Fayose, 1991:74).

Fayose defends herself by stating that this definition does not in any way diminish the value of literature from other places for the African child. However, she is of the opinion that such literature cannot be viewed as African children’s literature because they are far from promoting African culture.

These definitions imply that it is reinforced by purpose, which is the supposed connection with the child as its reading audience. They also pay attention to functions such as entertaining, pleasure, while Fayose relates it to the immediate environment in which it is produced. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that children’s literature is understood to be one which focuses on the child and/or young adult, written for/about children by adults or children themselves, addressing children’s sensibilities and worldview.

1.1.3 Children’s Literature in Nigeria

The publication of children’s literature in Nigeria began in the early twentieth century, in the same context as literature for western-based children. However, what was produced for Nigerian children was practically out of touch with the young Nigerians. According to Schmidt (1965:5) “its appropriateness for African readers was never considered apart from gearing it to their level of literacy, for the aim of teachers and missionaries was to Europeanize African children, not to provide literature related to their needs and interests”. As Nigeria attained independence in 1960, patriotism expressed itself in various spheres of Nigerian literature, including

children's literature. The development of children's literature during this period was motivated by the need for a literature that would more adequately reflect indigenous views and realities of the Africans, "many of the books written naturally reflect the African environment, and draw from the rich traditions of folklore, riddles and proverbs" (Umeh, 1997:1991). The didactic and indigenous nature of early children's literature corresponded with the United Nations principles proclaimed in 1959, in its Declaration of the Rights of the Child; specifically the principle stated that children should be given an education that will promote their general culture. Nigerian writers met this challenge by providing books that will nurture children into dynamic and well educated adult, among which include Cyprian Ekwensi, Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa and others. Cyprian Ekwensi is unique among Nigerian creative writers because he has written for children throughout his prolific literary career. Many of the characters in their texts are motivated by values which are real in specific socio-cultural contexts in Nigeria, they are and understandable to Nigerian readers. The major influence for children's literature in Nigeria is found in the culture, traditions and norms which are present in virtually all Nigerian communities. That is why most Nigerian children's literatures are actually reworked stories from the gamut of Nigerian cultural life and customs. Such examples are Kemi Morgan's *How Tortoise Captured the Elephant* (1966), Ekwensi's*The Boa Suitor* (1966) and Kola Onadipe's*The Magic Land of the Shadows* (1970). Early children's literature were also adventure stories in which the hero or heroes, exclusively boys, embarck on dangerous adventures either to save the community from criminals or save a princess from danger. Examples of such adventures are Ekwensi's*Juju Rock* (1966)and Achebe's *Chike and the River* (1966). Children can easily empathise with these stories because they express their everyday activities both at home and at school. Other themes often explored in Nigerian children's literature also include honesty, justice, family, community development, persistence, the reward of obedience and gender issues. Women writers such as AdimoraEzeigbo, Christie Ade-Ajayi, Remi Adediji, Teresa Meniru and Mabel Segun also played prominent roles in the advancement of the girl/women image in children's literature in Nigeria, with many of them producing over ten narratives in this genre.

1.1.4 Gender in Nigerian Children's literature

Gender issue remains topical in the study of Nigerian children's literature. It is important to point out that the pioneers of Nigerian literature were exclusively male(Chitando, 2016:126). The generation of Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe and others was characterised by a male outlook. As a result, early works were adventure stories in which boys are portrayed as heroes, going on dangerous expenditures, rescuing female princess and queens and school boys playing their usual pranks. For instance, Kola Onadipe's*The Adventures of Souza* is the exhilarating story of the adventures and misdeeds of a village boy who goes hunting, joins a secret cult, and meets a magician. In Nkem Nwankwo's *Tales Out of School*, young Bayo goes to school, and experiences a rebellion in his first term there. Rosemary Uwemedimo's*Akpan and the Smugglers* is also about a boy who in his bid to prove his father's innocence, in a false charge of smuggling levied against him, courageously and steadily uncovers the secrets of a gang of smugglers. In Anezi Okoro's *One Week One Trouble*, Wilson Tagbo goes to high school, and falls into trouble. Although these stories usually sustain children's interest, primarily because of their thrilling actions, attention is always on traits such as bravery, endurance and other risky practices that are hegemonic in nature. On the other hand, females in the texts are represented in one dimensional and stereotypical role and occupations such as wife, helpless queen, princess, prostitute, nurse and witch. This trend was aimed at keeping to the African patriarchal conviction that only the boy child constituted a worthwhile investment. Consequently, fewer women in Africawere allowed to attainsecondary education, let alone university in the 1950s and 1960s. The Nigerian feminist scholar, IfiAmadiume (1987) argues that patriarchy within traditional institutions was strengthened by the introduction of patriarchal religions such as Christianity, "This worsened the situation of women in Africa", she argues.

However, following the pioneering work of Flora Nwapa and others, in the 1970s, many Nigerian women writers have emerged. Nigerian women writers such as BuchiEmecheta, Flora Nwapa were supported by women children's writers like Christi Ade Ajayi, AdimoraEzeigbo, Remi Adediji, Teresa Meniro and Mabel Segun to demonstrate a concern for the liberation of African women. Women critics alike also challenged the issue of stereotypical representation of women in already published children's books, thereby calling for realistic portrayal of female experience. Odejide (1997) calls for the production of realistic fiction where readers'

range of life experiences is not limited according to race, gender and socio-economic status. Umeh (1997) also calls for the elimination of anachronistic stereotypical depiction of female characters in children's literature. She gives core conditions that will see to the quantitative and qualitative growth of children's literature. To start with Umeh calls for modern realistic depictions of stories around the dynamic,robust female experiences which must issue from the age-long patriarchal ideology that projects mis-representations of gender roles, to revolutionary reconstruction of the male superiority stereotype.

Writers suggest that the portrayal of realistic role models for readers will go a long way in ensuring a modest society, free of gender stereotypes. It is believed that the relative depiction of confident and assertive female characters in children's literature will increase the prospect for girls to question the imposed gender roles or to assume another desired place in society (Uzegbu, 2012). Similarly, Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2015) claimsthrough the creation of optimistic and confident female characters, literature for children in nigeria have the capacity to eradicate harmful patriarchal norms in the society. Ezenwa-Ohaeto is of the opinion that such attempt will help reduce gender stereotypes in the society.Consequently, children writers are recently making conscious effort to ensure a realistic and positive portrayal of gender roles in their texts. Prominent writers such as Fatima Akilu, Yusuf Adamu, Ayodele Olofintuade, Lola Shoneyin, AkachiAdimora and A. O Oyekanmi have contributed extensively to the empowerment of women through the children's literature genre.However, in spite of their persistent tussles aimed at the abolition of harmful patriarchal practices, many of their works always focus on the character of women and girls. Male characters are still seen retaining their traditional and hegemonic roles. Most of the stories often portraymaleness or masculinity as a goal that is achieved through attributes such as strengths, endurance and heroic exploits. What previous scholarly efforts fail to realize is that these attributes which are perceived as natural, norms and normal for men are not only dangerous for the wellbeing for males, but also they are considered to be the foundations of men's domination, women oppression and gender inequality in Nigeria. Hence, the sparse scholarship on the subject calls for the need to explore the constructions of masculinity in selected narratives for children in Nigeria, and how they represent male domination.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Scholarshipon gender hasrevealed that masculinity, which reinforces male domination, female oppression and gender imbalance, is entrenched in children's literature in Nigeria. However, existing studies on masculinity in Nigeria have focused more on adult fiction,paying less attention to children's literature. Though there are studies on the representation of masculinity in children's literature in Africa (Oyango 2007; Thyssen 2013; Adjei 2014), there is little scholarly attention on masculinity in narratives for children in Nigeria. Due to the paucity of works on masculinity in children's literature in Nigeria, the few works that exist are on gender issues in Nigerian's children's literature (Umeh1997, Uzegbu, 2012; Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2015). Nevertheless, such positions are analysed from the perspective of female characters only. Umeh (1997), for instance, investigated the stereotypical representation of women in children's literature. Similarly, Uzegbu (2012) examined the challenges and consequences to gender equality in children's literature in Nigeria. Also, Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2015) explored the role of children's literature in its capacity to eradicate harmful patriarchal norms in Nigeria and the impact on women.

Despite scholarly efforts from these female perspectives, there still exist a high percentage ofmasculine notions and ideas in Nigerian children's narratives. The study contends that the narratives tend to encourage masculine traits through various means such as symbols, images, narrative patterns, father figures, oral traditions among others. These social constructs tend to follow traditional stereotypical tendency by conforming to a dominant model of virile, active, aggressive, less emotional and competitive masculinity, while also reinforcing male domination and gender inequality. Unfortunately, the society is unaware of the degree to which these social constructs of masculinity are not only unhealthy but equally stereotypical and dangerous for the readers, most especially boys in the society. This study is, therefore, an attempt to fill this gap by exploring the constructions of masculinity in selected narratives for children in Nigeria, with a view to highlighting the representation of male supremacy and gender inequality.

1.3. Aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to make an exploration into the constructions of masculinity in selected narratives for children in Nigeria. To achieve this aim, the following objectives are considered:

1. To discuss the use of oral literary forms as enhancing elements in the representation of masculinity in the selected narratives
2. To identify and discuss images of masculinity as representations of male dominance and gender inequality in the narratives.
3. To discuss symbols that express masculine tendencies in the selected narratives.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Studying men's social behaviour, roles and attributes is significant in a number of ways. First, it reverses the imbalance of gender research. Critical study of men is rewarding for both genders as both male and female stand to benefit positively from its outcome.

One key contribution of this study is the recognition of masculinity as a discipline germane to addressing the issues of men's crisis, male dominance and women's oppression in Africa. To achieve this, the study has discussed the constructions of male dominance in selected narratives for children in Nigeria. Hence, this study is pro-feminist, as it sees the roles of men as gendered and not natural. This study also bridges the gap in gender studies, in Nigeria, by seeking to achieve a balance through a better understanding of men.

The study also points out the importance of engaging readers with positive images of masculinity that will help male readers disregard some of the traditional principles of masculinity. Such will enhance more dynamic perspectives of males within the society. The outcome of this study will also offer useful insights that will aid writers' depiction of realistic masculinity tendencies, thereby providing a helpful tool for the selection and teaching of literature.

Lastly, the research observes that the sampled narratives for the study are recent and that they dwell on hegemonic masculinity, males, children, boys and gender relationship. And as an overall contribution to the field of children's literature, the

findings of this study will help improve the current scarcity of research on children's literature in Nigeria, masculinity in Nigerian literature and specifically the absence of research on masculinity in children's literature in Nigeria. This should break fresh grounds and justify the need to reconstruct traditional and rigid principles of masculinity in the modern Nigerian society and make everyone realise that traits of masculinity as perceived in Nigeria are not fixed and natural.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The scope of thisresearch covers Nigerian children's prose fiction only. The study recognises that there are categories of children's narratives meant for different categories of children: picture books, traditional narratives, poetry, drama, fairy tales, fables, etc. It has been discovered that the narrative is becoming more dominant in Nigeria, and continues to receive more scholarly attentions as a result. At the same time, it is limited to the narratives written in English in Nigeria solely. Since getting hold of the entire children's narratives about masculinity in the country might be too ambitious, the scope of the study is limited to six narratives, whose contents engage masculinity issues.

The selected prose are ChineloIfezulike's*Chima Laughs Last* (2014), Ekpa Anthonia's *EdidemEyamba and the Edikang-Ikong Soup*(2009), Essien Ako's*The Adventures of Akpan Akan Uto* (2014), Ifeanyi Ifoegbuna's*Folake and Her Four Brothers* (2004), Ikechukwu Ebonogwu's*The Champion of Echidime* (2008) and Richard Osifo's*Murphy the Prankster*(2013).Lastly, the study favours the choice of the selected texts due to the marginal interest or near absence of critical interest on the texts, from the angle of masculinity.

The narratives will serve as the basis for analysing oral traditions, symbols and images of masculinity in Nigeria, thereby establishing that children's literature has a lot to contribute to the entrenchment and reinforcement of notions of masculinity, and aids male dominance, female oppression and gender inequality in society.

1.6. Methodology

1.6.1. Method of data collection

The current study examines constructions of masculinity in Nigerian children's narratives using a purposive sampling method.

In selecting the texts, the researcher chose narratives which were published for children, largely in the time-frame of 2000 till date. Also, the selected titles were all written by Nigerian authors of children's literature and no more than one narrative written by the same author was included in the sample. Furthermore, the narratives are published by a reputable publishing outfit: Lantern Publisher. The publishing firm isconsidered to be the leading publisher of children's literature in Nigeria. Hence, they are chosen because they are the ones that tend to reach most individuals due to the amount of mass attention that Lantern Publisher receive. The narratives also have local and realistic settings, and the target audience is the ordinary Nigerian child. Most of the central characters are also teenage boys. Nearly all are available online, in public libraries and bookstores. All the narratives were purchased from the Lantern Bookshop, and are categorised under the section for 'Teen' in the Lantern Book catalogue.

In addition, the selected texts are appropriate for children, in the age range of 8 to 12 years. The age bracket reflects the stage of development where children begin to understand and appreciate gender differentiation and expectations according to the norms of the society (Maccoby, 1998).Lastly, there are a handful of children's narratives with dominant instances of hegemonic masculinity.

1.6.2. Method of data analysis

All the narratives were read numerouslyfor initialunderstanding of the data. Though the narratives are all written in English, some texts infused with local Igbo dialect were translated and transcribed with the help of an Igbo translator. The narratives were then subjected to textual analysis.

The study utilises the literary approach in the exploration of how masculinity is configured in the selected texts. Using Raewyn Connell's theory of Hegemonic Masculinity and Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, the selected narratives weresubjected to critical and textual analysis, focusing on the constructions of masculinity via the analysis of oral traditions, images and symbols.

Besides, a review of texts of other authors has helpedin the holistic investigation of the topic under study. The secondary materials explored include scholarly books, journal publications on the related topics and internet materials. The secondary

materials are mainly on gender and masculinity criticism, with a focus to reveal the predominant masculinity issues espoused in the narratives, and to establish the representation of male domination and gender inequality. All these materials are employed in the discussion of selected narratives on the construction of masculinity.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Raewyn Connell's theory of Hegemonic Masculinity and its variants, particularly, Brannon and Juni's BMS (Brannon Masculinity Scale), and Carl Jung's Archetypal theory. Hegemonic masculinity and has been used to determine whether masculine gender performances in the narratives are hegemonic in nature. Brannon Masculine Scale is adopted to identify and analyse the norms and values that define the male role of the characters. Carl Jung's Archetypal theory on the other hand has helped to vividly show how Nigerian children's narratives frequently draw upon literary archetypes and trends in the constructions of masculinity in the narratives.

1.7.1 Hegemonic Masculinity and its Variants

Key to the discussion of masculinity in this study is the theory of hegemonic masculinity, which is a mesh of traits, roles, and beliefs which construct an 'ideal' masculinity within a given context, and against which other masculinities might compete for recognition. (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985; Connell, 1983; 1987).It is an important theory of analysis to identify the attitudes and practices of men who maintain gender inequality. These include masculine dominance over women and the power of certain men over other men (Connell, 1987).The theory of hegemonic masculinity has long been associated with the sociological work of Robert Connell; who took a key interest in theorizing and problematizing ruling class, power, and hegemony.Ithas been established that Connell's theory is influenced by Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony which asserts that the ruling class sometimes gain authoritywith the help of traditional institutions. Gramsci's concept has since penetrated gender scholarship, and still attracted much utility in current scholarship on gender, social hierarchy, masculinity studies, femininity as well as the feminist theorization of patriarchy (Ratele, 2016).However, while Gramsci uses the concept of hegemony to analyseclass relations, it is used by Connell to analyse gender relations between men and women, as well as among classes of men(Groes-Green, C., 2009).

By hegemony, Connell refers to the point where institutional powers and cultural ideals converge to produce a standard definition and aspirational image of being a social male (Ratele, 2016). It refers to those traits that various cultures ascribe to 'real men', and which do not only set out such 'real men' from women and all other men, but also justify all men to generally be in a position of domination over women(Connell 1987). In the word of Connell:

> One form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answers to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women(Connell, 1987:77).

Hegemonic masculinity is defined as the culturally celebrated ways of being a male in a specific social context, a position which sparks rivalry against other masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is the power of embodiment within culturally and contextually valued ways of being seen or evaluated as a man or a boy; such "hegemonic masculinity" becomes the "grounds from which other men and boys measure themselves against the non-ruling masculinity" (Ratele, 2006).

Many scholars have identified certain characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. According to Hatty:

> Hegemonic or dominant masculinity embraces heterosexuality…aggression, hierarchy, and competition…The opportunity and capacity to dominate others. The use of force and violence is viewed as one of the modes of bahaviour by which hierarchy is perpetuated in society(Hatty, 2000:181).

Trujillo (1991) also defines hegemonic masculinity by recognizing five characteristics. These are:

> When power is defined in terms of physical force and control, when it is defined through occupational achievement in an industrial, capitalistic society, when it is represented in terms of familial patriarchy, when it is symbolized by the daring, romantic frontiersman of yesteryear and of the present-day outdoorsman, and when heterosexually defined(Trujillo, 1991:291).

Luyt (2003:13) also identifies independence, emotional control, and stiffness as important features of hegemonic masculinity. He further adds that while it is

inevitable for men to experience and struggle with feelings, but rather such feelings and struggles are expected to be contained. Beyon (2002) attests to this by arguing that hegemonic masculinity has become a 'neuro-muscular armour' that forces men to subduetheir tenderness, feeling and any signs of weakness. Equally, Pleck and Sawyer (1974:4) claim that "hegemonic masculinity makes men suppress sensitivity and kindness, to the extent that the eventual result of not expressing emotion is not to experience it".

In Nigeria, there are also specific attributes of hegemonic masculinity which are characteristic of the society. According to Uchendu (2007), characteristics of masculinity in Nigeria include:

> superior physical strength, firmness, fearlessness, decisiveness, an ability to protect the weak, to control, to conquer, to take risks, provide leadership, to be assertive, to enjoy a high social status, and to display versatility in martial arts…intelligence, bravery, sobriety, unemotionality, and an absence of smiles (Uchendu, 2007:283).

The masculinity of a Nigerian man is measured based on most of these attributes, and to the degree to which he exhibits them. Towards the opposite gender, hegemonic masculinity is also manifested in presumed virility. This is achieved through a marriage between a man and a woman, and the ability of the man to impregnate the woman. In fact, in some Nigerian societies, marrying multiple wives is an evidence of masculinity. However, irrespective of the size of his family, if a man is unable to procreate, his masculinity is challenged or he is not seen as a male at all.Sometimes, virility goes beyond procreation. It extends to a man's ability to produce a male child. This duty is so important that sometimes the whole or ultimate purpose of being a man, in Nigeria, is to produce a male child who will elongate the heritage and name of the family. All these traits and expectations have fortified the maintenance of men's supremacy, legitimacy and power in Nigeria. It must be stressed that boys and young men are consciously or unconsciously groomed to follow these societal practices. According to Banks (2015):

> Masculinity is the only way of living for both the young and old men of Nigeria. Fathers drill it into their sons and society will reinforce these guidelines to further instill them into every little boy's way of living. It starts young and they receive training to be the best, as they get olderhttps://www.hastac.org/blogs/gilia-dejailee

banks/2015/12/09/masculinity-nigeria-rebellion-vs-conformity-and-power.

Boys are also expected to be physically fit, they must be able to tolerate pain, stand against threat, and must distance themselves from feminine domain in order to successfully beecome a man.

In essence, these definitions and features suggest that hegemonic masculinity often reinforces attributes such as physical and mental strength, violence, force, financial ability and success, emotional control, the power to dominate and control others (women and other men) and virility. It is significant to point out that not all mencan exhibit all the traits of hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless, hegemonic masculinity requires all men to position themselves in relation to it even if they cannot embody it (Connell, 1987). Similarly, Bederman (2008) calls "manliness a standard to live up to, an ideal of male perfectibility to be achieved" (27). This shows that hegemonic masculinity may not be the most common type of masculinity, however, "it sets the standard against which the achievements of all other men (the majority) are judged"(Tan et al, 2013:239).

For instance, young men may seek patriarchal hegemony through heterosexual marriage, economic breadwinner role, physical and emotional fortitude and independence (Ratele, 2008), but may be marginalized by their social, cultural, financial and political circumstances, as well as age range that may require complex re-configurations and renegotiations of their masculinity. This means that hegemonic masculinity is sometimes achieved through unusual means in Africa, especially within the context of economic marginality and poverty. It has been argued that despite the dominance of men in Africa, the uncertainty associated with a market-based, global economy is becoming a source of anxiety for men in present day post-colonial Nigeria. Men are becoming disempowered due to the harsh labour market, in Africa.This is also displacing young men of their livelihood, and even undermining their traditional roles,thus having negative consequence on their social and sexual behaviour and that of their partners. This also results in anger, tension and unhappiness, which explains why men participate in risky activities (crime, alcohol and drug use) as a way to prove their manhood to their peers and women and girls, or as a way out of the burden of their positions and obligations. Uchendu (2009), while discussing the negative effects of excessive masculinity avers that currently the wave

of crime among Nigerian youth, educated and uneducated, is very high, with crimes linked to money taking the lead. Excluding such an severe outcome, the obsession with achieving achievement and financial stability can lead to overuse of one's body, the end result of which may be illness or early physical degradation. It has also been pointed out that the male drive for control, especially within the family, creates room for the abuse of the repressed group, which, if in the larger society, can in particular hinder women's display of their potential, leading to some negative national consequences.

Moreover, it has even become a common phenomenon for boys to take to alcohol and drug as evidence of their masculinity in the presence of their peers. A study confirms that:

> The reason street boys drank was 'to step up', for them to get high and be able to do whatever they want to do…they are not getting anything from the society and their feelings about society are negative - that is why they go to whatever extent to intoxicate themselves because to them that is the only time when they will feel ok. This adds to the problem, because once they are intoxicated they are capable of committing any act. ("Being a Man in Nigeria" 2015:59)

This supports Brod's idea that the physical body and its potential for violence provide a concrete means of achieving and affirming manhood for males who have limited or no access to financial power (Brod, 1987). Similarly, Groes-Green (2009) claims that in the absence of economic power and social status in the midst of significant unemployment and deprivation, many young people seem to depend on sexual activities or abuse as forms of expressing male authority vis-à-vis female partners, often compared to middle-class peers, who acquired authority through consumerism and material gifts to girlfriends. (Groes-Green, 2009).

Hence, the study also examine male characters who are powerless economically, and therefore have lost their ability to play the role of bread-winners, but try to gain authority and respect through the use of violence and other unethical means. Hence, approaching the study through Hegemonic masculinity will allow for a more careful consideration of how different dominant notions of masculinity in Nigerian society shape masculine identities and behaviours of male characters in the narratives.

Brannon Masculinity Scale

The Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS) was developed by Brannon and Juni (1984; Brannon, 1985) to measure individuals' approval of the norms and values that define the male role. The theory is based on Brannon's (1976) 110-item self-report scale to analysed American culture's "blueprint" of what a man is supposed to be, to want, and to succeed in doing. The theory presumes that masculinity centers on four themes; no sissy stuff, give 'em hell; be sturdy as an oak; and the big wheel, with each theme containing various subscales.

Most vital, the "No sissy stuff" standard contains two subscales - avoiding femininiity and concealing emotions. No sissy stuff discourages some range of emotions in men. For instance, it highlighted that when a man is feeling a liitle pain, such pain should be concealed as much as possible. The "Big wheel" standard is described with two subscales – being the breadwinner and being admired and respected. Here, the theory identifies success in work as the central goal in a man's life, while he is expected to be respected and admired by everyone who knows him. The "Sturdy Oak" standard is arepresented by two subscales – toughness and the male machine. A man should always appear tough and should always try to project an air of confidence even if he doesn't really feel confident inside. Brannon's last masculinity standard – 'Give 'em Hell" is described in one violence and adventure subscale. It encourages violence and expect men to occasionally enjoy a bit of danger.

The strengths of the approach taken by Brannon include the scope of the masculinity standards included, and the effort to assess attitudes toward the expectations men face without direct comparison to women. Hence, the study uses BMS's ideological scale to identify and analysethe norms, behaviours and attributes that define the male role as distinct from the female role.

1.7.2 Archetypal Criticism

Jung's theory of collective unconscious is situated within the ambit of Archetypal criticism. It is, therefore, important to start with the discussion of Archetypal criticism. Archetypal criticism is largely traceable to the writings of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, Wilson Knight,Robert Graves, Maud Bodkin,Francis Fergusson, Northrop Frye,and Leslie Fiedler, Philip Wheelwright.Archetypes are repetitive narrative structures, patterns of bahaviour, character-types, themes, and images that can be found in a broad variety of literary works, as well as in myths,

dreams, and even social rituals. Such recurring items are considered to be the result of elementary and universal forms or patterns in the human psyche, whose effective embodiment in a literary work evokes the attentive reader 's profound response because he or she shares the culture as the author. In this way, literature becomes one of the most visible avenues of exhibiting such patterns of recurrences. Therefore, in literature, an archetype is a recurrent, universal pattern, images, symbols or myth that evoke a deep, emotional response in virtually all readers as it strikes a chord in their unconscious memory. Archetypal critics look for such patterns and images in literature, relying on archaeology, anthropology, psychology, culture, history, and religion to identify and explain the total human experience.

1.7.2. Carl Jung's Collective unconscious

Carl Jung argued that the root of an archetype is in the "collective unconscious" of mankind. According to Abrams (1999:112) "collective unconscious refers to experiences shared by a race or culture and are expressed in myths, religions, dreams and private fantasies, as well as symbols and images in the works of literature". Such experiences include abstract things such as life, love, death, survival, religion and birth. These things exist in the unconscious of every individual, and are re-created in literary works, through literary forms such as dreams, myths, images, characters, settings, and symbols. Archetypes, therefore, originate from the collective unconscious and function mostly as autonomous and hidden forms or potentials that are transformed by individuals and cultures when they are realized at a conscious level. They occur across cultures, appearing repeatedly in the myths and stories that those cultures create, particularly those stories relating to human behaviour (Jacobi, 1959).

The interface between archetypal criticism and masculinity in this study is linear. One of the ways by which masculinity is constructed is through archetypal images in a text.Olson (2014) assert that:

> Archetypes obtain specific context through historical, cultural, and personal representations known as archetypal images...while the number of archetypes could be considered limitless, Jung argues that some archetypal images recur across cultures, appearing repeatedly in the myths and stories that those cultures create, particularly those stories relating to human behaviour…(Olson, 2014:14).

Some of them includethe trickster, the Anima/Animus, wise Old Man, shadow archetype, mother archetype, father archetype, the child-hero and the animal archetype. Though Jung highlighted many archetypal images, few are only recognisable in the narratives, and they include: hero archetype, father archetype, and father-figure archetype.

For instance, one of the most often traced archetypal image is that of the hero, "who must leave her/his home, travel into unfamiliar territory, meet a guide, endure dangerous situations and adventures, reach the object of her/his quest, gain important new knowledge, and return home with that knowledge to share with others" (Bunkers, 2013). This image has reoccurred in prominent literature such as *Iliad*, *Homer* in a way to encourage young men to strive to imitate the courage and valour demonstrated by the heroes and gods celebrated in these texts (McCabe, 2014:7). This image has also become the narrative patterns of children's literary genre such as fairy tales and adventures. The representation of this image stems from the idea that every human civilisation has celebrated stories of men overcoming great odds through strength and courage, therefore, they set patterns that are hegemonic in nature for the society. This is significant, bearing in mind Connell's claim that "in certain circumstances, frontier masculinities might be reproduced as a local cultural tradition long after the frontier had passed" (Connell, 2005:74). In other words, these models of frontier hegemonic masculinity become a part of the society's national pride, and often become mythologized in literature to a degree through images. These sets of archetypal images represent a hegemonic "masculine ideal that conceptualises men as physically and emotionally indestructible…they show no sign of pain when physically wounded, and they refuse to acknowledge any sort of emotional sensitivity or vulnerability (Canavese, 2013 cited in Olson, 2014:18). These images "reflect stereotypical cultural ideas surrounding masculinity, particularly those that associate the concept directly with violence and aggression" (Olson, 2014:18). They "perpetuate and reinforce these ideas of hegemonic masculinity by emphasising violence and aggression and physical strength as the most desirable masculine traits" (Canavese, 2013 cited in Olson, 2014:18). They also send a message, to boys, that they should be able to endure pain without showing it and never betray their feelings.

Hence, despite the didactic nature of children's narratives, they still tend to reflect and reinforce these idealised versions of mythical figures in the society. Nigerian

children's narratives also follow this tradition. Male characters in the narratives all exhibit traditional and rigid traits of hegemonic masculinity that stresses emotional control, rugged individualism, and violent behaviour. In essence, It is this kind of image and other related images that will be analysed as archetypes representing men's' gender behaviours, roles, and attitudes.

Archetypes also appear in other forms in children's narratives. They appear through symbols that express hegemonic masculinity tendency. Generally, Jung identifies symbols such as the apple, snake, red and cross as conventional symbols. However, there are cultural symbols that are peculiar to each society, and some of them include male body, sexuality, animal and food in this study.

Archetypes are also expressed through traditional and cultural practices that reinforce normative gender roles and behaviours, especially oral traditions. Oral traditions are parts of the archetypes that are embedded in the collective unconscious. The fact that many oral traditions resolve around similar themes confirms the existence of a common collective unconscious. Akporobaro (2001:196-7) argues that oral traditions are used to explain to ourselves "who we are, how we are created, where we come from, and what is the origin of our social institutions, laws, rites, and codes of conduct". Hence, oral traditions are also roots of our collective unconscious, including the traditional constructions of gender behaviours and traits.

The constructions of masculinity in the narratives are, therefore, analysed specifically, through oral traditions, images and symbols.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews related works on masculinity. First, works on masculinity in children's literature across different parts of the world are appraised. Second, few works existing on masculinity in Africa and Nigerian society and literature are reviewed and lastly, previous studies conducted on children's literature in Nigeria are presented.

Children's literature has long been viewed as an important socialization tool for molding the attitudes and behaviours of children in the society. It plays a vital role in how children perceive themselves and experience gender roles. According to Zipes (2009), books are one of the primary means by which children first seek to understand gender and culture. They have the potential to influence children's perceptions of socially accepted roles and values of how males and females are supposed to behave. For instance, many contemporary narratives for children in Nigeria still confinethe female child character to the kitchen whereas the male child character has the liberty to play with friends, and engage in dangerous adventures. Similarly, role figures such as fathers, uncles and friends in children's literature also have direct impact on the socially expected roles of children (boys) in texts. These manners of gender representation do have impact on children's perceptions of gender-appropriate roles and behaviours in the society. Despite this, not much work has been done on the constructions of traits of masculinity in children's literature in Nigeria. While there has been a lot of discursive research on masculinity in children's literature in the Europe, South America, and some parts of Africa, same cannot really be said about children's literature in Nigeria. In fact, it is only in recent times that Nigerian literary critics have started to pay more attention to masculinity in adult literature. In children's literature, existing studies on gender have mostly focused on the stereotypical representation of women and girls (Uzegbu, 2012;Ezenwa-Ohaeto,

2015), thereby, neglecting the stereotypical representation of boys and men. However, in the course of this study, a few relevant previous works on masculinity and children's literaturearound the world were found and reviewed.

2.1 A Critique of Existing Works on Masculinity in Children's Literature

The field of masculinity may have received amazingly little scholarly effort from the academic field of children's literature in Nigeria; it has indeed enjoyed a lot of attention around the world.

The first notable study of masculinity in children's literature was carried out by Margarita Davies in Spain. In her thesis, *Narratives of otherness: masculinity and identity in contemporary Spanish children's literature and adolescents* (1998), she examines the predominance of male characters in children's and adolescents' literature. Using a selection of Spanish texts, a variety of male characters are analysed, focusing on six major roles: father, grandfather, imaginary friend, detective among others. The first chapter, concerning fatherhood, is related to the person's sense of intrinsic identity, given their name and genetic heritage. She notes that the grandfather represents a similar sense of family continuity, which enables the young reader to understand Spain's historical and rural past. The second chapter, which examines an imaginary friend focuses on the aspect of identity concerned with a child's ability to achieve a goal or to occupy a special place within the family. The third chapter which covers the detective stories are analogous to the young person's developing identity's ability to decipher the mysteries of texts. The thesis concludes that, when analysed as individuals, many male characters demonstrate traits not traditionally considered masculine, and that it is necessary to look beyond mere representations of gender in judging the value of characters in children's literature and adolescents.

Her thesis establishes the need to consider the personality and value of characters distinct from the conventional dominant traits of masculinity. In addition, the study recognizes the significance of variety of male characters such as father, grandfather, imaginary friend, detective among others to the construction of masculinity. Nevertheless, there are few gaps. First, elements of masculinity such as images and symbols were neglected in her analysis. Besides, while her study engaged children's

literature in Spain, this present effort examines the construction of masculinity in narratives for children in Nigeria.

In North America, closely related to Davies's study in terms of historical affinity is Bereska's (1999) examination of the representations of masculinity in young adult novels for boys from a sociological historical point of view. Bereska's study involved thirty novels from 1940-1997. She analysed the novels in an attempt to discover whether the structure of masculinity (as it related to Noirth American youth) had changed over time. She isolated components that she considered made up this structure (aggression, collectivity, adventure, athleticism, morality, for example) and concluded that these images remained stable over 50 year time period.

The major limitation of Bereska's work is her selection of novels. Bereska included not just young adult novels (that is, novels written specifically for teenagers), but also adult novels, which have been appropriated by teachers and used with teenagers (Golding's *Lord of the Flies* 1954 and Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, 1951, for example). These novels are about adolescence rather than written for adolescents, and as such, their ideological basis is different: they lack the didactic element common in children's literature and teenagers, for example. Although Bereska isolated many similar images of masculinity, he did not go on to consider other elements of masculinity such as symbols and oral traditions. One of the major contentions of this study is that an understanding of these elements present in narratives for children is crucial to examining of the construction of masculinity in the text. In addition, Bereska's study is limited in scope.

In Europe, the most sustained study that has addressed the representations of masculinities in children's literature is John Stephens' collection of essays titled *Ways of Being Male* (2002). The collection includes essays which examinethe depictions of masculinities and maleness in literature and film meant for children.However, despite the relevance of the collection to the study of masculinity, it focused more on film.

In the collection, Nodelman (2002) investigates how books for children express hegemonic assumptions for male in the society. Using a reader response approach, he explores a range of manners in which children's literature seems to imply and reinforce notions of masculinity.

First, a number of children's texts that focus on male heroes were analyzed. Second, texts that show masculinity as a force in opposition to law, order and to the social fabric in general were also analysed. He states that in a tradition going back at least as far as S. E. Hinton's *Outsiders,* perhaps even back to Twain's *Adventure of Tom Sawyer*, the boys who get praised tend to be the lawless outsiders, not the law-abiding plodders. He claims that many texts present boy characters continually and repeatedly dealing with a traditionally masculine dilemma, that in order to save their world from evil alien forces, they must forgo the luxury of being soft or tender or worrying about the feelings of others or the morality and even the legality of their exceedingly violent actions.

Third, he argues that masculinity is always and inevitably relational and always comprehended in terms of how it is not femininity and opposite to femininity, and just as significantly, how supposedly normal masculinity, inevitably assumed to be heterosexual, is not homosexuality and opposite to homosexuality (27). According to him, "boys who resist the boy code are therefore popularly considered to be girly or gay—which in the popular mind…are usually one and the same thing" (27).

Fourth, he argues that children's fictions have tendency to delineate between what it means to be manly and being homosexual as he believes that children's fictions sometimes unintentionally tend to be bring up the idea of homosexuality. Finally, he states that male children in children's literature are complex, conflicted, and shot through with all the interweaving threads of the current cultural constructions of masculinity and childhood.

He concludes that in most children's novels that make masculinity an issue, such readers are being invited to understand themselves as the good guys in opposition to the badness of conventional males, to see themselves as wise and good exactly in terms of how they are at odds with the conventional masculinity the books critique. In a very real sense, then, these books invite their readers to replicate a pattern of thinking that constitutes masculinity as, exactly not feminine and not gay.

A normative heterosexual masculinity based on this pattern engenders and institutionalizes homophobia and the rejection of a demonized homosexuality as a requisite foundational component of being masculine. It's not too far-fetched to conclude that an acceptable non-masculinity as constructed by such books, being

acceptable female or gay or simply an acceptably defiant male reader or thinker, similarly institutionalizes a demonized conventional masculinity, the rejection of which is a requisite part of self-fulfillment as a successfully non-macho girl or gay boy or imaginative and sensitive male reader.

He recommends that adults and children need to become more conscious of the convoluted nature of masculinity presented in children's fiction. The more the masculinity of the boys in children's books appears to us, visible as the set of changeable and non-hard-wired cultural conventions it is, the more we'll be able to think about and possibly even revise its implications. A major limitation in Nodelman's work is the scope which only examines works of literature in Europe. He also fails to examine the effects of role models (father and father figures) on the constructions of masculinity.

In the collection, Mallan (2002) also examines the crisis identity of boys and men in contemporary writing for young people. Selections of texts from picture books to novels for older readers are discussed as convenient indicators of the changing representations of masculinity that are evident in children's literature. He suggests three different constructions of masculinity (termed herein as 'antiheroic', 'transgressive', and 'hybrid') as the alternative ways to see masculinity in real life. Mallan observes that fictional manipulations on stereotyped and traditional fictional modes of representation of masculinity hardly suggest that gender relations in real life are reconstituted and transformed. Therefore, in considering the textual representations of masculinity in the selected examples, he posits that fiction can never hope to achieve realistic exactitudes in gender relations, notwisthanding its capacity to reflect such aspects of social and authorial values, events, and ideologies.

He concludes that even when fictional representations of masculinity may not bear such exact correspondence with the lives of its readers, teachers have the possible windows of exacting roles to play in the advancement of literature that engage students, especially boys cast in the forge of masculinity and power, and to provide them with opportunities to probe, analyse and deconstruct texts. He believes that teachers can help by offering students different texts and different approaches that will be impactful to both boys and girls and help them to reach lucid realisations of themselves as gendered subjects and to widen their experiences of social life and not

be mired in stereotypical gendered texts. With the burning question on the place of literature in curriculum documents, he emphasizes the greater imperative which necessarily challenges teachers to reaffirm their convictions about the possibility literature offers to young people, in primarily and significantly assisting them to develop their knowledge of self and others in an ever evolving world that is marked by uncertainty, flux and fluidity. In the main, it could be surmised that approach may play a crucial role in helping boys live their lives with keen abilities for enacting different and positive ways of self and other relations. Mallan's study is apposite to this present research as they both have masculinity focus. The point of divergence, however, is the scope of study. While Mallan's study only engageschildren's literature in Australia, this present effort examines the construction of masculinity in narratives for children in Nigeria.

Mallan (2001) also explores the representations of masculinities in contemporary picture books. The study focuses on male stereotypes and archetypes as they relate to the depiction of masculinity in picture books. Through the analyses of images, symbols and patterns, Mallan argues that children's books like any other visual and written texts are open to "unconscious processes both in production and reception, and so by representing the materialities of masculinities and male bodies" (16). Like Mallan's study, the present study also focuses on images and symbols as constructs of hegemonic masculinity. However, while Mallan's study engaged children's literature in Australia, the present study aims to examine the construction of masculinity in narratives for children in Nigeria.

Kasner (2004) explores gender prejudice and sexual labeling in children's fairytales. The study reveals various portrayals of gender.He highlights roles such as saviours, fighters and adventurers being suitable for boys. However, female characters are characterized as submissive, victims, lovelyand always at the mercy of the male charactres. He also notes that gender prejudice also exists in the content language and illustrations of a large number of children's fairy tales. Kasner further notes that label in fairy tales set children up for unreal expectations and girls to believe false hopes and not to empower themselves. Kasner is of the opinion that in many fairy tales, both boys and girls are often presented in stereotypical terms and stereotypes in literature can quietly condition children to accept the way they see the world; thus, reinforcing gender images.

Kasner's study is apposite to this study. The point of divergence, however, is in the scope and focus of the study. While Kasner's study explores gender bias and sexual stereotyping, the present draws on the construction of hegemonic masculinity. The focus of attention strictly on masculinity in this study gives room for the issues of men, patriarchy and manhood that are long neglected in Nigeria children's literature. In addition, this present effort focuses on the construction of masculinity in Nigerian prose narratives for children.

Clemens (2005) examines images of masculinity in realistic novels for young adults. Using Robert Connell's theoretical approach of hegemonic masculinity, the images are organized under body image, sport, other recreational proving grounds, relationships with men and women, school, and work; these are cross referenced by four areas of analysis: being male, competition, violence, and sexuality. He focused on the way the images (as representations of ideology) are presented in the texts and how the texts mediate the ideology/images through message presented in children's books. He concludes that:

> while the images of masculinity remain powerful, the majority of novels studied mirror the everyday struggle of real boys, and that generally, ideological statements in the selected novels move beyond reinforcing specific images to supporting more general humanistic concerns (Clemens, 2005).

Though, the study selected books covering wide range of children's literature around the world including Africa, with the expectation that factors such as race, c1ass and cultural background will influence the image presented in specific situations. However, none of the books examined under Africa focused on Nigeria.

Khan and Wachholz (2006) analyse the constructions of gender roles in adult novels. Specifically, they focus on how boys navigate within the construction of gender roles in order to 'come of age.' Focusing on novels such as William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1974) and Louis Sachar's *Holes* (1998), they argue that the novels teach boys to "accept the conventional constructions of masculinity and learn to master socially acceptable forms of male power" (Khan and Wachholz, 2006:66). They are of the opinion that "for the characters in the novels, masculinity, and essentially manhood, becomes what Kimmel (2004) calls a "relentless test" and a renunciation of the feminine" (Khan and

Wachholz, 2006:66). Hence, renouncing feminity is one of the ways boys attain power and navigate their masculinity. According to them, the novels often serve as guide for children growing into adulthood, therefore a careful reading and analysis of the novels "will allow students to learn how, traditionally, male coming of age has been portrayed as a flight from the feminine" (Khan and Wachholz, 2006:72). They conclude by stating that:

> Using young adult literature and 'classic' texts, such as *Lord of the Flies*, that speak overtly to assumptions and conventions of masculinity, teachers and students can engage in dialogue that addresses the complex nature of being a boy/man and being a girl/woman. Rather than seeing gender as binaries, these texts help demonstrate how constructions of male and female depend on each other (Khan and Wachholz, 2006:73).

The major drawback of their work is the selection of their novels. Like Bereska, they also included William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, which is a novel about adolescence rather than for adolescents, and as such, their conceptual and focus basis are different.

Harper (2007) explores the nature and presentation of masculinity portrayed through cross dressing, featuring female and female characters in popular young adult novels in America. Instances of cross dressing depicted in the stories are "male-to-female and female-to male crossdressing, and to less obvious moments when an alternative, feminine or traditional masculinity was apparent in the narrative" (Harper, 2007:512). The study's focus is on how various masculine performances are viewed in the novels. Considering the discursive construction of masculinity and biological point of view, he contends that masculinity can be performed by both male and female. He concludes that additional study is required to explore the depiction and reading of masculinity in other young adult novels, while other aspects of social difference such as race, age, class, ethnicity need to be considered in the portrayals of masculinity. It is also recommended that research and scholarship need to focus on how male and female students actually engage in the study of masculinity using popular young adult literature about girls. This work is relevant to the present study but it is limited in scope as it has been observed in the review.

Wannamaker (2012) also examines the representations of masculinity in children's literature and popular culture in Europe. Wannamaker's study offers an astute critique of how popular children's texts reveal cultural apprehensions about manhood in the

modern world. The central argument of her study is the need to explore and make visible the ways masculinity functions in popular and commercially-successful children's texts in order to better understand the complex negotiations boys currently make as they form their identities within the context of rigid masculinity. Drawing on psychoanalytic theories, Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque, empirical studies of children's reading habits and even comments from young fans which disclose their own attitudes to the texts they consume, Wannamaker provides an incisive analysis of the multiple images of masculinity produced by such text. The study notes that masculine identity is portrayed in opposition to feminine identity. The study demonstrates how the texts marginalise female characters, consequently constructing masculinity and femininity as oppositional, rather than relational, concepts. The resulting portrayal of masculinity in the texts thus offers young male readers dominant and stereotypical ideals of masculinity. This study is also relevant to the present research as they both have masculinity focus. However, while Wannamaker's study only engageschildren's literature in Europe, the present study focuses on narratives for children in Nigeria.

Gill (2009) explores the cultural images of boyhood in adult fiction. The study focuses on literary texts with young, male heroes and published in the USA,the UK, and Australia, from the 1990s to the mid-2000. In doing so, he considers ways in which boys are portrayed in these texts from the three countries and the images which they are projecting about boyhoods to potential readers.

The research addresses certain issues. First, it considers whether 'boy crisis' is a realistic conceptand whether it can be applied to boyhood. Secondly, it question if "crisis is a helpful framework or simply serves to reinforce negative perceptions, encouraging societies to think of boys as a problematic, indistinguishable group" (Gill, 2009:3). To answer this, the thesis focuses on the time from the mid-1990s to the beginning of the 2000,a period when the idea of 'male crisis' was beginning to attract attentions. The research contends that the novels examined:

> Represent a positive source for images of boyhoods and, significantly, reinstate the perception of boys as individual, unique and diverse; something which is missing from most of the representations which arise from the 'crisis' discourse, with its construction of boys as a homogenous group whose members lack individual agency. As such, they offer readers (male and female, juvenile and adult) an alternative source of cultural

> imagery - more individualistic, more optimistic - about boyhoods, than many of the more visible and debated cultural versions currently in circulation in the UK, Australia and the USA (Gill, 2009:ii).

Despite the positive outcome of Gill's research, there are few concerns. First, his analyses are motivated by masculine crisis discourse rather than focusing on the unique and potentially transformative nature of the novels. This potentially ignores the analysis of other forms of boyhood in the novels. Second, the research fails to highlight how the discourse of crisis is reflected through other forms of images in the novels, but only focuses on the alternative sources of cultural imagery in the novels. This also potentially ignores the problems, concerns and struggles associated with the 'crisis' discourse. Lastly, the scope of the research is limited to children's novels in UK, Australia and the USA.

In Africa, a substantive amount of works also exist on masculinity in children's literature. However, much of the works are from South Africa and Kenya.

The first major work in masculinity in Africa is Oyango's study of masculinities in Kiswahili Children's Literature in Kenya. As attested by Oyango (2007), masculinity has been less studied in children's literature in Africa. He argues that since the inception of gender studies in Africa, remarkable strides have been made especially on creating gender awareness. A number of issues have been tackled, for instance, violence against women in homes, in wars, and in work places, in literatures. On the overall, the dominant approach has mainly focused on women and rightly so because they are perceived to be vulnerable in many Sub-Saharan African countries. While these studies yielded clear agenda for the education and liberation of women and girls, it is not clear what they mean for the education of men and boys. It is obvious that the continuous proliferation of research from feminists' perspectives continue to draw attention to the inadequacy of interest in males in the society. His paper thereby investigates the social, economic and political manifestations of masculinities in the Kenya children's texts published in Kiswahili language. The paper critically engages the canon of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its method of data analyses, using Connell's theory of Hegemonic Masculinity to analyse the selected texts. By focusing on the numbers and roles of male characters viz a viz the female characters in the texts, he discovered that the "numbers of male characters dismayingly overwhelms

the number of women or (girl characters). The boys are typically portrayed as adventurous, strong and independent" (253). He also points out that such dominant ideological representation of male characters shows female characters as object, with dire consequences on women in the society. He concludes that *Short Stories Across Africa* (Staaf), an agency of African academy of languages should ensure more stories should be produced about female character. Moreover, the way female characters are portrayed should be critically done in tandem with critical gender perspective of the contemporary times. Oyango's study is apposite to the present study as it examines hegemonic masculinity as an emblem for the growth of women in the society, however, he fails to open up on the adverse effect of hegemonic masculinity on the mental, physical and psychological development of boys themselves. Besides, this present effort focuses on the construction of hegemonic masculinity in Nigerian prose narratives for children. In addition, the texts examined are written in Swahili language, though with the intention to connect children to their immediate cultural environment, the present study analyses texts written in English language.

In South Africa, Thyssen (2008) examines the representation of masculinity in twenty South African children's picture books. The picture books analysed were written in English and published between 1984 and 2008. The research aimsto examine ways in which numerous masculine identities are exemplified in children's picture books. In her qualitative assessment of the picture books featuring African characters, Thyssen observed that male characters were rigidly portrayed as fighters and hunters. Thyssen commented directly on how boys less frequently challenged gender stereotypes related to activity than did girls. He believes that gender margins are more permeable to girls than to boys as girls are more likely to identify with male characters than boys are likely to identify with female characters.

The study concludes by stating that boys in the texts are also open to other forms of masculinity that involve nurturing, being respectful and caring for others. However, the spaces for renegotiation tend to be limited in the face of more enduring stereotypical models of masculinity. A major limitation in Thyssen's work is the scope of the study which is limited to picture books only, as well as to South Africa.

Mathuvi et al (2012) also identifies and discusses gender roles and representations 40 picture books for classes 1 to 3 in Kenya. The books published between 2005 and

2010 were analysed to specifically evaluatesthe portrayal of female characters in the picture books and the implication of such representations on female readers in the society. The results indicate that the bahaviour of the female characters in the selected books varies substantially from that of the males. Both positive and negative images of females have been shown, although the patterns vary from year to year. Suggestions for practice and further research are provided.

The results suggest that the bahaviour of the female characters based on the model of decoding bahaviour by Goffman is substantially different from that of men in the books.This result also verifies earlier studies where women were found to be unfairly represented as opposed to men. Additionally, the results in the selected texts show both positive and negative messages regarding women. This is an important finding as gender roles, stereotypes and scripts are conceptualized from infancy and have a strong effect on the perceptions, ideals, beliefs and bahaviours of children (22). Nevertheless, the presentation pattern appears to differ from year to year. In most cases women are viewed in as second to men in ranking. The feminine touch, ritualized subordination and approved removal are motifs of female character presentation that seem to occur continuously over the years.

The study further shows the need to educate parents and teachers to make use of gender-neutral literature and picture books that encourage gender equality between the sexes. On the basis of the current results, the authors are persuaded that the decoding bahaviour model of Goffman provides an important theoretical structure to examine gender representation in school books intended for children in Africa. It is proposed that more work be done on the basis of this model focusing on depictions of women in additional reading texts for children in other classes in order to provide a more holistic view of the frames of reference that we can put in place in our education system regarding gender roles for our children.A similar study can also be carried out to establish the portraits of women and girls in Kiswahili children's texts recommended for Kenyan schools and a comparison with English texts can be done. This would go a long way to portray a concrete picture of the Kenyan education system.

Despite the significance of the study to the present study, it is limited in scope as well. While they focus on children picture books in Kenya, the present study focus on written narratives for Nigerian children.

As attested by Thyssen (2013), children's literature in Africa favours thestudy of stereotypical representation of girls and women, and negelectresearch on masculinity. She therefore examines intersection of categories such asgender, class, and race in the depiction of black masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa. According to Thyssen, in South Africa, the primacy of books and the role they play in nation building makes them thematically relevant and attractive for study, particularly when children are considered as focal reading audience. Being black and the experience of blackness and the consequences of these representations in books, as Thyssen particularly notes, further stir an interest.

The study deploys the social constructionism and postcolonial theory to ten picture books. However, noted were some good changes in the representation, Thyssen still discovers a wide range of stereotypical representation of black people.

Thyssen documented that the 'black people as rural dwellers' depicted Black people in pathetic conditions away from the cities and were seen in picture books where characters had to travel to the city. The 'black people as poor' as one thematic concern presented black people as disadvantaged. The clearest symbol deployed to corroborate the thematic idea, herewas the depiction of black people, adults or children, without shoes.The barefoot metaphor is treacherous in almost all the books, and in some, none of the characters wore shoes for the entire story. Black people were also portrayed to be quatred around by domestic or wild animals in many of the stories, in a way that somewhat echoed the minimal difference between them and the non-human animals they exist with. This as well extends even to the professions of black characters, as the depiction of their jobs in the books on the whole, hinted at no social mobility quest to black boys, and in a sense, showing black people as unsophisticated, retrogressive and barely desirous of literacy. In clear terms, there is the depiction of absent fathers and the non-presence of confidentblack male characters, which pointedly suggests that the sense of proper guidance from a close-knit family perspective is grossly lacking.

Black boys in the study exhibited in the narratives such volleys of emotions and bahavioural traits that were indicative of hegemonic masculinity, while others somewhat similar to the attitude of "New Age Man".Thyssen would have it that, in the story, the men took on the meanings consistent with their characterization as: creators, workers, providers and leaders, and particularly as well showing male propensities for adventure, invention and rebellion. Thyssen also noted that the men as demonstrating as sensitivity to the emotions of others, interested in self assertion and personal development. Howver, Thyssen also noted that most father characters were missing from most of the books, with only two showing positive bonding between father and son.

She submits that as South Africa takes important steps toward forging a society which regards each of its members, it is pertinent that researchers draw on the usefulness of children's literature in promoting positive male figures, especially for young black boys. Despite the significant of the study to the present study, it is limited in scope as well. While Thyssen focused on post-apartheid South African children's picture book, the present study focused on written narratives for Nigerian children. The study also ignored the hegemonic attributes of the black characters as well as the relation of blackness to whiteness.

Adjei (2014), in his thesis explores the depictions of male and female characters as well as the illustrations of masculinity and femininity in African children's literature. He focused on works written by several African writers of children's literature. He also analysed selected oral narratives for children such as folk tales and lullabies. The study is concerned with the reflection of gender role stereotypes in African children's literature. He argues that despite a lot of research on gender roles and stereotypes in African literature for adults, it has not been replicated in African children's literature. He discovered that there exists a lot of conventional portrayal in the selected texts even though there is some positive representation of male and female characters. According to him, "male characters were presented in diverse roles. They were often portrayed as leaders, heroes, strong, brave and with a career. Some of these portrayals are still considered stereotypically masculine" (Adjei, 2014:81). Despite focusing on literature written for children written by writers of children, he failed to examine any Nigerian author. In addition to this, his study has not included the effect of some

aspect of oral forms on the construction of masculinity in children's literature which this study has included because oral literature is a part of the daily lives of Africans.

2.2Feminist Assertion and scholarship in Africa

Since this study is situated within the scope of Africa, it is also important to review how feminists' assertions gave birth to masculinity discourse in Africa.

In Africa, ground breaking research by many prominent scholars such as Molaraogundipe, Bolanle Awe, Mary Kolawole and the likes has established the concern of women through many theories. They have theorized from different theoretical perspectives emphasisng the different experiences and ideologies of African women in response to western or white feminism. For example, Womanism popularized by Alice Walker emphasise the totality of feminine self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion of all women, including the black women in positive cultural ways (Kolawole, 1997). By emphasisng positive cultural ways, African feminists rejected the individualism of the female person celebrated by western feminism. From this perspective, ChikwenyeOkonjo-Ogunyemi (1985) maintains Womanism as an ideology is to analyse the condition of the black African woman. The condition shaped by patriarchy, the effects of colonialism, globalization and the resultant economic hardship experienced more at the home front which culminates in the constant pressuring of family ties and values dear to the African woman and society. African feminists maintain that family ties with other members of the extended family, husbands, and children are of great importance to African women. Therefore, feminist agitations and theories have to be shaped considering these factors.

Also, Catherine Acholonu's concept of Motherism is also instrumental to the concern of women in Africa. Acholonu explains Motherism as the motherhood in the African female experience (Sotunsa, 2008). Acholonu maintains African women are the spiritual bases of every family, community and nation. She posits men are dominant in sociopolitical spheres of life while women have the upper in the spiritual and metaphysical. She sees the role of men and women as complementing each other. Acholonu projects the core tenets of motherism as love, tolerance and mutual cooperation of both sexes. Acholonu'smotherism as an alternative to western feminism is influenced by the institution of motherhood which is of great concern to

the African society. However, Sotunsa (2008) opines that the idealized picture of the African mother as patience, self-sacrificial love and the likes are myths that have only helped further debase the women.

Contributing to the discourse of African women theory further, MolaraOgundipe-Leslie propounded an ideology she termed Stiwanism meaning Social Transformation Including Women in Africa. Ogundipe-Leslie who is known for her radical feminist perspectives also states the danger of incorporating western feminism to the African society. She explains that African feminists are not interested in contesting with men but seek social transformation that will result in a harmonious society. She maintains that this is possible when men and women work together.

Each of these concepts attempts to make case for women in Africa and their agency. However, in spite of these remarkable strides from these feminists perspectives, this body of work is notable for its lack of attention to men and masculinity. This gap in gender studies is highlighted by Mellstreom (2005) who identifies feminism as an off shoot of Women Studies. He explains that in gender research, there are three major parts; feminist studies, critical men's studies and gay and lesbian studies which are commonly referred to as queer studies. All these branches emanate from Classical Women Studies.

He opines that feminist research is the major area that has thrived for long while critical men's studies are just unfolding. Millstream's explanation highlights the imbalance in research within the gender research. This he attributed to some feminist research and men's unwillingness to support feminist agitations for gender equality. This situation he observed further strengthened feminist research to the detriment of men's study as feminist explore more effective ways to get the derived results.

However, the continuous violence against women, children and other men have shown that the exclusion of men from critical research has not worked well for women's liberation. Kaufman (2002) notes that though feminism has done a lot for women, it didn't happen without the help of men. By this he highlights the gap in gender studies.

2.3Masculinity in Africa

The last twenty years have witnessed developments in gender studies in Africa with anadditional focus on men and masculinity. Few and important studies have contributed to the evolvingfield of masculinity, with attention to the understanding of what it means to be a man in various social, cultural and historical contexts. Among a few pioneering studies are*Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* by Lisa Lindsay and Stephen F. Miescher, *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present* by LahoucineOuzgane and Robert Morrell, *Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts* by Helen. N. Mugambi, andTuzyline J. Allan, and *Men in African Film and Fiction* edited by LahoucineOuzgane.

In the introduction to *African Masculinities* edited by LahoucineOuzgane and Robert Morrell (2005), awareness is brought to the subject of masculinities as a field which has continued to be neglected in Africa.The essay highlights the neglect of men and how it seeks to correct such imbalance. It discusses how the shape of masculinity varies in relation to other men in respect to age, ethnicity, and even race. The collection, according to Ouzgane and Morrell is also motivated by two essentialphilosophies: that masculinity in Africa is not static and homogenous, not universal to all men in Africa, and men's bahaviours in Africa are not natural or fixed, meaning that new (and less violent and less oppressive) forms of being male may emerge.

LahoucineOuzgane and Robert Morrell *African Masculinities* (2005) categorises four sections in which masculinity can be understood namely: Interpreting Masculinities, Representing Masculinities, Constructing Masculinities, and Contesting Masculinities.

'Interpreting Masculinities' discusses the flexible nature of masculinity in relation to the notion of power. It focuses on the limitation of Western feminism in adequately understanding the concept of gender in the African context. The issue of body politics in relation to white masculine insecurity and anxiety is further explored in relation to the biological aspect of the human body in Arthur F. Saint-Aubin's "A Grammar of Black Masculinity: A Body of Science". The paper analyses the construction of the natural particular black male body, endowed with an inordinately huge penis and an

insatiable sexual appetite by the eighteenth and nineteenth century Western masculinist science and medicine.

Interpreting Masculinities further takes into consideration the subject of homosexuality and how it is viewed in the African Film Industry using Mohamed Camara controversial film, *Dakan* to discuss how black gayism is perceived and the reaction of his audiences towards a film considered "taboo". Attention is also given to Frank A. Salmone's final essay on how the Hausa masculineidentity is disrupted and tested by the 'yan daudu' or rather men who act, and speaks like women and also have sexual relationship with each other. Although this study addresses the concept of masculinity from the biological aspect and queer aspect; it's however limiting in its field as it uses mostly film studies rather than literary materials in its analysis.

In "Representing Masculinities", it recognizes masculinity as a fictional construction learnt from postcolonial criticism and applied to postcolonial locations. In line with this, it explores the representation of masculinity in different settings most especially Africa, and also investigates the impact of western colonialism on masculinity. Representing Masculinities uses *Drum,* a post World War II South Africanmagazine to tracethe development of masculinity, growth and role of manhood from being the breadwinner to being an independent self made individual. It does not fail to explore various magazines, literatures among others to discuss the subject of racism and the 'other' comes into play to depict the relationship between manhood, masculinity and the concept of citizenship and human right especially in South Africa. Furthermore, this section of masculinity identifies and analyses numerous modes of African masculinities namely: the native intellectual, the good native, the Big Man, and the colonial mimic especially in the works of Timothy Burke, Marc Epprecht among others. The tension between the British and African system of control, both patriarchal and colonial is also questioned. It further confims the theory by Ouzgane that violent heterosexuality remains the cornerstone of the hegemonic masculinity portrayed in major literary works in North Africa and the Middle East.(Ouzganeand Morrell, 2005). This section takes into consideration the re-sharpening of already established colonial masculinity ideas. A major contention of this section is its limiting scope to the South African society which although is relevant to this studies

due to the shared continent Africa, its however insufficient to masculinity studies in Nigeria.

The section, “Constructing Masculinities” examines how masculinity is constructed within various contexts. For instance, Paul Dover examinesthe role of virility in the enactment of masculinity among the Goba people. Dover points out that a real man among the Goba people is one with a “strong back,” who is implicitly a potent man. This means that manhood is determined by the capacity of a man to make children among the Goba people.It is expected that a Goba must have many children after marriage, which also establishes among the well respected. Howerver, a Goba man is expected to marry a second wife if the first wife is unable to produce children, a reason for the high percentatge of polygamy among the Goba people. Furthermore, attributes such as ability to provide for and protect the family, being fearless and brave in the face of challenges are equally seen as standard for men (Ouzgane and Morrell, 2005).

“Constructing Masculinities” further reveals howMargrethe Silberschmidt argues that men have become disempowered due to the harsh labour market in East Africa which displaces men of their livelihood and even undermines their roles leading to negative sexual and social consequences. Margrethe Silberschmidt further identifies globalization as a factor that belittles Tanzanian men in terms of economic performance having a great effect on them in which they neglect their wives who alone manage the home while they feed on alcohol and women. Aside manifesting manhood through sexual relationship, masculinity has been expressed in South Africa at tender age through the culture of bullying within the school environment. Economic inequality is said to be a cause of this violent hegemonic form that bullies subordinates forms of masculinity. It further highlights the importance of class and age as essential factors in the examination of masculinity in Africa. Although this study explores the limitations of masculinities, and identifies virility in relation to sexuality as a model of masculinities in Africa, it however, fails to put into its case study, Nigeria while making reference to Tanzania, South Africa etc.

The concluding section which is “Contesting Masculinities” recognizes and examines various versions of masculinity and also identifies forms of masculinities which are not dominant namely: complicit, marginal and subordinate. It reveals that contestation

is always associated with masculinities constructions. It also explores how the harsh working condition of men influences their domestic lives, home and family, as well as its impact on gender relations in contestation of violence. Victor Agadjanian's "Men Doing 'Women's Work' is an article that examines masculinity within the context of globalization, poverty and economic crisis.It reveals how the consequences of these factors impact on men's occupation by compelling them into taking low income and women's occupation. This in fact denotes the gradual dismantling of patriarchal authority, and leads to gender parityin many cities. This section further dives into the subject of male fertility as a form of masculinity which often blames women for reproductive failure; Robert Morrell and LahoucineOuzgane (2005) further argues that masculinity is said to be challenged by men and women and this is in relation to what Connell described as a 'crisis moment' which shifts male behaviour and the norms inscribed within masculinity.

In conclusion, *African Masculinities* explores how the African setting coupled with its condition is not the best place to implement the application of existing gender theory. Although, this section explores the contestation among masculinities and also identifies models of masculinities, it limits its discussion to the economic and global factors which deconstructs masculinities without recognising other factors like race, class, age, homosexuality etc. as other factors that can contest with man.

Another important addition to the study of masculinity in African literature is the collection titled *Men inAfrican Film and Fiction* (2011) edited by LahoucineOuzgane. The collection focuses on the place and role of man and masculinity in African fiction and cinema from the colonial, postcolonial/independent, and post-independence periods. It explores the ways in which a serious examination of the male characters in literature and film opens up new meanings about masculinity in Africa.

The book is divided into two sections: *Man and the Nation in Africa* (5 articles) and *Alternative masculinities* (7 articles). The first section acknowledges the power of patriarchy in the formation of men's dominance in Africa, including over women. In his article, *The Anxious Phallus*, Jane Bryce proves that the loss of sexual power is a metonymic tool of the representation of the unstable relationship between manhood and the nation in two Cameroonian films of the 1990s, Quartier Mozart and Clando. The films, according to Bryce, "offer a critique, albeit in very different forms, of life

under a president (Paul Biya)…whose reign implicitly contradicts inherited notions of good leadership and coincides with – colludes with, is a symptom of – the effects of millennial capitalism in Cameroon. Bryce also, through the representation of impotent and feminised men, calls into question dominant modes of masculinity that dominates and oppresses others.

In *The homoerotics of nationalism: white male-on-male rape and the coloured subject in Mark Behr's The Smell of Apples*, Lindsay Banco dwells on the sexual dimensions of the South African nation in his analysis of Mark Behr's novel *The Smell of Apples*. According to Banco, this novel represents an Afrikaner masculinity based on homo-social practices, far removed from homoeroticism, by the link between the white victim of a homosexual rape and a Métis aggressor, seen as the Other and feminized.

In *Wild Men and Emerging Masculinities in Kenyan Postcolonial Popular Fiction*, Odhiambo traces the processes through which Kenyan fiction portrays the social dynamics and sexual anxieties of the male and urban population in Kenya.

The 7 articles in the second part identify spaces of reinterpretation of masculinity since male behaviours are neither natural nor stable and healthy, non-violent and non-oppressive patterns emerge throughout the continent. The first articles explore Zimbabwean fiction and film. Patricia Alden 's *Coming unstuck: masculine identities in post-independence Zimbabwean fiction* explores the depictions of intimate and personal feelings in three short story collections published in the 1990s by well-known writers. She analyses the fiction of Charles Mungoshi, Shimmer Chinodya and Stanley Nyamfukudza from the perspectives of of men's struggle against their economic and psychological vulnerabilities, their aggressive feelings towards menacing women, but also of admiration for strong and economically independent women. Of all the stories, Alden argues that "Can We Talk" offers "the rawest psychological portraits of a male characters struggling to define himself in a world far distant from the rural idyll of his past with its secure, albeit restrictive definitions of roles offered by parents, teachers, the bible" (12).

Writing about masculinities in Zimbabwean films, Katrina Daly Thompson concurs that filmmakers in Zimbabwe are also beginning to explore the possibilities for alternative, progressive, conceptions of masculinity through male characters who do

not dominate women. In *Imported alternatives: changing Shona masculinities in Flame and Yellow Card*, Thompson challenges the commonly accepted notions of Shona culture as a patriarchal society that sees women as inferior citizens.

Andrew Hammond, in *NguguwaThiong's and the crisis of Kenyan masculinity*, examines the strategies the author uses in his early novels to mediate on the effects of British imperial resistance on gendered relations and hierarchies. According to him, novels such as *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat* chronicles Kenyan history from the 1920s to independence in 1963. The novels, he contends investigates the links between nativist politics and hegemonic masculinities which, with their competition and aggression, repeat the inequities of British colonials. Also, the novels, according to him, evinces a range of powerful figures that frequently challenge male dominance and masculinist discourse. Hence, Hammond notes that the underlying message of this author's complex characters is that there is no common, simple, logical, indisputable idea of masculinity.

The treatment of Senegalese man and masculinity is analysed through Tarshia Stanley's cinematography of Ousmane Sembene's films: *Faat* and *Moolaade.* Stanley argues that although *Faat* is ostensibly about the titular character's economic strength and power, the film also provides a derisive critique of the men in her life and by extension of masculinity in post-independence Senegal. Men in the film are analysed as complicit in their failure and that of the nation at large because they are trapped in the past and crippled by traditional masculine ideologies.

while Asian-African masculinity is considered "deficient" in the fiction of MG Vassanji, the poetry of Jagjit Singh and the theatre of Kuldip Sondhi, according to Makokha in an analysis that observes that the African of Asian origin will remain eternally the Other, the perpetual scapegoat. According to Epprecht, the presence of more and more important homosexual or bisexual characters in African artistic work facilitates a powerful critique of contemporary African society and Western presumptions (and prescriptions) of Africa (Ouzgane).

The last article compares Maryse Condé's novel, *The Last Kings* (1992) to Patrick Chamoiseau's film *The Exile of the Last King of Dahomey* (1994), directed by Guy Deslauriers: both versions use representations of the king in order to examine the

imagined African diasporic community. Wendy Knepper's essay *Re-membering the last king of Dahomey* examines how the re-representation of the king functions as a complex way of performing black masculinity in postcolonial and diasporic context. The king is represented as someone whose erotic experiences are negotiated through exile and displacement as he confronts the shifting constructs of black masculine potency in face of colonial imperatives. The film and the novel, Knepper argues, use the displaced figure of the king to examine the imagined African diasporic community. Hence, the king of Conde seeks reincarnation in postcolonial Africa while that of Chamoiseau becomes the voice of a new form of African warrior.

In conclusion, the books examined provide room to rethink the current theory about men and women in Africa.They also provide new insights into how African men perform, negotiate and experience manhood in a number of contexts.

This set of high-quality editorial essays provides a space for reflection on the contemporary theory of gender and masculinity, including the questions of which Western popular theories are acceptable in the context African, how Western masculinities act in relation to indigenous masculinities, how masculinity and femininity are found on a continuous platform of cultural practices and, finally, how "generation" is often a more important metaphor than "gender".

Another important essay on masculinity in Africa is *Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts* (2010) edited by Helen NabasutaMugambi and TuzylineJita Allan. Like it precedents, the collection outline the challenges to the field of masculinity. According to them:

> Men's studies emerged a little over two decades ago from the growing undercurrent of discontent with the establishment of feminist gender critique as a force for social change in the 1960s and 1970s. Coming of the age in the 1980s under the shadow of a decidedly female-driven sexual politics, the study of men and masculinity faced a crisis of confidence in its ability to engage a theoretical framework for challenging the intellectual arguments against male power and dominance in the social system (Mugambi, and Allan, 2010:4).

The collection expands on the field of African masculinities and the broader field of gender and cultural studies. Specifically, it draws on variety of subject areas including history, gender studies, film studies, oral literature and cultural studies to illuminate

the processes by which masculinity is produced, constructed and contested in Africa. The collection is structured into two parts: configuring masculinity in orature and film and writing the masculine.

The first two chapters in the oral section present two epics: one from East Africa, and another one from the western region. In *Staging Masculinity in the East African Epic,* Waliaula explores conceptualisations of masculinity among the Waswahili peoples. He argues that although the Liyongo epic contains exaggerated elements of conventional masculinity characterised by such attributes as power, virility, strength and domination, the hero's masculinity is dependent upon female power. He describes the female power as 'oxygen that ventilates masculinity' (2010:3) and argues that Swahili epic constructs a form of "masculine femininity" (2010:3), a concept that exemplifies a masculinity that defies the usual masculine-feminine dichotomy.

In *Masculinity in the West African Epic*, Hale expands on the study of male identity in African epic by comparing epic heroes in medieval Europe and West Africa. He argues that although both heroes in the two cultures exhibit similar traits such as bravery, strength, loyalty and honour, however, unique family and social circumstances distinguish the two. Sibling rivalry and class dynamism, for instance, complicate the heroic ideal in West Africa.

Abasi Kiyimba's*Men and Power: The Folktales and Proverbs of the Baganda* also examines the configuration of male power in the oral traditions of the Baganda in Uganda. He uncovers hegemonic forms of masculinity in the two oral genres of folktales and proverbs. Kiyimba notes that the negative stereotypes of women in African oral literature have attracted considerable scholarly attention, but the interrogation of the meaning of manhood in African oral literature has not been sufficiently explored. Hence, the paper explores the portrayal of man as husband, father and societal-political leader with a view to highlighting how they work as part of a broader mechanism that perpetuates male domination. The paper argues that folktales and proverbs of the Baganda greatly contribute to a process that constructs the male in the dominant role. He argues that patriarchal ideology of dominance remains unchallenged because it is rooted in the culture's founding myth which permeates everyday life.

As shown in the oral genres analysed, the gradual representations of the dominant "male as boy, husband, father and political leader are accumulative social constructs that have absorbed many factors and are part of the various mechanisms that the system uses to sustain notions of masculine superiority" (Kiyimba, 2010:26). It is these notions that make it possible for the male to remain the head of the family and the undisputed leader of society, even after he has been portrayed as greedy, irresponsible, inconsiderable and brutal (Kiyimba, 2010:36).

For instance, he maintains that proverb such as, 'the one who will become a favourite (wife) begins by giving birth to a baby boy', not only ascribed superior status to male but also leads to a deadly competition among co-wives to bear male children. This sort of situation often puts pressure on women to do inhuman things as analysed in a folktale titled, *A Cow for the Mother of a Boy* (36). Such level of importance permeates in other oral forms analysed about male as husband, father and political leader.

He concludes that the subject of masculinity in Baganda's oral literary traditions is broad and multifaceted, but three general trends emerge. First, the literature presents a glorified image of the boy child and assigns him a more elevated position than the girl child. Second, the system assigns the man enormous power over the woman in marriage, politics and parenthood. Also, the man has superior physical strength and society sanctions his use of it to beat women. Lastly, he notes that although the notions of masculinity that emerge from the folktales and proverbs of the Baganda promote male dominance, they also pose enormous challenges for the male members of society.

The paper is also important in the conceptualization of the role of oral traditions in the construction of hegemonic masculinity in Africa. However, despite the importance of the paper, the present research aims to build on the role of such forms of oral traditions in children's natives and the attendant complications for the children readers.

Like Kiyimba, Helen NabasutaMugambi's study of masculinity and gender anxiety during song performances in Africa explores reconfigurations of male identity through *kadongokamu* oral songs which contains exaggerated elements of manly attributes. She demonstrates how the masculine text in the songs she analyses

confirms that male identities predicated upon ambivalent cultural notions of the feminine are fated to crumble and collapse.

Rangira Bea Gallimore's *Ndabaga Folktale Revisited* examines the fate of a dutiful daughter who, the absence of a male sibling, assumes a male identity to relieve her aging father from military duty. Not only does Gallimore problematizes the issue of whether masculinity in Rwanda society can be performed, but she also demonstrates how a feminist reinterpretation of the Ndabaga folktale in post-genocide Rwanda has resulted in the disruption of the indigenous patriarchal power structure. Furthermore, she points out that although the original version of the folktale ends in a reiteration of the privileged status of masculinity, its performance by women in Rwanda has imbued it with a subversive power to appropriate attributes formerly reserved for men.

Two important study done on film are *Faces of Masculinity in African Cinema: A Case of Dani Kouyate's Sia, Le Reve du Python* by Dominica Dipio and *Masculinity in Selected North African Films* by John Downing. Dipio draws on Anthonio Gramsci's theory of hegemonic masculinity to discuss the relationship between the system of patriarchy, myth and hegemonic masculinity among other contesting masculinitiesin Dani Kouyate's film *Sia, Le eve du Python*. She argues that in post-colonial contexts, powerful men cannot also maintain total control over marginalized groups.The hegemony is perceived as dynamic because it is always recruiting new members from various social groups to sustain itself. The film is set to be set during a time between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic blocs, an alliance formed to challenge the dominant hegemony. The dynamics of power and resistance in the film, further explores the directors transcending between the past and present to present points of tension between the hegemonic and subaltern blocs as depicted through Sia's character who revolts against the myth. Songs, silence, secret schemes and even arms taking are discussed to be the various form of resistance by the subalterns who revolt against the hegemony rule.

Downing's *Masculinity in Selected North African Films* sheds light on prevailing images of maleness in North African and Arab cultures. Examining the array of films across North Africa, Downing starts by dispelling entrenched myths associated with

Islamic cultures and goes on to explore the complex ways in which masculinities are viewed within these cultures.

The second part of this collection explores masculinity in written texts, most especially novels written by prominent African writers. In *Rapacious Masculinity and Ethno-Colonial Politics in Swahaili Novel*, Bukenya expands the critique of masculinity through the purview of race, class and gender. He argues that the issues of race, class and gender among Arabs, creole Swahilis and black Africans in the postcolonial Swahili society of Zanzibar and Pemba undermine any monolithic idea of male identity in that culture. Bukenya contends that the protagonist's display of power and aberrant masculinity is characterised by predatory practices directed at women and lesser men.

Another study of importance in the collection is Horne's *Sexual Impotence: Metonymy for Political Failure* in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*. She examines how African writers employ masculinity as a metaphorical device to critique African counties. She show how Aidoo's play dramatizes the powerful connection between sexual potency and hegemonic masculinity. Anowa, she argues, establishes a direct link between her husband's impotency and his callous exploitation of others and by extension, between male impotence and national inertia.

SiendoKonate in *Virility and Emasculation in AhmadouKourouma's Novels* also applies sexual metaphor to signify masculinity, virility and power in Manding society. He discusses three masculine figures from Kouroyma's novels: *Les Soleils des indépendances* (1968),*Monnè, outrages et defis* (1998) and *Waiting for the Vote of the Wild Animals*(2001) to reveal ways not only the drastic effect of imperialism on masculinities, but the underlying significance of virility to men and how these men fall short of societal virtues. While Fama Doumbouya is said to have lost his noble status and rendered a beggar as a result of independence, Kourouma in *Monnew*also of noble birth loses his privileges and ends up pledging alliance to the French alliance. Koyaga on the other hand, a traditional hunter is the only one, who ends up rising to the rank of a ruler, head of state through military emergence. Siendou A. Konate explores ways in which the Manding society ascribes masculinities to boys and extols feminine roles to girls. Masculinities in the Manding society is said to be hegemonic in nature as it dwells on physical force, exploitation and dominance thereby rejecting

every form of femininity. In a case where a man is being oppressed by a woman or by another man with the same power he holds but in another way, such man is said to have lost his virility. Aside discussing masculinities in the novels, the structure of Manding society where manliness is the barometer alongside the significance of the mother is also highlighted. Like the Baganda society where the function of the griot is emphasized, Kourouma also employs the techniques of the griots to function as the link between the past and its influence on the present world. Just as Uchendu (2007) acknowledges that globalization has caused a reverse in gender roles, Kourouma uses the character of Fama Doumbouya to not only show the reversal of fortune, but to also reflect how his wife ends up taking the masculine roles of providing and fending for the family. This depicts one step in the deconstruction of virility and masculinity in the Manding society. In discussing the historical structure of the Manding people, the heroic figure Sundiata is identified to have fought for and liberated Manding. Through the assistance of his mother he was able to defeat Sumanguru's troops and also emerge as a leader. This situation further depicts the significance of the motherly role and her status in the hierarchy of power. The concept of manhood is said to be in alignment with motherhood. Sundiata's political achievements thereby become a characteristics worth of emulation in the Manding society as promoted by story tellers and griots. Although this chapter is useful for this study, its bone of contention lies in its limited scope of study to the society of Mali.

In *Killing the Pimp: Firdaus's Challenge to Masculine Authority in Nawal El Saadawi's Woman at Point Zero*, Zucker deviates from ascribing masculinity to men alone, this article rather reflects the embodiment of masculinities in a feminine body. This feminine figure is said to be Firdaus, a woman imprisoned and awaiting death roll for killing a pimp. Slutzky uses Sadaawi female character to portray the realities of masculinists' principles organizing Egypt and also attack the social structure of the cultural masculinities that have adverse effects on the lives of individuals and society at large. While some may consider Firdaus as a murderer, Marilyn Slutzky is of the view that elaus is more of a symbol of masculinity which revolts against the cultures of patriarchal control. Like Firdaus herself, Sadaawi's life occurrences are similar to the prisoner's own, as she too was also imprisoned because of her writing having been dismissed as Egyptian national public health director as a result of her writings on sexuality. In conclusion, Slutzky project the varying ways women are breaking their

silence, assuming masculine powers, earning their own money, seeking better lifestyles and also unwieldy in conforming to the cultural exploitative masculinities in order to retain some degree of personal power and freedom, it however limits the scope of this study to the Arab/ Egyptian society with high concentration to the plight of women.

Lastly, DaoudaLoum, in *The Ambivalence of Masculinity in Gorgui Dieng's A Leap out of the Dark*, links masculinity in the first Senegalese novel written in English with a plethora of images and definitions accumulated in the process of the society's evolution from rural to urban and from traditional to modern society. Daouda goes on to highlight that in *A Leap out of the Dark*, masculinity is tackled from the sphere of tradition and modernity. He goes on to identify that often times, masculinity has been discussed from the biological point of view of sex featuring the idea of the phallus, virility, physique, and also generative power. Daouda identifies sex as the first fundamental symptom of masculinity acquired by nature not by nurture. He further goes on to the use of simile, metaphor and figurative expressions in defining Moodu's masculine character.The concept of sex is further identified to be one of the three pillars of marriage followed by providing food and shelter. This idea holds that masculinity keeps a marriage through sexual intercourse. By contradicting such ideology, Daouda spells out the implication of a bad sex life in a marriage by using Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* (1850) to depict Hester's engagement in adulterous act in other to satisfy her sexual needs as a result of her husband long absence.

This further leads to the issue of emigration which spells out a cause for the high number of divorce cases and adultery in Senegal whereby many emigrants stay abroad for years leaving their wives behind. Although owning a penis and engaging in sexual intercourse are associated with masculinity, it is not enough to proclaim masculinity as one must show evidences of procreation, otherwise such a man is referred to an impotent. Impotency makes a man loose his wife, money and honour and this is why an impotent man is compared to a bull that doesn't have an erection, while a bull is slaughtered, the man is stigmatized. As a barometer of masculinity, the concept of polygamy or bigamy is seen as a mark of bravery, and financial buoyancy and courage as seen in Okonkwo's life in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. As long as a man

takes full control in successfully managing his household, such a man is said to bestow masculinity and also seen as a living proof of courage and industry. Men who marry only one wife are considered weaklings resulting to a decline in their masculinity just as the case of Moodu.

2.4 Reviewing literature on Masculinity in Nigerian Literature

In Nigeria, there are almost no scholarly studies showing the representation and construction of masculinity in children's literature. However, there exist works on masculinity in Nigerian society and literature, with specific attentions on oral literature and adult fictions.

Investigating into the creation of masculinities,Olawoye et al (2004) examines the social construction of masculinity and manhood and socialization of gender among the three Nigerian ethnic groups.They found that, despite the gender roles typically assigned to males and females, gender dynamics and social guidelines for the roles of males and females are not static.The research focuses on gaining an understanding of the rates of determinants of male enactment of obligation by studying ways in which males are socialized to fit into their defined gender role. This covers research into the attitudes and behaviours of males taking into consideration variations by socio-cultural groups, age and locality. This is an attempt to go beyond stereotypes of men manipulative and authoritarian.

It is also found that masculinity and virility are built through a gradual, timely and orderly process of socially prescribed, family-centered, and community-based roles and responsibilities (Olawoye et al, 2004). This includes many socialization agents including family members, peers , teachers, religious leaders and law enforcement officers, as well as the role they play.It is also observed that a man is aware of what the society expects from him through both formal and informal means, such as jokes, social mockery, and insinuations. Women are seen to provide the theoretical instruction while men provide practical examples by their bahaviour which the male child is to imitate and reproduce. Also, through participation in age grade activities, communal activities, relationships with siblings and other gender sustained activities shown in the discriminatory treatment of males and females, the male child assimilates the superior mannerism displayed by aggression and assertiveness that are associated with manhood.

Olawoye et al conclude that the "family context is where a man's image, manhood and masculinity are most clearly defined by himself and others. It is where the images and bahaviour of manhood learnt outside the home are applied" (Olawoye et al, 2004). This means that the hallmark of all socialization both formal and informal is expressed on the home front. A man's ability to hold sway in his home, maintain order, provide leadership, resolve conflicts and ensure that his family conforms to societal standards is the hallmark of masculinity and true manhood (Olawoye et al (2004).

Olawoye et al have presented a very comprehensive study combining quantitative and qualitative forms of data gathering. The study is an in depth view of different socio-cultural, ethnic and religious entities in Nigeria. The study evaluates traditional views of masculinity and manhood and also incorporates the various challenges being experienced in maintaining such gender specific roles of manhood. The study contributes significantly to this research work by highlighting the roles of the family in the formation of appropriate masculinity, the imitation of the man or men in the family and community by the male child as the basis for effective manhood and masculinity.

Identifying dynamism in societal views in the creation of contemporary masculinities, Uchendu (2007) highlights how university education has influenced the perception of Nigerian youths about masculinity and what it means. This study is a focus group discussion of Nigerian undergraduates from different ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are aged between twenty to twenty-seven years. The research group is made up of 37 males and 33 female undergraduate students.

The youths both male and female associated masculinity with maleness. Uchendu (2007) affirms that they differentiated man from maleness as two distinct words with different interpretations. Maleness was used to refer to qualities of being male, a state of being that is socially enhancing while man refers to a generic term for human gender category. An important observation from their responses emphasizes that being anatomically male was not regarded by the respondents as being masculine; being masculine is a mental phenomenon that gives men a sense of superiority that can be anti-female. However, majority of the youths believe that attributes of masculinity are learnt through the process of socialisation.

The description of the features of masculinity proffered by the youth is not specific. The youths describe features of masculinity along physical, that is, physical strength like huge biceps, biological; the presence of the male genitals, psychological qualities like decisiveness, intelligence, and some elements of personality like to be assertive, str a high status. Body markers like deep voice, short hair among other things and culturally approved male attire.

Attaining ideal masculinity in traditional concept includes the ability of the male subject to pass physical tests, endure pain, confront danger and separate himself from feminine domain. However, from the responses of these youths, there is a belief in a measure of traditional ideals of masculinity like getting married, raising a family and meeting the needs of the family. However, their views on meeting these ideals are premised on two things; education and hard work. They believe education can get a man to any peak in life, moreover, a good paying job. They also maintain that hard work always bring success. They all agree that negative traits that could brings violent masculinities are obsession and desire to always be in control.

Egodi's study highlights salient points that connect to this work, that is, the creation of masculinity is multifarious and dynamic. The study also shows that ideals of traditional masculinities are changing by bringing to the fore the existence of traditional masculine ideals and contemporary masculinities that are shaped by colonial intrusion, education, religion and current economic travails.

Ojaide (2010) discusses Urhobo notions of masculinity as expressed through oral poetic performance known as *udje*, an artist contests in poetry, song and dance creatively staged as a battle of fighting words intended to annihilate opposition team. In the *udje* poetic performance, masculinity assumes an even more heightened form, not only in poetry, music and dance, but also in its being geared towards extolling those virtues that the Urhobo hold to be admirable in men. The performance is an exclusive male activity steeped in the cultural history of the Urhobo people. According to him;

> Udje is a male performance tradition. The composers of the songs (*irori-ile*) and the performers/cantors (*ebo-ile*) are all men. Women stay at the periphery in udje dance song performance. Their role is limited to clapping to the percussive rhythms of the drumming, fanning the

> male dancers and chanting praises of drummers and dancers (Ojaide, 2010:67).

Despite the revelation that men who are involved in the performance dress in women's wrappers, *udje*in its conception and execution deploys masculinity in a variety of ways. In addition, Ojaide states that the setting where *udje* is performed is crucial to the understanding of masculine ethic. The performers live in rural towns and villages, where fishing and farming which are two rigorous means of livelihood are the main occupations. In addition, many practitioners of udje have Ivwri icons in their homes and they pour libation on it regularly. Ivwri is the god of toughness and revenge and the divine personification of masculinity in Urhobo culture. Hence, udje exponents and practitioners often invoke the spirit to defeat their rivals.

Apart from the nature of the performers, the nature of content and performance itself express hegemonic tendencies. Ojaide states that many udje songs show the element of provocation before a satirical onslaught is unleashed against one's rival. Once there is provocation, there are no boundaries in the response and counter attack, as it is considered unmanly for a man to ignore a provocation from the opposition (p, 71). Similarly, there is also the principle of honour (self-pride) and shame of the Urhobo people embedded into the *udje* tradition while boasting is also an expressive mode of masculinity in the songs and performance. Ojaide concludes that *udje* dramatizes toughness, honour, propriety, the capacity for revenge or retaliation and the projection of self-pride, all of which are the values of Urhobo's notions of masculinity and a community that has embraced for harmonious living.

The study is highly related to the current research as it offers ways through which aspect of a society's oral traditions serve as enhancing elements in the depiction of hegemonic masculinity. However, the present research builds on Ojaide's study to see how such forms of oral traditions manifest in children's narratives.

Okafor (2010) also explores how cultural values found in Igbo proverbs about gender inequality shape notions of masculinity in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. His intertextual reading of *Anthills of the Savanah* and *Things Fall Apart* is especially illuminating in the light of the tremendous critical attention the later has received. Using *Things Fall Apart* as foundation for the analysis of masculinity in *Anthills of the Savanah*, Okafor paints a picture of masculinity in Nigeria during the postcolonial

era. Here, Okafor highlights power and authority as symbols of masculinity. He specifically portrays masculinity in the novel through the dialogues and activities of three dominant male characters: Sam, Ikem and Chris. These characters symbolize the egotistic and unbridled masculinity in postcolonial Africa. The consequence of such form of masculinity is the recurrent military incursion in most African states as well as the betrayal of peoples' dreams about independence by most African leaders. Okafor concedes that it may be difficult to dismantle systems of male domination, but in the wake of the catastrophic failure of egoistical masculinity, a solution as provided by the novel is the deployment of the strategy of the wise guest in the Igbo tradition, who avails himself of the resources of the spouse, in addition to the patriarch. Thus, the complementary and redemptive potentials of womanhood in postcolonial Africa as portrayed by Beatrice in the novel is the alternative to the egocentric masculinity of men.

The paper is relevant as it offers an understanding of the far-fetching consequence of egocentric masculinity and why most African states are saddled with tyrannical governments. Though the present study examines masculinity in children's literature, it also aims to investigate the adverse effects of hegemonic masculinity in the society.

Etter-Lewis (2010)'s study investigates the interplay among competing masculinities within Africa using Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* Emecheta's*The Joys of Motherhood* and Abani's*Graceland.* He specifically investigates the interplay between word and image to point to the alternative masculinities that co-exist uneasily and in constantly fluctuating positions of dominance and subordination. The chapter is a subtle critique of African masculinities. Drawing on earlier icons depicted in the African literary classics, *Things Fall Apart* and *The Joys of Motherhood*, as background for the discussion of *Graceland*, the study focuses on the intersection of word and image in the (re)creation of African masculinities. The study specifically examines way that representations of masculine identities, especially non-mainstream varieties, are mediated by visual cues. According to her;

> The process necessarily involves a conjoining of visual and verbal signs in a merger that creates a space where opposing traits vie for dominance and expression. As a result, these sites of engagement employ language that opens up conflicts that inform society (Etter-Lewis, 2010:161)

She argues that fictional depictions of such African masculinities allow readers to pinpoint specific areas of cultural disruption.

First, in her analyses of *Things Fall Apart* and *The Joys of Motherhood*, she notes that cluster of traits such as strength, stoicism, violence and control are elements of words and images that work together to create specific embodiments of male identity in characters such as Okonkwo and NwokochaAbgada during such period. The characters display such traits with the awareness of how men are not to be or behave, which include being lazy, idle, weak and womanly. In such context, Etter-Lewis states that masculinities are constructed in an oppositional framework. This characterisation supports Morell's claim that, besides oppressing women, hegemonic masculinity silences or undermines certain masculinities, placing them in relation to themselves in such a way that the ideals articulated by these other masculinities are not those of currency or legitimacy (Morell, 1999).

In the analyses of *Graceland*, Etter-Lewis pitted Elvis' alternative masculinity against the African masculinities established long before he was conceived. She notes that *Graceland* signifies an important departure from the more traditional models of male identities portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* and *The Joys of Motherhood*. Elvis represents such complex, alternative masculinity (including the forbidden domain of homosexuality) that co-exist uneasily and in constantly fluctuating positions of dominance and subordination. Elvis express such masculinity through cross dressing, make-up and performing Elvis Presley, an American singer. Such impersonation is an embodiment of the changing realities of the African society where there are poverty and economic breakdown. She concludes that the novels are tied together by several commonalities, including visual models of African masculinities embedded in the respective cultural stings. However, *Graceland* is distinct in its vivid representation of African masculinities as complex, changing and shifting states of social, economic and political realities. She notes that such complex situations not only disrupt traditional and dominant masculinity but also give room for alternative forms of masculinity to upsurge.

The chapter is useful to this study as it offers a sound conceptualization of the changing nature of the traditional concepts of masculinity in Africa and Nigeria. This further aid the inconsistencies surrounding the traditional and hegemonic form of

African masculinity that continue to permeate children's narratives in Nigeria. Lastly, the chapter is deficient in scope as it only covers adult fiction.

Maduagwu (2011) discusses various traits of masculinity as adopted and accepted in a typical Nigerian society. Focusing on the characters in the texts, Maduagwu identifies the sexual symbol (phallus) as one of the most important attributes. This is usually manifested in the ability of a man to use the phallic symbol properly in procreation, because his value is substantially informed by the size of his family, not by the presence or size of his phallus. The point here is that maleness becomes special when a man can utilize his phallus effectively. However, a man loses his masculine status if he is unable to procreate. He also identifies other masculine attributes such as physical prowess, lack of emotions, fear of failure, aggressiveness and highly remarkable physical feats and accomplishments. Maduagwu concludes that masculinity is also without its trails and deficiencies, as exemplified by Okonkwo, who despite achieving manly success at a young age, fails to cope with culturally constructed notions of masculinity. The chapter is useful to this study as it offers a good understanding of traditional concepts and notions of gender and masculinity in Nigeria. However, the paper is deficient in scope.

Like Maduagwu, Minga (2016) explores the concept of masculinity in the context of traditional African gender relations in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The paper argues that colonial imposed definitions of patriarchy and matriarchy were designed to create hierarchy within the African society which did not exist before. Through the works of various African scholars, the paper takes another look at gender relations in order to show how these relations define masculinity. Based on this, the paper went on to use that framework to analyse Chinua Achebe's representation of various masculine forms. Through the eyes of Achebe's men, the paper highlighted some of the variables responsible for the restructuring of the African masculinity and ultimately gender relations in Africa.

Expounding the scope of investigations into the concept of masculinity, Olarenwaju (2014) identifies masculine featuresshowed by female protagonists in the selected dramatists belonging to the first and second generations of playwrights in their continents. She identifiesmasculineparametersshowed through the actions of female characters in selected texts of Zulu Sofola, Femi Osofisan and William Shakespeare.

She identifies and analyzes indicators as assertiveness, voice act,dress code and body language.

Olarenwaju opines that gender is a sexed-stereotypical way of speaking, acting, dressing and behaving which are naturally thought to be appropriate to the male or female sex. She explains that the concept of gender also needs to be understood as a cross-cutting socio-cultural variable and that gender roles are learned through processes of socialisation. They 're not standardized but they're changable. Olarenwaju claims these qualities have created the image of femininity and masculinity that are mere constructs of culture. She affirms that masculinity is not necessarily to be associated with a person who has biological male body.

Olarenwaju's research is timely and influential to this research because it emphasises the fluidity of masculinity by appropriating masculine expressions to female gender. However, her work focuses on the male body.

2.5 Gender Representation in Children's Literature in Nigeria

There is no shortage of children's literature featuring boys as central characters, but little critical research has been done on the messages they contain about masculinity. However, what does exist has generally been literary criticism of gender issues from female perspectives (Ezenwa-Ohaeto 2015, Uzegbu 2012, Haruna-Haruna-banke 2005 Umeh 1997).

Haruna-banke (2005) in an M.A. thesis with the title; *Gender stereotypes and children's literature in Nigeria*, views children's literature from the prism of gender roles. Haruna-banke reveals that stereotypical roles that are assigned to women and girls in selected literature include maidens and princess who usually must wait passively for a prince to save them and elevate the status of these girls and women. She posits that females are portrayed as docile and incapable of fending for themselves. According to Haruna-banke (2005);

> 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.

To this end, she further examines the role language plays in the subjugation of women and perpetuation of gender imbalance in the society. From the above, it could be

argued that Haruna-banke's major contention is how characters in Children's literature are portrayed either erroneously or unequally. Since one of the basic functions of children's literature is to engage children in stories so they are able to make meaning of the world, Haruna-banke fears that the language, content and structure of children's literature in Nigeria has a way of portraying women and girls badly. This, to Haruna-banke, influences children negatively. In doing this however, she also fails to point out the adverse effects of gender stereotypes on the characters of boys in the texts. Having made female the primary point of contention, overlooks the discourse of masculinity, male characters and men issues that the texts have. The present study, therefore aims to fill such gap.

Similarly, Uzegbu (2012) attempts to analyze the issues , problems and consequences of changing the apparent roles of girls / boys in Nigerian children's literature. She argues that despite the goal of the former Nigerian President – Olusegun Obasanjo, through the NEEDS strategy program which is a comprehensive socio-economic reform compact, formed to promote gender equality, the programme has not created much impact on gender equality. Factors responsible for the failure are poverty, lack of political will by subsequent government, early childhood socialization process in the family and the school, writers – teachers' insensitivity to gender identity and formation in early childhood, etc. Hence, she maintains that in order to achieve gender equality through gender transformation in Nigeria and Africa at large, there is every need to identify gender inequalities in children's literature. To her, the representation of gender in children's literature leads to the perceptions children create of their own roles in society as many popular stories and fairy tales in Nigeria continue to represent stereotypes of male and female roles.

The work consists of the content and context analyses of selected texts, language, and image. Primary data were also collected through interviews with a variety of teachers in Nigeria's nursery, primary and junior high schools, while the texts were analyzed using Butler's theory of social construction (1990). Selected texts include Ifoegbuna's*Folake and Her Four Brothers,* Meniru's*Unoma,* Ade-Ajayi's *Ade, Our Naughty Little Brother* and Akanji's*The Hands of Fate*.

From the interview, the study discovers that some teachers both males and females, across various teaching levels proposed gender transformation for both boys and girls.

However, some male teachers noted that this transformation must be done with utmost care. They still maintained the need to specify gender roles because the Bible and the Holy Quran have made it so. The female teachers appreciated the fact that the society has moved away from what it was in the past. They noted that the female gender is seriously making an effort to aspire to traditionally male – dominated environment and professions.

In the content of the books, the male character is represented well as an individual playing an active or independent role such as going on adventures, rescuing a queen (*Unoma*), practicing judo or wrestling (*Folake*), while female characters are portrayed as passive and victims (*Folake*, *Unoma*). In addition, she points out that several challenges of gender transformation as noticed in the texts analysed include, social system, ignorance and the environment, parents and male negative responses, religion and cultural practices.

She concludes that writers and publishers especially in Nigeria must be sensitized on the need to write and publish non-sexist children's literature, thereby eliminating gender stereotypes and ultimately achieving gender equality. It is pointed out that teachers in Nigeria must also make concerted efforts to ensure that children's literature books that reflect fairness to both genders are selected. To reduce gender inequalities to the barest minimum, government must have the political will to implement mechanisms that will orientate and re-orientate boys/girls, men/women to see new and positive ways of perceiving gender roles. Gender activism must be encouraged among girls/boys as a tool for gender transformation. This study is relevant to the present research, but the theme of masculinity is not the main focus of Uzegbu's study. The present study strictly focuses on the construction of hegemonic masculinity in selected narratives for children.

Otuburu and Akpan (2016) examine journey as a structural and instrumental technique in Nigerian children's fiction. They see the journey motif as a very significant technique to be encouraged in Nigerian children's literature, as Itprepares children for life's unpredictability, especially at a time whenthierthoughts are exciting. According to them;

> This subtly reminds every child that a time will come when he or she will be left alone to take life decisions and take responsibility for the aftermath of such

> decisions. Some children become failed adults because they were always pampered and not given an opportunity to take decisions concerning their lives. Ezeigbo uses Nwakannaya's lonely journey to the holy mountain to underscore the point that life is full of challenges and at one point or the other, children will be left alone to face these challenges (31).

Though their study demonstrates that each major character in the stories is created realistically and always placed on a journey in order to convey the morals poignantly and that the authors have successfully established the relatedness between the physical journey and the journey of life through the journey motif. However, they failed to point out the hegemonic tendency involves during such journey.

Children's literature in Nigeria has also been seen by writers as an important device for fighting patriarchy in Nigeria. They are of the opinion that by portraying characters, especially the women in a more realistic way, harmful patriarchal practices in the society will be eliminated. To this end, writers continue to call for the realistic portrayal of female characters in children's literature in Nigeria.

For instance, Odejide (1997) calls for the production of realistic fiction where readers' range of life experiences are not limited according to race, gender and socio-economic status. Umeh (1997) also calls for the elimination of anachronistic stereotypical representation of women in children's literature. According to her:

> If the quantity and quality of children's literature is to improve, then modern realistic stories depicting the vitality and complexities of female experience must emerge from the past of mimicry and patriarchal ideology to the new vision of artistic eloquence and revolutionary commitment to eradicate the myth of male superiority and female inferiority (Umeh, 1997:192).

More recently, Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2015) investigates the dominant masculine norms in Nigeria and the pontential of children's literature in controlling and eliminating such masculine norms. She argues that children's literaturehas the capacity to impact on the growth and development of the children's self-perception. As a result, she therefore, sees children's literature as a viable means of eliminatingharmful patriarchal norms and practices. According to her, this can be done through the portrayal of resilient, positive, and ambitious female characters who also recognizes their roles within the context of marriage.

She also points out that writers of children's literature should see their works as a form of struggle against the negative aspects of patriarchy. It is also suggested that writers should writes books that support tenets of a good relationship, shared responsibility, progressive values and norms in the society. She is of the opinion that if such values are depicted by writers of children's literature in Nigeria as themes in their works, children will absorb, internalise and appreciate these virtues as morals and see them as part of their developmental processes.

In essence, the writers suggest that the portrayal of realistic role models for readers will go a long way in ensuring a modest society, free of gender stereotypes. The portrayal of strong and resilient female characters in children's literature is likely to improve the potential for girls to transcend the fixed gender expectations or affirm their desirable position in society.Though, the work explores the importance of children's literature in ensuring gender balance, it only examines the need to expunge the marginalization of female in children's literature but fails to examine the effect of the construction of hegemonic masculinity in children's literature on men gender in the texts. In addition, there are no thorough critical examinations of any children's texts.

2.6 Appraisal of the literature reviewed

The literature reviewed herein demonstrates the numerous stereotypes surrounding gender and masculinity in children's literature around the world, as well as the critical role that these literature can have on the growth of children's sense of selves and their understanding of society's norms and values. Though several studies over the past few decades have drawn attention to the considerable presence of these messages in children's literature, much of the research has been from other parts of the world, mostly South America, Australia, Europe and some part of Africa.

From the review on gender issues in children's literature in Nigeria, it is evident that much scholarly attention has not been given to the construction of hegemonic masculinity. The earlier attempts are not comprehensive enough and predominantly focused on female characters within children's narratives, thereby, neglecting masculine roles, attributes and norms (Ezenwa-Ohaeto 2015, Uzegbu 2012, Haruna-banke 2005, Umeh 1997). One possible reason for the limited analysis of the

representation of male characters could be due to the dominance of male characters in children's literature.

Although the studies identified gendered messages in the narratives analyzed, many questions are left unanswered, specifically, they failed to show the ways the writers do construct and portray hegemonic masculinity to the children readers, especially the boys. This study is therefore driven by the need to fill the gap that has been noticed in the works of some of the scholars.

CHAPTER THREE
AFRICAN ORAL TRADITIONS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN SELECT NIGERIAN CHILDREN'SLITERATURE

This Chapter examines the connection between African oral traditions and hegemonic masculinity, in an attempt to view oral traditions as part of a broader mechanism that perpetuate the legacy of male dominance in Nigeria through the sampled narratives. Specifically, the Chapter analyses elements of oral traditions such as praise poetry, war songs and dance, wrestling, and drummingin the selected narratives. Through an archetypal survey of the oral traditions, the Chapter reveals how hegemonic masculinity is perceived, lived, and practised at the local level, and recreated in narratives for children in Nigeria. Hence, the identified oral traditions are explored as archetypal constructs of masculinity in this study, drawing illustrations from select narratives.

3.1. Oral traditions: an Overview

Oral traditions are the heritage of creative verbal inventions, tales, folk beliefs and songs from pre-literate cultures that have evolved from one generation to another through the spoken word. Ngugi WaThiongo also sees oral tradition as an oral form of plays, stories, and poems. He contends that oral traditions preserve the value, sensibilities, aesthetics, and achievement of traditional African thought and imagination. In addition to the obvious purpose of entertainment, oral traditions often serve as a valuable medium for instructing, preserving history and strengthening indigenous norms. Thus, validating Chinua Achebe's statement in his essay, *The Image of Africa* (1978), oral traditions have considerable functions and serve a much more utilitarian purpose, which double as the popular aim intended for cultural preservation and ultimate people's 'survival.'

Part of the functions of oral traditions as an important segment of the society is its function as a source for written literature. During the early years of the development

of written literature in Africa, writers such as Chinua Achebe, Okotp'Bitek, AyiKwei Armah, Ngugi, Kofi Awoonor, and a lot of other writers have, on various occasions, used different forms of the oral traditions in their literary works. The exploration of oral materials in an attempt to renew the oral traditions of the African heritage in children's literature cannot also be denied. To ensure continuity in terms of race, traditions and beliefs, writers have transmitted African traditional elements into children's literature in the form of stories, legends, proverbs, folktales and other traditional beliefs. Children's literature is usually meant to entertain the readers, but such stories are also meant to initiate children into African cultural world view. This way, the child also learns about the African cultural and moral values. Hence, African written literature continues to receive much inspiration from the oral form, particularly through the exploration of existing oral literary styles, and in some cases, by an outright adaptation and adoption of materials from oral traditional materials.

Yet one imperative issue with certain oral traditions, especially in some of the select narratives in this study, is the patriarchal context which gives birth to them. In broad terms, oral tradition is a general reflection of the social and cultural lives of the people, but as works of art. Some elements of the traditions serve as means of construction of the social psyche of the people from whom they originate. Akporobaro (2001:196-7) argues that oral traditions are used to explain to ourselves "who we are, how we are created, where we come from and what is the origin of our social institutions, laws, rites, and codes of conduct". Oral traditions answer the question about how the African collective unconscious was formed because oral traditions are both the vehicle and the repository of culture. As such, oral traditions continue to shape the collective unconscious of Africans, including the manly traditional practices and expectations. Inappropriately, oral traditions also exist as archetypal products in children's literature, expressing manly values and behaviours, which are deeply seeded in the collective unconscious of many Africans. Nwapa (1997) recognizes the significance of oral traditions in children's literature, but believes that there is the need for a careful adaptation of some Africanoral tales due to their patriarchal nature.Oha (1998) also argues that the society tends to neglect the chauvinist tone of oral traditions due to its importance and their value-carrying roles. According to him, in "the male-dominated Igbo culture particularly, and in some other African cultures as well, proverbs are appropriated by men to uphold themselves as

producers and custodians of knowledge which women are thought to be incapable of" (Oha, 1998:88).

These cultural values and behaviours"are not only integral parts of the African culture but are also seen by the people as meeting established rules of behaviour/conduct and action of men" (Kiyimba 2010). This makes it possible for men to dominate various areas of social and political life, because men have put in place forms of control, including oral traditions that enable them to psychologically overwhelm women into believing in the superiority of men. Therefore, the Chapter'saim is to see how ideals of hegemonic masculinity are constructed and communicated through various oral traditions to the readers, especially boys.

3.1.1 The Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Praise poetry

In the praise poetry of the African peoples, especially the praise poems addressed to royal households, warlords and kings, hegemonic masculinity appears as an ideological idea which creates and consolidates male power over various categories of people, and such idea highlights several hierarchies of masculinities. It is a form of poetry that is specifically designed for the eulogistic portrayal of the virtues of a given subject, mostly kings, chiefs and war leaders. Finnegan relates praise poetry to men's masculine feats when she states that the court poetry is one of Africa's most advanced and elaborate poetic genres thatplaces emphasis on kings and aristocrats and admiration for military accomplishments(Finnegan, 2012). This suggests that the important feature of the praise poem is the invocation of the noble and heroic qualities of the subject through the use of appropriately suggestive metaphors, symbols and allusion. In the deployment of oral poetry in the narratives, hegemonic masculinity assumes a heightened form not only in the poetry composition but also in its being geared towards extolling those virtues that the African people hold to be admirable in men.

In some of the narratives, male virility, strength, achievement and invincibility are the main virtues emphasised. These virtues are reflected in Anthonia Ekpa's*EES*. The narrative illustrates the traditional kinship system in Africa, through Edidem, a very famous king in Eburutu. The narrative, set in the eastern part of Nigeria, also illustrates the significance of praise rendered to kings in Africa. Like many kings in traditional African societies, Edidem is described as a great warrior whose fame was

well known all around Eburutu. As a result, elaborate praise poems are composed to eulogise his historical character, his deeds, behaviour, his clan, those associated with him, the places he has been and the realities of the period in which he lived. Praises rendered to him in the narrative stress Edidem's legitimacy as a king who had fought many battles, and had conquered all the towns and villages close to his kingdom. In a series of praise poems composed by his wives during a visit to Edidem, the wives highlight the king's manly attributes such as virility, strength, and invisibility, in lofty and effusive language. Asandia, the second wife begins the King's praises:

> The Great son of EfiomEyamba, I greet you.
> You are the great lion that reigns in Eburutu.
> You re the great king that can humble a leopard. (9)

After Asandia had stopped, the youngest wife, Asari continues:

> My husband Eyamba, that builds a house by the great river.
> A man of strength and vigour…you are the arrow that blinds the eye of the lion.
> You are like the mighty three in a forest. I kneel on the ground for you.

Ekanem, the first wife is the last to sing his praises:

> The great king of Eburutu. You are like the dried kernel that fills the mouth.
> You are the harmattan wind that dries up the river.
> The big sword that cuts through the side of the elephant.
> I greet you. (8-10)

In another meeting with his chiefs, one of his chiefs also reflects the king's invincibility, strength and ability to frighten his enemies thus:

> My powerful and generous king.
> You are the one who went to swim in the sea and there you caught a live crocodile with your bare hands.
> You are like the tortoise shell which cannot be harmed by the venom of a viper. You are the thunder that frightens all the animals in the forest (10)

The above praises establish a connection between masculinity and praise poetry, whose social significance is "bound up with the aristocratic nature of African societies, traditionally based on a hierarchy of rank dependent on birth, and linked by an emphasis on the institutions of kingship and chiefship" (Finnegan, 2012:139). In the praises above, the author uses allusion, metaphor, and exaggerated images, related to many traditional court poetries in Africa, to express the courage and ferocity of the king in adventures. The author adopts an allusive style, with references to animals,

natural phenomena and historical events that aim to heighten the masculinity of the king. Notable is the frequent comparisons of the King's attributes to animals with astounding traits. For instance, his strength is conveyed in metaphorical terms in "the great lion that reigns in Eburutu" (9). One of his chiefs also extolls him as "the tortoise shell which cannot be harmed by the venom of a viper" (10). The subject of strength, bravery, and heroism here echoes the king's past heroic deeds and how he comes about his present status. Throughout his past, he "builds a house by the great river" and "swim in the sea and there [he] caught a live crocodile with [his] bare hands" (10). From thesepraise poems, the subject of bravery, strength, and invincibility as major characteristics of the king's heroism are echoed as reflections of his hegemonic masculinity.

Furthermore, animal metaphors are also used not to enhance the attributes of the king, but 'veil' the animals as enemies the king once defeated. In the narratives, the author addresses the king as "the great king that can humble a leopard", "the arrow that blinds the eye of the lion", 'the big sword that cuts through the side of the elephant" and "the one who went to swim in the sea and there you caught a live crocodile with your bare hands" (8-10). On the one hand, the animals symbolise the images of the enemies that were subdued by the king in the past, while on the other, the king's ability to defeat these animal-like enemies further reinforces his masculinity.

Though the narrative is replete with animal metaphors, the king is also associated with natural phenomena like thunder, wind, tree and river, and to other objects like arrow and sword. It is largely through these figurative and allusive forms of description that actions and qualities of the king are conveyed in the praise poems. Not all forms of "praise poetry take allusion, quite so far, but in general, panegyric seems to exploit allusion and imagery to a higher degree than other forms of poetry in Africa" (Finnegan, 2012:117). Hence, in the praise poetry of the Edidem, ferocity, power, bravery, and courage are the qualities praised. In addition, the poetry highlights how wars, battles, and hunting for survival constitute the important duties of man, especially a king.

The significance of praise poetry to the construction of masculinity is equally accentuated in Ikechukwu Ebonugwu's*TCE*. It is an interesting story that portrays society's traditional expectation of a man through the art of wrestling. The narrative

tells the story of Dimgba, a wrestler, whose victories on the field have been a source of pride to his community, Echidime, a village well known for its wrestling matches. The narrative, which shares similarities with Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in its glorification of men's physical attributes also, uses panegyric to highlight attributes such as muscles, strengths, war exploits and bravery. The type of panegyric evident in *TCE* is self-praise, a type of poetry which lays emphasis on personal achievement in war, hunting and other personal endeavours. The narrative, which is about the art of wrestling among the Igbo, opens with an atmosphere of communal gathering occasioned by a wrestling festival. The villagers are waiting for the king to arrive and declare the commencement of the wrestling festival. When the King arrives, he projects himself as a wrestler whose exploits attracted fame and crown. He calls on the wrestlers to put in their best to ensure victory in the battle. Here is the king's self-praise that, like an opening salvo in battle, meant to exhort his wrestlers and to intimidate the other side:

> Once upon a time, I was a wrestler. In my youth, I was quite the fighter and you can see where my fighting spirit has brought me. So I say to you all, never underestimate the power of a determined spirit. If you feel that you can beat our wrestlers' strength then you are welcome to try your luck. Great people of Echidime. The history of Echidime is full of achievements and today will not be different. Therefore, we have come to give support to the great sons of Echidime, who are like the eagles. They soar high in whatever they do. Ours is a village of great warriors and wrestlers. In my time, honour was fought for and titles earned through service to the community. Oh, the atmosphere reminds me of my youthful days, when I won many wrestling matches for my village. I hereby declare the festival open (17).

Here, like many performance of self-praises in many African societies, boasting becomes an expressive mode of masculinity as the king, who was also a warrior, projects his people variously as great sons of Echidime who are like the eagles and village of great warriors and wrestlers. Such is a metaphorical display of physical and martial power meant to intimidate their opponent into submission, even before the wrestling matches begin. The eagle with its powerful eyes symbolises intelligence, immortality, bravery, and power. It is a bird also considered the "king of the skies" that stands alone in defiance of other birds around him. In the narrative, the king uses such allusion to project the masculine power of his people. This form of personal

glorification of manly attributes is also echoed by Okpewho (1992:142). He claims that self-praise in Africa is practisedby young boys at a traditional circumcision ceremony:

> Where they are anxious to prove that they feel no pain from the cut of the circumcision knife and are proud to be stepping onto the threshold of manhood. In some traditional African societies, as among the Bahima of Ankole (Uganda) a man composes and performs praises of himself after a successful battle with an enemy, especially in a cattle raid. In title-taking ceremonies among Igbo of eastern Nigeria, self-praises are chanted by the celebrant or by the masquerade performing on the celebrant's behalf

This suggests that self-praise emphasises the attributes and qualities inherent in personal achievements. Self-praise builds up someone's masculinity to the extent that it sometimes moves beyond mere personal glorification to deliberate attempt to establish power. In many African societies where war was used to settle disputes, many societies composed eulogies in a way to intimidate opponents into submission. In such eulogies, threat, victory, bravery, boasting, and occasional magical supplement are recurrent rudiments. This is reflected through a wrestling match between Dimgba and Nwadibia, a man known for strange metaphysical powers. As one of the traditions of Echidime, Dimgba is expected to face challengers from his village before he is allowed to fight visiting wrestlers. Nwadibia challenges him to a fight, creating a tensed moment in the narrative. Before they attacked each other, each wrestler avails himself in verbal arsenal of self-praise. In a lengthy conversation that ensues, Dimgba and Nwadibia deploy metaphors, proverbs, and allusions to extol each other's talent and strength:

> Dimgba: "The lion does not play with the warthog," fearlessly declared to Nwadibia as he approached him.
>
> "Were you not born of a woman?" Nwadibia retorted.
>
> "I was a wrestler before I entered my mother's womb," Dimgba responded.
>
> Nwadibia stretched his hands in readiness for the fight. Dimba was amused and continued to talk. "Nobody dares Dimgba and remains in one piece".
>
> "You must fall today!" Nwadibia told Dimgba as he started to chant some incantations, "NwanuoAjakaja! Magic wonder! Magic wonder! Do you want to wrestle a superior power?

> Victory does not come from the might of the sword but from its holder, NwamuoAjakaja!" Nwadibia shook his rattle threateningly but Dimgba eyed him calmly.
>
> "Ha-ha-ha! You are like a man that challenges his god to a fight after eating to his fill. Nobody does that and survives!" Nwadibia taunted further.
>
> "You forget that I am a very good wrestler with so many years of experience," Dimgba said closing up on him.
>
> "And when a child challenges his father to a fight, is the father not quick to correct him," Nwadibia replied (28-30).

It is significant to put some of these self-praises in the cultural context of the Igbo culture, where the narrative is situated. Some of the oral elements are culturally significant to the well-being of the Igbo people. First, reference is made to Igbo expressions such as "NwamuoAjakaja" (29), meaning 'son of the spirits god'. In Igbo metaphysics, reality falls into two demarcations, the physical and the spiritual forces. According to Achebe (1988:435) "the Igbo world is an arena for the interplay of forces". This means that although the division between the physical and the spiritual exists, elements of the two interact. A man who is able to operate between the two worlds is clearly above other men. Little wonder, Nwadibia warns Dimgba that he is "like a man that challenges his god to a fight after eating to his fill. Nobody does that and survives!" (29). This precept underscores the importance of human's relationship with the divine component of identity that the *chi* embodies. The *chi* in Ibo cosmology is the custodian spirit approved to everyone at the time of birth. It is a part of everyone's ultimate creative essence, as the *chi* is completely accountable for the fortunes and misfortunes of the individuals. Hence, Nwadibia, as a representative of the spirit god exudes supernatural powers that are beyond Dimgba's imagination. Among the Igbo, an excellent wrestler is one who is not only able to compete in the human world but also in the world of spirits. ThusNwadibia's ability at wrestling is aptly compared to that of his chi who, according to him, is the superior power. However, Nwadibia is defeated in a fiercely contested match. The defeat earned him laughter and ridicule from the audience who call him, "a weakling while others called him a toothless dog" (32). This does not undermine the power that Nwadibia represents in any way, but demonstrates men's unending quest for supremacy among themselves in the society. Dipio (2010:95) notes:

> There are variations of masculinity that exist alongside hegemonic masculinity and at times, challenge it. In order to sustain itself, hegemonic masculinity is constantly on the 'look out' for threats against the status quo-and adjust the balance of power to keep situations under control.

Hence, Nwadibiasymbolises a similar hegemonic archetype that Dimgba needs to reassert himself against.

It is also significant that the use of proverbs in the dialogue between Dimgba and Nwadibasounds like self-praises. In Nigeria, especially among the Igbo people, proverbs are cardinal strategies for acculturating youngsters into what society expects of them. However, in the narrative, they play a significant role in strengthening the traditional ideal of masculinity such as endurance, dominance, competitiveness, self-reliance, forcefulness, confrontation, and readiness to take risks. Igbo notions about masculinity are encapsulated in some proverbs in the narratives. Among the following are:"the lion does not play with the warthog", "You are like a man that challenges his god to a fight after eating to his fill. Nobody does that and survives!"(28), and "when a child challenges his father to a fight, is the father not quick to correct him," (30). These proverbs are significant social signals. The suggestion that the lion does not play with the warthog loudly proclaims the notion of a male strength, rivalry, and invincibility. Also, the proverb about a child challenging his father speaks volume about respect, authority, and humility in African context. Africans emphasise respect for the father's legitimacy, so when a child disrespects such authority, he is dealt with accordingly. It alludes to children who overstep their boundaries, and challenge superior authority. Hence, these proverbs emphasise power, authority and physical strength as constructs of masculinity.

In conclusion, praise poetry is an integral part of the African cultural identity. However, as in the analyses above, they are also integral part of the cultural construction of masculinity among traditional societies in Nigeria, because they function as originators of social authority. Through them, masculine attributes such as bravery, strength and courage are emphasized as important attributes of men in Africa. At the same time, young readers will be exposed to these traditional manly attributes as core values of the African society.

3.1.2 War Dance, Songs and the Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity

War dance is another important element of oral tradition that reinforces traits of hegemonic masculinity in its content, context, and performance in some of the narratives. War dance has played a dramatic role in popularising masculine image of men in traditional Nigerian society. This aspect of African culture involved the glorification and expression of high morale during wars. Finnegan (2012:210) states that during war dance, songs which come along with the dance play a crucial role. According to her, such songs are usually "short and onomatopoeic, but mount up to a high pitch of intensity as the men dance, stamping their feet and knocking their shields" (Finnegan, 2012:210). War dance and songs, as twin expressions of masculinity in the society is reflected in *FFB*. In the narrative, the traditional genre of war dance and song in its context, content, and performance deploys masculinity in a variety of ways. First, in its context, the war dance in the narrative is synonymous with many African war situations. The narrative, which tells the story of Folake, a thirteen year old girl kidnapped by a cult group succinctly captures the traditional practice of war dance and song. In the narrative, Kassidi, a young rich man, and leader of the twelve-star cult fails in his attempt to win the heart of Folake in marriage, he resorted to employing the arsenal in his possession to kidnap her. As a member of a cult, Kassidi has the backing of his group members which also include a chief priest and deadly looking assassins. When Folake's brother notices her disappearance, they swing into action by preparing for battle with the cult group: "Folake's four brothers were busy practicing a war dance in the courtyard. People gathered to watch them. They were heavily built and the crowd admired their vigour and youthfulness" (30). Here, the war becomes a masculine art in which physical prowess was displayed to assert the twin qualities of courage and power. The war dance therefore becomes a direct provocation to the fight and a part of the battle itself. It is in readiness for a battle between the brothers and the twelve-starcult.For the boys, the task of defending and rescuing their sister in the battle against the cult stars is embraced with the kind of enthusiasm and pride expected of traditional African warriors. Okpewho (1992:152), explaining the enthusiasm for war as reflected in most war dance and songs states:

> Once a people have determined to go to war against another people, it is considered cowardly and foolhardy for anyone among them to argue the wisdom of the decision or even

> attempt to justify it. The warriors are simply glad of an opportunity to show their heroic spirit and have no patience for any form of argument

This idea, that there is an inherent value in defending one's masculinity through war is responsible for the African's perception of men in traditional African society. A warrior is expected to be glad, once there is an opportunity to fight in a war. War builds up men's masculinity, and a man's ability in a war front is revered if he shows sign of bravery. Also, the content of the song that accompanies the dance embodies features of masculinity. As the crowd watching the dance cheered, the boys chanted:

> Enyimba Enyi!
> Nzogbu!
> Enyimba Enyi!
> Nzogbu!
> Enyimba Enyi!
> Nzogbu!
> Enyimba Enyi!
> Nzogbu! Nzogbu!
> Enyimba Enyi! (31)

The war song literally translated from the local Ibo dialect, means, *"Trample, Trample, We are like elephants, marching to battle, crushing obstacles on our way"*. The song/chant originated from Aba area, specifically during the Aba women riot. The riot was one of the most important events that happened in Nigerian history during the Colonial Period. For example, it was the first main rebellion of its kind, planned and led by rural women of Owerri and Calabar Provinces with a protesting population of two million people (Van Allen 1981:60). The women's revolt enriched Igbo folkloric songs and dance during this time, as women composed songs exemplifying their complaints, as they danced and marched to the District Officer to present their petitions. Van Allen relates further that "in Aba-Ngwa area, women chanted traditional war songs entitled: "Nzogbu, Enyimba Enyi", meaning 'trample, we are like elephants'(Van Allen 1981:60). These songs remarkably became quite popular during Biafra war in 1960s, revealing the influence of the folkloric songs of the women's revolt on Igbo martial songs and music during the Nigerian civil war(Mbah, 2013:252). Mbah further states that "in the course of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war (1967-70), the war dance served to drum up confidence and raise hopes in the region"(Mbah, 2013:252). The war song has since become popular in contemporary times, and has been adopted in many contexts such as politics and sport, especially by football fans when football matches are played. The song,

therefore, becomes a necessary ingredient in the performance of masculinity that the song represents. For instance, the word "*enyi*", means an 'elephant', an animal with large body size and strength. An elephant is a big animal that symbolises power, strength and authority. The hugeness and strength of the animal come to a focus in the song to intimidatean opponent. In the narrative, the twelve-star cult is a notorious secret cult known for threatening, kidnapping, killing and giving riches. The song, therefore, becomes an expression of high morale in preparation for the daunting task. The song also features the repetition of "*Enyimba Enyi*! *Nzogbu*!", a refrain to reinforce the intimidation that comes with the performance.

Like many African societies, war dance and song in the narrative arealso a male performance tradition. In the narrative, the four brothers exhibit high level of masculinity through the performance of the war dance and song. They tie a red rope round their heads, waist and arms. The red rope, a conventional symbol of danger is associated with the boy's physical strength and their will to fight. It projects a resilient and dominant masculine energy. As a colour symbolizing physical movement, the red rope stimulates the boys' physical life and strong will after they have been labeled useless in the community. Moving round a cycle, and stamping of the feet on the ground is also an indication of excitement, unity and motivation to take action. Particularly, the performance is similar to *udje* a unique type of Urhobo poetry-song in Nigeria, about which Ojaide (2010) notes that the male performers are always dressed in war-like manner. Similarly, Finnegan (2012:204) points out that during *imigubo*,(a song before going out to fight in Malawi):

> Men danced in full war dress with shields and spears and performed in the Paramount Chief's village, the traditional place of mobilization. The women too, join in the dance, and the tempo works up and up to inspire the men with the lust for battle.

The idea stressed by Finnegan also points to the dichotomy in war dance and song, where men's dominant ability suppress women's limited role. In the narrative, this form of performance is reflected where the boys are seen dancing, stamping their feet on the ground while women's roles are limited to the clapping of hands to the percussive rhythms of the drumming and chanting praises of the boys. The women's morale imbued chants is an indication of women's recognition of men's patriarchal world that continues to render women as passive and unimportant. As a

memorialization tradition, the war dance propagates the masculine image of some ethnic groups in Nigeria, especially the Igbos. Its performance views these ethnic groups as a land of noble warriors. Dance and song organized the social perception of the gender system of society as one that included male warriors (Mbah, 2013) and women singers, and has been a major internal factor in the equation of Nigerian ethnic societies. Hence, war dance and song in its conception and execution deploy masculinity in a variety of ways to achieve hegemonic and ideological goals to readers.

3.1.3. Wrestling Festival and the Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity

Another aspect of oral tradition employed to fortify hegemonic masculinity in some of the narratives is wresting. Wrestling is a dramatic art that belongs to the aspect of oral drama in Africa. Wrestling can be part of an annual festival in the society. It can also be an annual festival that holds in a certain period. In most cases, they form part of extended festival celebrations to honour either seasonal changes or rites of passage. This way, they serve as a form of entertainment for an annual festival that also includes other activities. Wrestling performs a lot of functions in the society in Nigeria. Among the Igbo, where it is mostly practiced, “traditional wrestling is the most popular sport” (Desch-Obi, 2008).In Igbo land, a man is believed to demonstrate physical strength when he can contend with the aggressors. The implication is that a young man who can display and prove himself through wrestling is respected and valued by the society. In most societies, wrestling also functions as a rite of passage for initiating young boys into adulthood. It's also a way to entertain people from a community around the village square. Wrestling matches take place in a sand-filled traditional ring that normally indicates its fall line. Other elements of oral drama such as music, drum, and dancing also add aesthetic value to create excitement, and ignite emotions during wrestling festivals. This is also thought to strengthen the weak, while spectators are also available to cheer and encourage the wrestlers.

Wrestling festivals have well been documented in works of literature in Nigeria. One of the notable works that documents the tradition of wrestling in Africa is Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, written in 1958. Since Achebe’s masterpiece, wrestling has been documented in other texts such as ChigozieObioma’s*The Fishermen* and NnediOkorafor’s*Akata Witch*. In children’s literature, writers have also portrayed

wrestling as a dramatic and traditional art of the African people. For instance, BuchiEmecheta depicts the dramatic aspects of wrestling through the story of a sixteen-year-old boy in *The Wrestling Match* written in 1980.

Despite different significant values of traditional wrestling, the depiction of wrestling matches in the narratives illustrates the value that is placed on physical agility, strength, bravery, honour and respect as constructs of hegemonic masculinity in Nigeria. Wrestling is deployed in three of the narratives analysed in the study: *TCE*, *FFB* and *TAAU*. In two of the narratives (*FFB* and *TAAU*), wrestling is not focal to the stories but simply employed to enhance male physicality. On the other hand, the author in *TCE* creates a traditional contexts and settings that embody a traditional art of wrestling among the Igbos in Nigeria.

In *TAAU*, Ako Essien tells the story of Akpan Uto, born a crown prince but not loved by his father, King Nsabong. As a result, the king attempts to get rid of him on several occasions. After several failed attempts to disgrace him by giving him difficult tasks, the king sent Ekpe (nick name a lion) to Akpan to have him killed. Ekpe is a known assassin in the village whose deadly acts give the villagers nightmares. However, Akpan kills Ekpe in a fierce physical wrestling. When the king receives the bad news of Ekpe's death, he explores other means of eliminating Akpan by sending him to the land of the spirits to get an old gong belonging to his grandfather. This kind of perilous task helps construct a form of masculinity for Akpan. To prove his masculinity, Akpan must accept the challenge, and embark on the journey into the land of the spirits. His incursion into the forest started smoothly until he gets to the spirits' land. After spending few months in the spirit world, he decides to leave. However, his masculinity is put to test when the spirits' king is reluctant to let Akpan leave without a fight. The author puts it thus: "he was to wrestle with the king's brave men. He must defeat them all before he can go back" (46). The spirit king informs Akpan that it is their tradition that any man who enters their land, and wishes to go back must fight their wrestlers. Since wrestling is a form of ritual for the spirit people, Akpan agrees to the challenge. Though he is almost defeated by the spirits, he eventually won. Apkan's wrestling match with the spirits reflects his need to demonstrate that he is indeed a man and a worthy heir to the throne. The wrestling also reflects Nigerian children's literature heavy reliance on the folk tradition of the Nigerian people which also subscribes to the ethics of magical realism. Though this

aspect of style is exploited to educate the children on what Isidore Okpewho describes as "African's acceptance of the trinity of the dead, the living and the yet unborn" (50). Such idea in the narrative also stresses the relationship between masculinity and magical realism in children's narratives. For instance, Akpan's fight does not only foreground the attributes of strength, bravery and power but also highlights the significance of the spiritual realm in the enactment of masculinity. The spirits that Akpan fought used charms and other spiritual items. The implication is that such heroic violence has the tendency to reinforce the notion that violence signifies an essential part of adventure narratives in Nigeria as well as in the construction of masculinity in the society. The two fights can be interpreted as simply a test of bravery and skill for Akpan who is constantly under his father's radar.

The trope of reinforcing masculinity through wrestling is also reflected in *FFB*. In the narrative, Folake, the protagonist has four brothers who are jobless and, "they idled away their time in the house practicing wrestling, judo and karate" (1). Wrestling becomes an element of masculinity in the narratives to reinforce the dichotomy between man and woman. While Folake is preoccupied with selling oranges, the brothers are categorized as warriors engaging in manly activities. They displayed their manly attribute when Folake is kidnaped by a secret cult. Already seen as failures in the society due to their inability to secure jobs, the brothers took the opportunity to redeem their image and restore their pride and reputation through wrestling to save their sister. During the rescue mission, the brothers who are experts in wrestling, Judo and Karate are able to fight off the invading cult members in a violent physical combat. They rely on violence to resolve the problem, and saved the day. Here, wrestling became a heroic deed that proves masculinity. After the feat, the Inspector said, "For your gallantry, you are hereby enlisted in the Police Force as officer cadets" (44). Hence, through wrestling, the brothers earn respect from society's authority figures. It is vital to note that this scene has been used to convey an important message to readers. The message is that there is a reward for being brave, and this has the tendency to instill courage and boldness on young male readers especially.

Wrestling as a device for narrating and reinforcing masculinity is more reflected in *TCE*. Although the narrative is didactic in nature, the importance of wrestling to the sustenance of man's masculinity in traditional Igbo society is the scaffold for the narrative. Wrestling as expressed in the narrative is an indicator of the Igbos'

contributions to African martial arts through the traditional form of Igbo wrestling locally known as *Mgba*. According to Nzewi (2007), *mgba* is an ancient sport which started as a masculine sport organized as an annual festival within each community. It is a type of traditional sport that holds much significance among the Igbos. In earlier days, when farming was not as intense during seasons, the art served as significant uniting activity that brought people together to socialize, communicate and honuorthe heroes among them.Nzewi (2007:51) points out that:

> *mgba* is staged at the season when agricultural and other subsistence pre-occupations are relaxed (around December/January) so that everybody could recreate and socialise in mass dancing breaks.

Many Igbo communities used *mgba*to initiate men into manhood, while others used mgba as a bloodless way of resolving conflicts and wars. Wrestling, also known as *EkereMgba* (traditional wrestling), was also a way of choosing the best husbands for the most suitable maidens, as champions have proven to be capable of protecting their wives and families..Today, however, the popularity of this sport is diminishing, as the paradigm change in lifestyles, which is influenced by westernization, has contributed to the dwindling interest and participation of young people.Hence, through a vivid description of the popularity of the martial art in the narrative, it can be deduced that the author adopts the tradition of *Mgba* as a narrative device in an attempt to revive the dying tradition. First, the opening scene of the story provides an atmosphere of communality brought about by wrestling festival:

> Echidime village was well known for its wrestling matches. Every year, wrestlers came from different villages to compete in a two-day festival. It was a time of great excitement and festivities for the villagers. Winning a wrestling match here meant a great deal, not only to the winner, but also to the village the winner came from (2).

The description given by the author using Echidime as a reference mainly serves to show that wrestling has been a traditional African sport from ancient times, especially among the Igbos. The author attempts to recreate wrestling, which is one of the most thrilling events in the Igbo society. Traditionally, wrestling was an essential sport among the Igbo because matches allowed young men to gain respect by validating their masculinity through strength. The community involvement in the wrestling matches illustrates the solidarity among the people. It is believed that in earlier times,

mgba united different communities and villages at public arenas to witness displays of strength and valour by men. The narrative tells the story of Dimgba, a wrestler, whose victories on the field have been a source of pride to his community, Echidime, a village well known for its wrestling matches. Every year, wrestlers come from different villages to compete in a two-day festival. At the onset of the story, the people of Echidime express their excitement about Dimgba, their current champion. They expect him to defeat Mbonu, an equally strong wrestler from the visiting village. First, Dimgba has to defeat many challengers in his village and age grade before he can fight Mbonu. He defeated them all, including Nwadibia, a notorious herbalist. This pattern of wrestling matches, that include a wrestler defending his champion first before representing his community, highlights the importance of pride, honour and also the text of masculinity that comes with being a champion. Desch-Obi (2008:98) explaining the pressure and challenges involved in being a champion among the Igbos avers that, "retaining the recognition of a master wrestler demands that the *di-mgba* continues to exhibit a keen sense of justice and socially appropriate behaviour, both in the competition and daily life". This highlights the critical importance of wrestling to the society. By this, young readers are intimated with the fact that wrestling is essential to their masculinity in life, and victories in wrestling could distinguish a man among his equals. The art of wrestling also links and identifies the power and authority of a winning team with masculinity, because winning a wrestling match in Igbo society meant a great deal, not only to the winner but also to the village the winner comes from. Hence, the masculine values of Echidime are heralded and revered, and the portrayal of masculine ideology is gradually carried out mainly through the legendary Dimgba and his relentless pursuit of the fulfillment of personal accomplishment as Echidime's champion. As a wrestler, Dimgba proves his strength and consolidates his position in the village by defeating his challengers, and overthrowing Mbonu, his fiercest rival from another village. This feat brings honour to him, as well as to his village. After defeating Mbonu, the king, "Chief Onyeze smiled broadly" (40). This indicates the joy and honour a victorious wrestler brings to his community.

The symbolic relevance of the name, Dimgba to the art of wrestling in Igbo society, also becomes important to the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in the narrative. Dimgba in Igbo means master wrestler. It has two symbolic meanings. First, it is an

Igbo name given to a baby boy at birth which culturally suggests him an ultimate wrestler. Second, it is a title awarded to a wrestler who is skilled in the traditional game of wrestling, and has just won a wrestling tournament. In *TCE*, it is not detailed that Dimgba was his birth name, but it is obvious from all indications that he earned the name as a title. He has won many intra and inter wrestling matches, and he is the defending champion of Echidime with outstanding past records. In relation to this, Desch-Obi (2008:67) asserts that "through the masterful wrestling in inter-village contests, a wrestler can bring honour to his village and will be recognized as a *di-mgba* and a candidate for heroism". Similarly, Onunwa (2010:31) claims that "one who emerges as the overall winner or champion in the wrestling competition of his Age Grade or in any inter or intra village competition is honoured with the title Dimgba". Dimgba is therefore a title owner due to his feats. He bears the name with dignity and pride. The villagers speak highly of him, and entrust the honour of the village in his strength and bravery. He is a role model to young boys who are also studying his fighting skills. He is also a sight of attraction to young girls who want him as their husband. Hence, Dimgba maintains a name, image, and personality befitting of a wrestler of his caliber. The implication is that those who maintain their heroic character without blemish throughout their lives could find their way to the leadership positions of their communities. They could also have their burial ceremonies marked by the presence of an *Agaba* masquerade symbolising heroic strength and vigour, making their candidacy to become an ancestral hero (Desch-Obi, 2008). The graduation from champion wrestler to spiritual figure is comparable to the elevation of the male through a variety of masculinities, attaining new powers and responsibilities as one progresses through the hierarchy (Desch-Obi, 2008). Two notable points here are that wrestling represents a test of masculinity, and it requires qualities beyond the display of physical strength.

Wrestling also becomes an avenue of sexual attraction in the narrative. Because wrestling brings about security and prestige, popular wrestlers are usually one of the most wanted in marriage as part of the dividends that come with holding the Dimbga title (Akubue, 2013). When Dimgba wins his first set of matches, he is admired around the town by everyone. However, while the young men look up to him as their role model, the young women see him as a potential husband. In the afternoon of his first fight, he moves around the village, baring his body to everyone. One of the ladies

in the village remarks; “the dream of every girl is to have a strong man like [Dimgba] as a husband to protect her” (30). Here, the defamation of femininity, as well as its depiction for the positive construction of hegemonic masculinity, reinforces the dichotomy that exists between male and female. This idea is emphasized by some scholars who stress the relevance of wrestling in attracting the opposite sex. For instance, Onunwa (2010:30) corroborates that “as a result of the wrestler’s exploits, women offer themselves easily to such celebrities for marriage”. Similarly, Akubue (2013:180) observes that:

> In Igboland, physical education competitions are arranged for peers in order to determine village champion. As part of the major sport, wrestling produces champion names such as Dimgba, Otiaba, Abaeluana, etc. In effect, winners of the competition become instant toasts of the villages and could, by this singular act, warm their way into the hearts of beautiful brides

The scenario Akubue depicts above, which is also portrayed in the narrative, shows how wrestling is not only an affirmation of men’s physical prowess, it also seen as a means of attracting the best women in the community. The scenario is also an indication of women’s recognition of the importance of big muscles and body as traits of masculinity. Such recognition does not only stress the established dichotomy that exists between men and women, but also highlights the perceived negative image of women in the society, as the weaker gender constantly in need of protection.

The narrative also depicts the significance of dramatic and traditional oral elements such as moral-imbuing chants, drum, and dances to wrestling as embodiment of masculinity. In the opening scene of the narrative, there is much tension around the village as supporters of two major fighters (Dimgba and Mbonu) engage in moral-imbuing chants and arguments. For instance, women in the village of Echidme, discussing the competition speak about their excitement: “at last, the long awaited moment is here. Two elephants are going to fight for supremacy today. With Dimgba’s past records, I am sure he will triumph” said Mama Obidiya, the oldest wrestling fan in the village” (5). Dimgba receives many recommendations. A boy says of course he will win! There is no way he will let us down, after all, no one has managed to defeat Echidime in a very long time" (3). The villagers are also supporting Mbonu, thinking he can be the next champion because “he is fast and strong” and “skillful in the art of wrestling” (5). The time of the match approaches

and both Dimgba and Mbonu enter the arena, performing series of signature dances and flamboyant movements. Such movements inspired awe and excitement amongst spectators. Simultaneously, their entrance was heralded by their supporters and hype-men who were singing their praises and feats. After this dramatic display, the tune of the talking drums changed to wrestling song, and the heat of the brawl ensue, with supporters from Dimgba and Mbonu's camp hurling morale-imbuing and subversive chants that simultaneously appropriate praises and ridicule to each wrestler alike:

> "Dimbga is the greatest!"
>
> "Mbonu is the best!"
>
> "Mbonu is a fool looking for a lesson!"
>
> "Dimgba has been looking for an exit! (35)

The supporters' ridiculing and praising of the wrestlers serve as a way of intimidating each wrestler into submission and creating anxiety. Nzewi (2007), explaining the significance of chants and music during *mbga*notes that:

> Music and chants as institutionalized components play indispensable roles as the agency that structures activities. Often called *Egwumgba*, the event-symbolic music for wrestling festival accompany wrestlers as a moral factor, to conduct the event as a friendly sport.

Hence, as each supporter encodes in chants, its team wrestler's names and praises, the chants inspire and sustain both Dimgba and Mbonu during the fight. Therefore, the chants in theirdefinite form are not only to sustain the exciting atmosphere of the festival but also to arouse the wrestlers into displaying their masculinity.

The implication for the young readers is that, as an age group event, wrestling has a way of preparing boys towards achieving the traditional traits of masculinity, through building muscles, competing with one another, and sometimes using charms. Though, wrestling is an important old tradition in Africa which has other important functions, it appears in the narrative as an embodiment of masculinity to be attained at all cost.

3.1.4. Masculinity and Gender Roles in Wrestling Festival Drumming

Drums also play a big role in the narratives, specifically in *TCE*. This is a typically African traditional story which underlines the significance of drum in the construction of masculinity during wrestling festivals. Generally, the importance of drum during festival is to evoke the emotion of the wrestlers, and to create an excitement in the

arena. Drumming during wrestling festivals is also used to welcome wrestlers into arenas. Wrestlers react to this welcome beat in different ways, based on the beat of the drum. Sometimes, they dance to the beat to show their strength. They also react by shouting their names, raging at their opponents or walking boldly round the arena. In *TCE*, the drum also plays similar function as Dimgba is seen "walking boldly towards the center of the festival arena" (18) after the sound of the drum. The beat of the drum further invokes another level of excitement in Digmba: "instantly, the drummers changed their beat and started to drum a message to Dimgba, encouraging him to fight and defend the honour for which Echidime was known" (18). Here, drumming is introduced to trigger fire and desire in Dimgba to conquer and subdue his opponent. The sound of the drums becomes essential in stirring up emotions in the match to inspire excitement and passion. The effect of the beat of the drum resonates as Dimgba vows "not to let [the people] down" (20). In the midst of excitement of the inspiring drumming, he boasts; "whoever doubts the depth of a great river should step into it" (20). The study argues that drumming also has an intoxicating effect that further brings the wrestler's masculinity to the fore. During matches, wrestlers engage in both attacking and defensive movements with the aid of the rhythm from the percussion instrument. However, the effect of drumming during matches sometimes reaches a maximum peak of intoxication. The role drumming plays in building up the masculinity in wrestlers, as further expressed during the fight between Dimgba and Mbonu. After Dimgba had defeated all his challengers from Echidime, he must finally defend his title by wrestling Mbonu, an equally experienced wrestler from another town. During the fight, the percussive effect of the drum plays into Dimgba's advantage when Mbonu got distracted by the drumming of his supporters. The author recounts:

> The drumming and praise from Mbonu's supporters got Mbonu distracted. He became too excited and started smirking at his fans, with confidence and arrogance filling his muscles. Dimgba, who is more experienced knew better than to give into the crowd's praise. With one swift move, Dimgba launches himself towards the distracted Mbonu and floors him (38).

Hence, drum in the narrative plays similar important and symbolic role ascribed to drum, during wrestling festivals in many African countries. For instance, while discussing the importance of drum during wrestling matches among the Kele in the

Congo, Finnegan (2012) affirms that wrestling tournaments are sometimes accompanied by a kind of praise on a talk drum: the participants are welcomed as they enter the ring while the match continues to offer comments and encouragement.This thought is also echoed by Marshall (2001) in her study of *Sabars*drum among the Senegal, where wrestling is a major source of entertainment. During wrestling festival in Senegal, wrestlers are always accompanied by personal drummers who usually play *Sabars*, a traditional African drum which possesses deep symbolic meaning to the wrestlers. While explaining the physical and spiritual importance of *Sabar* drums among the Wolof wrestlers in Senegal, Marshall points out that:

> Each wrestler also has their own *sabar* drumming group and the competition between the *sabar* groups representing each wrestler is almost as important as the competition between the wrestlers. I attended a few of these events and the *sabar* groups seemed to line the wrestling ring and the wrestler would come and talk with his drummers, often huddling in together. The night before the wrestling match the drummers construct new *sabar* drums and inside these drums place the wrestler's personal talismans or protections. The drummers also spend the night at the home of the wrestler so as not spend the night in the home of their wives, an example of this taboo against intimacy and drumming (Marshall, 2001)

Therefore, drums as evidenced in the narrative help to create a rhythmic beat as motivation for the wrestlers to fight with greater strength.

Most importantly, drum appears in the narrative as an instrument of power, only associated with men. Drumming is an exclusive duty of men while women sing and dance, a practice that further emphasises gender dichotomy and men's supremacy in the society. Hale (1998:162), explains: "When asked why only men play the kora, griots simply reply that it is a man's instrument..." Hale goes on to state that it is unusual for women to play kora, one of the main instruments of the griot, because it is associated with power. A similar study of essentialist notions of gender in Afro-Brazilian carioca carnival by Dillon (2013) demonstrates how masculine constructions of sexuality are performed through drumming in the context of the carnival. He is of the opinion that due to the influence of transmitted African ritual traditions, carnivals in Brazil reinforce drummer/dancer gender roles where drummers

are marked as masculine because of their power over women, while dancers are considered feminine as a result of their submissive role. According to him:

> During the colonial period, African descendants were pushed to the margins of society by a hegemonic masculinity that rejected their sexual identity. The *terreiro* of Afro-Brazilian religion provided them with a space to affirm a sexual identity in accordance with the obligatory gender roles of African tradition. In the spirit possession ritual, drummers called upon African gods to "mount" dancers. This ceremony of gender role dramatization, which promoted popular conceptions of the powerful male drummer and submissive female dancer, constituted a healing process and return to African identity. While the ritual preserved inequitable gender roles, it allowed mixed-race women to escape the image of the promiscuous and beguiling mulata promoted in masculinist literature (1).

Hence, the origin of gender dichotomy, established through drummer/dancer gender roles in the carnival is synonymous with many African traditional practices. The gendering of instruments emphasised in the narrative is seen in many cultures across Africa and outside Africa where the ideas of what is and is not suitable for men and women to do are extremely entrenched in the cultures from which they emerge.

Oral traditions as discussed in this chapter are a depository of norms, beliefs and culture of the African people. The oral traditions establish the strong connection between African oral traditions and masculinity thereby showcasing the masculinity consciousness of the people through the narratives examined. The study argues that while the narratives employ various elements of oral traditions, such aspect of oral tradition perpetuates gender legacies and ideology. They present a glorified image of men, and assign them a more elevated social position. For instance, elements of oral traditions such as praise names and chants, wrestling festivals, proverbs and drums reinforce strength, toughness, honour, protection, respect, the capacity for revenge or retaliation, and the projection of self-pride as acceptable and embraced values in the society. On the other hand, they associate femininity with meekness, weakness, indignity, powerlessness and constantly in need of protection. Oral traditions continue to play a significant role in terms of social role and relationship in Africa. However, as suggested in the narratives, some aspects of oral traditions in Africa are chauvinistic because they continue to favour men in the legitimization of their authority in the society. This implies that such notions of masculinity that emerged

from the oral traditions provide vicarious pleasure for the male readers who consider them as acceptable, norms and value.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMAGES AND SYMBOLS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN SELECT NIGERIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

This Chapter identifies and discusses the images and symbols of hegemonic masculinity in the selected narratives. The Chapter starts by discussing the hegemonic representation of the male characters through different plethora of images. Specifically, the Chapter sheds light on the authors' construction of the male characters through the following dominant images: boyhood, manhood, absent fatherhood and father-figures. Here, the Chapter is interested in the ways construction of masculinity are mediated through visual cues. Lastly, the Chapter discusses symbols of masculinity such as sexuality, animals and other concrete and abstract objects that express hegemonic tendencies with the aim of viewing how the symbols represent the ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

4.1. Imagery: an Overview

In literature, images "signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the vehicles (the secondary references) of its similes and metaphors" (Abrams, and Harpham, 2008:151). They areexpressions, words or sequence of words that trigger human's imagination to recall and recombine images and memories or mental pictures of sights, sounds, tastes, smells, sensations of touch, and motions. In essence, images create the picture of an idea in the mind of the reader, and make the reader feel, hear, see or touch the idea the writer tries to create. Often this idea can bea sound (auditory imagery),through sight (visual imagery), or touch (tactile imagery). It may also be an odour or a sense of taste or perhaps a physical feeling such as pain, bruises and the quenching of thirst.

The premise guiding this Chapter proposes that narratives for children present images of men that are worthy of serious study. This is because imagery creates pictures in the mind of the readers, and when they are used in children's literature, can

communicate stereotypical ideas to children still learning gender roles and behaviours. They can communicate through graphic cues, characters' actions, and language. They have ways of expressing the prejudice attached to people of a particular culture, and when they are used in children's literature, they tend to pass messages that are stereotypical. In Nigeria where there is gender inequality, male domination and supremacy, readers of children's literature are exposed to traditional suggestive images of hegemonic masculinity. Such images are often accommodated through an internal mechanism that appropriates the display of male masculinity within a regime of didacticism.

Portrayals of male characters in the narratives illustrate several of the most salient images of hegemonic masculinity that are embedded in Nigerian cultural psyche. In Nigeria, being a man is defined by a cluster of traits (e.g. strength, stoicism, violence, emotional control, avoidance of feminine trait, risk-taking, extreme self-reliance, pursuit of status and winning) that secure the primacy of men within an ideally stable social hierarchy. Though these traits are generated in a Nigerian context, they do not represent the generalperception of manhood, however, they highlight some of the uniformities in the messages informing male behavioural norms in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. These traits, therefore, inform the various forms of images of hegemonic masculinity identified in the narratives. With the narratives heavily anchored from a male-centered perspective, the authors of the narratives advance the prejudice which tends to reinforce men's domination, while also limiting women's gender roles and aspirations.

The first image of hegemonic masculinity identified is the image of boyhood. The Chapter discuses boyhood image to draw attention to socially constructed traits of boys such as bravery, emotional control and risk taking. Secondly, the Chapter discusses manhood image to highlight the portrayal of men, especially husbands as dominant and assertive. Third is the image of the absent, insensitive and emotionally detached fathers who struggle emotionally. Here, the Chapter discusses how suppression of emotions is reinforced as an embodiment of masculinity. Finally, the Chapter discusses the image of the mentoring father-figures whose role is to enforce traditional norms of hegemonic masculinity through a process of gender socialisation and policing. In the narratives, they are represented as teachers, coaches, friends, and

other mentoring figures in a boy's life whose role is to instill socially expected traits of masculinity in boys.

These images are significant in framing and shaping constructions of hegemonic masculinity in the narratives. They also bear testimony of the values and beliefs of many Nigerian communities about men, since ideals of masculinity spring from and express the culture of the people which include their values and beliefs. Since the images are entrenched in people's minds, they manifest themselves in their beliefs.

4.1.1. Boyhood, Gender Socialisation and Hegemonic Masculinity

In Nigeria, the initial construction of masculinity is first evoked at the early stage, during the birth of a child. This stage reflects the societal preference for one gender, especially boys above the girl child. Male child preference in Nigeria is commonly seen as a socially defined tendency in a patriarchal society where couples prefer to raise a child who possesses the traditionally recognized features, status and economic ability associated with the male gender (Ushie et al, 2013; Lewu, 2015; Inyang-Etoh andEkanem, 2016). Like many countries in Africa and around the world, Nigeria "exhibits patrilineal and patriarchal family systems where sons exclusively inherit the wealth of the family, and perpetuate family lines" (Inyang-Etoh and Ekanem, 2016:1). The father also "enjoys great pride and respect with the assurance of the protection of his assets and continuity of the family line" (Raji *et al,* 2016:58). Daughters, on the other hand, are considered inferior tosons as they are expected to leave the family to marry. (Nnadi, 2013, Lewu, 2015). The high premium the family puts on sons is due to their economic value because they run the family business, raise income to help the family, and bring in-law daughters into the family when they get married.Though preference for son is a universalissue,and not peculiar to developing countries, there are suggestions that it is prevalentin a patriarchal society like Nigeria (Nnadi, 2013; Ohagwu, Cc et al, 2014).

The desire for a male child and the anxiety that comes with it runs through Anthonia Ekpa's*EdidemEyamba and the Edikang-Ikong Soup* (2009).It is a story about EdidemEyamba, a powerful and wealthy king who reigned in Eburutu, a fictional kingdom in Cross River, Nigeria. Eburutu is described as a highly traditional and patriarchal town where "only the first son of the king could rule after his father's death. Sometimes, a son was crowned king if his father was too old to rule (13-14).

Eburutu is a reflection of many traditional societies in Nigeria, and in extension in other parts of Africa where the practice of monarchy is common place. This tradition requires a paternal line which only recognizes male kings and male heirs. While it is not uncommon for women to become kings, they are only seen as regents where matrilineal or patrilineal structures are practised. This means that their claim to throne is not legitimate, and can be contested whenever a male replacement is found. This practice places high premium on transfer of power between father and sons, and, in some cases, between father and other male members of the family, in a situation where there is no male offspring. This male-controlled family system and the subsequent strong preference for sons havebecome entrenchedideals in many traditional Nigerian societies, and therefore form the focus of the story. In the narrative, Edidem is described as a "young handsome ruler who had fought in many battles, and had conquered all the towns and villages close to his kingdom" (1). However:

> EdidemEyamba had a big problem. He wanted a son who would succeed him as king. He had married so many wives with the hope that one of them would give him a son. (5).

The king sees a son as essential to the survival of his lineage in a strictly patriarchal system; that only sees a male king. Edidem knows that the family lineage can only be strengthened by male childrensince he also took over from his father:

> His father, EdidemEfiomEyamba, when he became old and could not sit on his throne again, ordered that the *Ikpaya*, the woven raffia dress for kings be out on his son…from that day, young Akabom became EdidemAkabomEyamba. That tradition had to be kept (14)

This is a justification for male-primogeniture in the narrative which vestsEdidemAkabom with the power of the patriarchal system, and the system provides for the power to be handed down from him to his son. This traditional system constituted the foundations of male supremacy, and also constitute part of the context within which the personal plight of Edidem should be understood. He has no son to continue his lineage, protect him in old age and ensure the continued remembrance of his ancestor. Though, family lineage, farm work, property inheritance and financial support to aging parents have been identified as factors significantly responsible for high rate of son preference in many Nigerian societies

(Ushie et al, 2013; Inyang-Etoh andEkanem, 2016), this study goes further to highlight the importance of kingship and inheritance system.

This story also points out the role of polygamy in the enactment of masculinity in Africa. In Africa and some Nigerian societies, marrying multiple wives is an evidence of masculinity. In fact, it is believed that a "man with one wife is a chief among the unmarried" (Kiyimba, 2010:43). Edidem's masculinity is equally measured by the size of his family. He has three wives and fifteen children, a sign of power and virility in the narrative. Though there might be diverse perception about the issue of polygyny in Nigeria, "there is no doubt that the institution of polygamy is a celebration of superior masculinity" (43), and Edidem enjoys such status.However, despite Edidem's masculine status through the number of wives, the lack of son becomes a source of anxiety for him, and which explains the reason for marrying many wives in the first place. What is significant is the form of strategy Edidemadoptsto improve his failing masculinity, and how it results in gender biases that negatively affect hiswives' welfare, health and survival. Edidem renegotiates access to patriarchal hegemonies by marrying more wives with the hope that one of them would give him a son. However:

> His first wife, Ekanem, had given birth to four daughters. He married a second wife, Asandia, who had four daughters. The third wife, Asari, whom he hoped so strongly would be the mother of his son, had three children – all girls (5-6).

Edidem's search for a son is a crucialpart of the story, despite having fifteen daughters already. His masculine decision to update his wives in order to have a son is also a principal theme, and becomes one of the focal points of the story, rather than the effect of such a decision on the women. Such decision is able to redeem his helpless status which is an important but complex form of agency available to men in his situation in Africa. By this, he distanceshimselffrom the problem, while his wives are assumed to be responsible for his plight. This demonstrates how slippery hegemonic masculinity is sometimes gained within the context of marriage in Africa, where the society "still holds on to a fallacy that has been debunked by science that a woman determines the sex of a baby" (Orabueze, 2004:109). Lewu equally highlights that:

> Due to the preference for boys in most cultures, a woman without a male child is almost regarded as barren. This is borne out of belief in male physical,

> psychological and social superiority. Only the male child is regarded ascapable of perpetrating the lineage, while the female gets married into another family (Lewu, 2015:564).

This practice has been identified in explaining fertility behaviour in Cross River State, a society where the narrative is situated (Igbolo, 2016:2). According to her, male child preference is believed to be a major contributory factor in the continued growth of the population of Nigeria in general and Cross River State in particular (Igbolo, 2016:2). This is because most women find it very difficult to stop having children when they do not have at least a son, even with many daughters—putting their own health at risk, while most marriages get dissolved for the sake of the absence of a male child. Though Edidem's wives retain their status in his house, they are exposed to such risk as three of them had fifteen girls between them. When they couldn't bear Edidem a son, they also suggest he marries another wife so he could have a son:

> Our King, we have come to make a suggestion. We would like you to marry one other wife who may give you a son. We knew that that must be the cause of your worry (10)

Their actions is an indication that their survival in the family and society can only be guaranteed if they make a natal alliance with the male sex. This practice also resonates with (Orabueze, 2004) findings that in a traditional African society, barren women or women without sons are sometimes expected to marry another wife or wives for her husband in order to cement their places in the house or risk losing their husbands to concubines. In order to avoid such, the wives suggest he marries another woman and are even instrumental in bringing Queen IfokAkabom to the palace who is eventually able to give birth to a boy much to the delight of the king. As evidentin the story, Nigerians idolise women who produce a baby boy, and consequently impose a feeling of guilt upon women who produce girls. When Queen Ifok gives birth to a boy, her baby suddenly becomes the most important ammunition that she possesses, in thatextremelymale-controlled society. Despite her poor background, her baby boy scores her victory, and places her in a better position than the other wives in the palace. In addition, the king gives her half of the entire kingdom, and builds a house for her. There are no indications in the narrative that the king doesn't take care of his other wives, but his behaviour to Queen Ifiok implies that there is power in producing a boy and there is a greater reward for women who give birth to a boy. Thus, it is not

surprising that “Kings and chiefs from nearby kingdoms and countries brought for the baby, gifts of all types” during the naming (75). The naming is described as the most glorious andthe most celebrated. Merely being born male places him in a better position than his sisters. This near glorification of the baby boy is central to the understanding of what it means to be a male in Nigeria.

The craving for baby boy as discussed above is only the first step to establishing gender difference between boys and girls in society. ChineloIfezurike’s*Chima Laughs Last* is a narrative that portrays how gender power difference continues right after the birth of a baby boy through socialization and policing. In Nigeria, after birth, boys are expected to display strong mental attitude among his peers, show evidence of braveness, and involve in risky and aggressive activities as they grow (Uchendu, 2007). They are also expected to be strong individuals showing readiness to distance themselves from perceived effeminate attributes such as emotionality, weakness, and crying. Izugbara (2004) affirms that boys who cry, easily frightened, avoid fighting, or easily indulge in peer intimidation are often scolded and warned to stop acting like girls and women. This socialization process is significantly different from the image of a baby boy, discussed earlier, who simply had to be born male in order to be a potential heir to the power reserved for him by the system of patriarchy.

In the narrative, the character of Chima and other male characters demonstrates how children’s narratives mirror the above assumptions about boyhood. Initially, in the narrative, Chima is portrayed as someone who finds it difficult to embrace the masculine ways of life of other boys in the text. For instance, he has no time for football, hunting for fruit and other conventional masculine activities in which other boys in the text engage. Instead, he is portrayed as a model of a tender masculinity. However, after enduring bullying and teasing from his friends, Chima starts exhibiting traits of hegemonic masculinity. Chima’s first attempt to illustrate his masculinity occurs when he is invited for fruit hunting at Mr. Aghamelu’s compound by Obinna, one of his friends. Chima agrees to follow Obinna, even against the wish of his sister, thereby exhibiting his first flight from the feminine domain. During the fruit hunting, Chima is afraid of a dog, in the compound, but decides to hide his fear when queried by Obinna. However, Chima’s inner fear is quickly revealed:

> Chima was however afraid. He did not like to be bitten
> by a dog. He however quickly concealed the fact from

> Obinna. He knew that Obinna would laugh at him and call him a girl meaning that he was a coward (32).

Chima's concealed fear shows the pressure that comes with conforming to normative masculine behaviours or what Khan and Wachholz(2006:70) argues is "relentless test of masculinity—the ongoing battle to prove oneself a man, and more importantly, not feminine". The author constructs gender dichotomy by attributing timidity to the female gender, a negative image that is entrenched in the psyche of many Nigerians (Olawoye et al, 2004; Uchendu, 2010). Explaining gender socialization in Nigeria, Olawoye et al (2004) state "that in a situation where a young boy may be naturally timid and withdrawn, he may be derided as 'being too feminine". Nodleman (2002:27) also aggress that masculinity is always and inevitably relational and always comprehended in terms of how it is not femininity and opposite to femininity. According to him, "boys who resist the boy code are therefore popularly considered to be girly or gay—which in the popular mind…are usually one and the same thing" (Noodleman, 2002:27). Hence, the narrative helps maintain patriarchal social order by indoctrinating Chima and the male readers into accepting their dominant position. By implication, the readers, especially boys, are exposed to such stereotypical parameters that both downgrade the female gender, and further reinforce male dominance.

When reading through Chima'sbehaviour, the strong relations between masculinity and peer pressure is also apparent. The presence of Obinna is responsible for Chima's display of rigid masculinity during the fruit hunting. Though Chima is hesitant about the adventure, neither was he happy with the plan (Chima was afraid. He did not want to be bitten by a dog). However, he delivers a strong message of disclaimer to rationalize his behaviour. When projecting his masculinity in a profoundly restricted environment, his concealed fear place him potentially in a highly precarious position against the existing boy/manhood codes. Chima is caught in an ideological dilemma that could subject his masculinity to public scrutiny. At the root of this ideological dilemma are the concerns of being viewed as less of the appropriate masculine standard.

The framed position of Obinna as an instructor put pressure on Chima who he expected to be a man and not a "girl meaning…a coward". This implies the crucial influence of Obinna as an observer. Obinna's presence motivates Chima's decision to hide his fears as part of the discourse of dominant masculinity. Although Chima

knows he is not capable of expressing traits of dominant masculinity and would have preferred to return home, this is rather dangerous, because running away would have a significant impact on Chima's male identity.

Chima's growth and acceptance of his manly expectations are further shown during another adventure at a riverside. The author describes the river as "deep and the children have been warned against going to the middle of the river and other deep areas of the river" (66). At the river, Ifeanyi, another friend challenges Chima to paddle a canoe. Chima grudgingly replies, "I can. I'm not afraid, you know," (69). Having earlier recognized Chima's timidity, Ifeanyi teases him, "Liar! You can't" (69), thus generating laughter from other boys. In an attempt to manifest and improve on his masculinity, Chima enters one of the canoes and begins to paddle but the canoe capsizes. Fortunately, a very good swimmer who was walking along the river hears their shout and decides to help. The message here is that there is a reward for being brave and resilient when confronted with danger. In addition, being brave is not a bad trait, but the narrative does not only encourage boys to be brave but also expects them to suppress their inner emotions and fears. These attributes and expectations are enacted by Chima, however, when he nearly gets drowned, he has to be saved by a man.Chima may have been saved, his decision to accept the challenges does not only symbolise flight from femininity, but also a symbol of heroic masculinity. On both occasions that Chima proves his mettle, the readers will sense as long as a man lives, no matter his age, he must repeatedly distance himself from socially constructed feminine traits, and suppress his emotions in order to keep his masculinity intact.This resonates with Uchendu's (2010) notion of boyhood in Nigeria, and how the need to project an image of power must motivate boys to hide their susceptibilities, especially their physical and emotional weaknesses, and to adopt what he refers to as "a psychological defense mechanism"(12).

Again, the presence of Chima's playing mates is powerful and instructive here. Chima's resistance to subordination from his peers, readiness, and determination to sacrifice his susceptibility to comply with boyhood behavioural expectation is considered appropriate. Social respect and power seem to be the immediate reward of such resistance. Chima's decision to paddle the canoe not only reveals his true dedication to dominant masculine ideologies and his success under the guidance of his peers (Obinna and Ifeanyi), but it also establishes him as a member of the dominant

masculinity. Chima's friends are more like patriarchal surveillance figures whose interest is in re-entrenching conventional norms of what it means to be a man in a particular situation. This finding goes beyond the usual claims of fathers as rigid models of their son's compliance with conventional masculine ideals (Clowes, Ratele, &Shefer, 2013). Instead, the study contributes to a wider debate on men's psychology, claiming that peers also play a major role in entrenching masculine ideals). Our findings point out the importance of understanding the messages (implicit and explicit) received from peers regarding what is suitable or unacceptable men's masculine behaviour for younger boys.

The image of boys as brave is also heightened in *Murphy thePrankster* through the adventure of Murphy, a prankster. The story highlights the importance of bravery in the life of young boys. As an adventure, the narrative constitutes one of the popular forms of children's literature, because they are interesting accounts of heroes going on journeys. Most adventure narratives encompass daring journeys which help the young heroes to have a better conceptualization of their environment. In such narratives, the protagonists face risky situations; people are saved from outrageous calamities; antiheroes overpowered and heroes compensated. Probably, the child reader can develop knowledge about the ups and downs of life, moving imaginatively with the boy hero as he experiences and overcomes the difficulties of his journey. Despite the moral lessons embedded in these adventure stories, they also operate according to what Sussman and Sussman (1995:45-46) terms the masculine plot, wherein "manhood is an ongoing process, a plot, a narrative over time that charts achieving and maintaining the tense regulation of male desire". In the course of their journey, the heroes are put through series of doubting tasks that bring out the masculine in them, thereby portraying them in the image of a brave hero.

In the adventures, the heroes, seeking an exclusively male universe, leave the feminine domestic sphere, and set on a course progressing towards masculinity. They "set off into the unknown to fulfill their destiny unencumbered by the feminine constraint or by emotional ties with home"(Tosh, 1999:174). The "setting off' is an integral part of this journey of a world, free from the unmanning taint of the females and the domestic. In *MTP*, though Murphy is involved in series of adventures in school, his journey to manhood starts when he is caught up in a weed plantation camp with criminals. During his trials in the camp, he hardly thinks of home, and only

remembers his mother when he is hungry, indicating his total void of emotional ties with home. Instead, he is focused on exposing the criminals. He displays high level of bravery by outsmarting Boka, his men and the fierce looking dogs. Also, Murphy's elder brother, Victor, is an officer of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (35) who also exhibits hegemonic traits of masculinity, by appearing at the last scene to arrest the criminals with his gun. In the end, his exploits in the narrative earn him recognition from friends, family and the society. His brother shook his head in wonder, and said; "I am proud of you, Murphy, you were very brave…you have single-handedly smashed a syndicate we have been after for years. You are indeed a hero" (110). Murphy's heroism is further recognized by the N.D.L.E.A Chairman who sent a letter to Murphy, inviting him to a press conference at the agency's headquarters. At the press conference, the Chairman "announced a scholarship award to Murphy up to university level…you are a brave boy, the nation is proud of you" (133).

Similarly, the idea of drawing children to the fact that the journey of life is extremely difficult (through the image of boys as brave) is also accentuated in *TAAU*. The narrative portrays Akpan's bravery and heroism as he battles many odds, including his father. Akpan in the narrative is the archetype of the child hero who is the mana personality and the defeater of evil dragons. To Jung, the child hero represents the ego and is often engaged in fighting the shadow. This is typified in the narrative as Akpan battles Ete Ekpe, a mysterious lion sent by his father to kill him. However, "Akpan killed the lion in a brave fight" (25). Akpan continues to follow the archetypal pattern of the hero archetype by embarking on a dangerous journey to the land of the spirit, to recover a lost gong belonging to Akpan's grandfather, an errand also organized by his father. While Akpan has been under the care of her mother, all along, he has to leave her mother to prove his masculinity. Jung (1954) points out that the departure is the first stage of the child hero. It is a stage where the hero is separated from her mother or similar female domain. Loum (2010:120) buttresses the importance of such separation to the development of boys:

> When boys distance themselves from the female domain, it prevents them from acquiring female traits, particularly from being emotional or morally weak. Second, cutting a boy off from his mother is a way of raising his sexual consciousness.

What Loum's argument suggests is that such distinction makes boys realize the differences between males and females, and ultimately serves as a base for the initiation to full masculinity. Separated from his mother, Akpan is able to display heroic deeds in the narrative by not only embarking on the daunting task but also defeating spirit wrestlers, along the way, and returning home with the gong. The author visualizes Akpan's defeat of the spirit from a metaphysical perspective. The narrative stresses the idea that at times, the journey that is undertaken by the male character takes them from the physical world to the land of the spirits. This aspect of style is exploited to educate the children on what Isidore Okpewho describes as "African's acceptance of the trinity of the dead, the living and the yet unborn…" (50). Thus, in *TAAU,* such interface between the living and spirit worlds helps heighten Akpan's heroism and masculinity.

In *FFB*, Ifoegbuna also successfully portrays gender disparity between Folake and her brothers, by depicting the brothers as brave boys who practise "wrestling, judo, and karate" (1). In contrast, Folake and her sister assist the family by selling oranges as the father only earns 500 Naira per month. Like Chima in *CLL*, the brothers are also representations of the archetypal hero identified by Jung. Like Chima, the brothers are also taught to detach themselves from feminine domains, and encouraged to excel in male-dominated professions like wrestling, judo, and karate. As stressed by Uchendu (2007) and Loum (2010), the process of separating boys from their mothers and seeking an exclusively male universe before they can become men is also stressed here. Such process also prepares the boys for future adventures in the narrative. This is seen later in the narrative as the brother savesFolake when she falls into danger. Before the rescue mission, Sule, the eldest of the brothers, assures their parents and the crowd watching their war songs and dance, "We are going to rescue our sister. We know where she is. Come here tomorrow morning and rejoice with us" (31). Here, the brothers' bravery is linked to the key masculine characteristics of being protectors. Such separation also affords them the opportunity to display their bravery, and prove their masculinity. They are even watched by the villagers, while they practisefor the rescue mission. The villagers recognize the importance of bravery in men when a woman confirms her trust in them: "They will succeed…they fight like tigers" (31). During the rescue mission, the brothers who are experts in Judo and Karate are able to fight off the attack, from the members of the cult, in a physical combat. They rely on

their strengths and fighting skills to rescue their sister, and save the day, and this has the effect of linking bravery to the image of masculinity. After the feat, the Inspector said:"For your gallantry, you are hereby enlisted in the Police Force as officer cadets" (44). Folake, on the other hand, is presented as frightened and dependent on her brave brothers. This is an example of the archetypal journey where a damsel in stress is usually saved.

One of the concerns of this study is the lack of social education that boys receive at home from their parents. The girl's absorption into the mother's domestic work routine enables her to receive thorough instruction in the norms and taboos of the society, some of which the boy is excluded from, as he is defined as different from the girl. The boy, on the other hand, is not absorbed in the family's routine. Boys are hardly trained to be a good husbands and fathers, but are only exposed to hegemonic traits of manhood. By implication, the narrative characterizes Folake and her brothers differently, thereby, consolidating stereotypes of male superiority.

In essence, the authors while presenting the image of boyhood show that attaining masculinity begins when young boys display strong mental attitude among their peers, show evidence of strength, and must be ready to distance themselves from female domains. The boys' behaviours and attitudes are representations of the archetypal hero. The authors demonstrate that the masculinity for young boys must be attained and defended, even in the sight of danger, as any indication of weakness is directly linked to femininity. However, such image of a young boy in contemporary Nigerian society is not only stereotypical but also dangerous.

The implication for the young readers is that the masculinity of a young boy must be attained and defended, even in the sight of danger as any indication of weakness is directly linked to femininity. However, such image of a young boy in contemporary Nigerian society is not only hegemonic, but dangerous. Nodelman (2002), in his analysis of masculinity of young boys in Australia, is of the opinion that the flexible nature of social gender norms needs to be grasped, and one must be prepared to explore how they function in literature. He suggests that writers of children's literature should start addressing the multifaceted nature of being a boy/man and being a girl/woman. According to him, such literature will help male readers begin refuting many of the conventional ideologies of masculinity, thus achieving a more

dynamic view of themselves and society as a whole, instead of seeing gender as binaries (Nodelman, 2002:15).

4.1.2 Manhood, Gender Relations, and Power

One of the dominant stereotypical images that resonate in the narratives is the image of men as dominant and insensitive. Here, the study discusses this image from the perspective of the father archetype. Crisp (2010) points out that the images representing father archetype are many: God; a god; a giant; a tyrant; executioner; devil; Pan; older man; male leader figure; the sun; an older male rival; a holy man or priest; a dominating boss; wise old man; the sun; a bull. Some of the images highlighted by Crips are evident in many African societies. Men are highly respected in Africa and, by extension, Nigeria. Their words are law, and the amount of power that men have continues to construct them as dominant. Further supported by tradition and customs, the dominating role of the male, with reference to gender relation has often trodden over women in the society. Men make decisions as the head of the family, have a final say on issues affecting the household, and subsequently expect women to submit at will. This chauvinist archetypal image is apparent in two of the narratives, where men as husbands are portrayed as dominant and oppressive.

This image is reinforced in *TAAU* and in *FFB*. In *TAAU*, the author visualises the archetypal image of a domineering man from the perspective of King Nsabong, a man portrayed as a polygamist who benefits from the so-called 'patriarchal dividend' by virtue of his status as a husband and king. King Nsabong lives in a compound consisting of three wives and numerous children. He is a well-respected son of the soil. However, his patriarchal status accommodates his personality, which is described as arrogant, sarcastic and cruel. These qualities create an image of a man whose patriarchal status is offset by brutal domineering qualities. It is as if his potential brutal domineering qualities dilute his image as a king. He uses brutality to suppress people, and to enforce his will. He also has a chain of institutional functionaries: priests, culture, and Ete Ekpe, a lion assassin that makes him almost invisible. This hegemony conclave is an all-male one, reflecting the male predominance in the exercise of political power in the African society. The king, the absolute ruler, remains remote from his social responsibly to one of his wives and the son she gave birth to. King Nsabong dominates his wives. For instance, he hates NwanUsua, one of

his wives, and decides to build her house far away from him, denying her rights as a wife. When challenged by NwanUsua, he refuses to offer any explanation. When he gets bored about NwanUsua's presence in the palace, the king chases her out completely even with a pregnancy. NwanUsua's rapid displacement within the marriage suggests that wives are dispensable commodities traded and changed at the discretion of their husbands. This is also an indication of how gender relationships are reflected in many African societies.

The archetypal image of a domineering husband is equally accentuated through the relationship between Mr. Babaji and his wife. The story which narrates the struggles and challenges of Mr. Babaji's family highlights the stereotypical behaviour of husbands as domineering and insensitive. He is portrayed as insensitive, selfish and cold. Mr. Babaji is poor and deficient in moral convictions, but because of his male privilege as head of the family, he freely dominates those under his roof. One of his roles as a father is to ensure that his family is well provided for but his monthly meagre income of 500 naira is not enough. In order to sustain the family, the wife sells oranges to put food on the table. Nevertheless, Mr. Babaji doesn't appreciate his wife's effort. Instead, he is only interested in his four sons who, "idled away their time in the house practicing wrestling, judo and karate" (1). In fact, when a friend tells Mr. Babaji that he will be rich through his daughter and wife "who are very caring and industrious" (4), he simply rebuffs him and replies that "behind every contended and well-fed elderly man are his sons" (4). Here, hegemonic masculinity is viewed as devastating, especially to women. It is domineering, oppressive, and preludes equality between man and woman. This is more reflected through Mr. Babaji's exhibition of unwilling and assertive manners when Kassidi(a rich young man interested in Folake, their fourteen-year-old daughter) comes for her. The wife begs the husband to allow Folake finish primary school before she is allowed to marry, but the husband firmly refuses. The wife does not perceive Folake's early marriage as a very reasonable idea, and so she disapproves of her husband's stance. When her husband only sees their daughter as a commodity to be exchanged for financial freedom, she sees educational possibility. However, Mr. Babaji is not ready to succumb. He is an archetypal husband who demonstrates a desire that is usually found among men of his social set up.Mill (1869:12) observes that:

> Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments…they have therefore put everything in place to enslave their minds. The masters of all other slaves rely, for maintaining obedience, on fear, either fear of themselves, or religious fears.

Mill's view is shared by other scholars, such as Schipper (1991)and Kabira (1993), who argue that man is able to dominate various areas of social and political lives, because he has put in place forms of control that enable him to psychologically overwhelm the woman into believing in the superiority of the man as specie. The image of the man as the husband comes with a lot of attributes. As a husband, his first and most important responsibility is to his wife. Marriage institution is one of the most important structures that permeate the society. In the marriage institution, it is important that there should be harmony. Harmony can only be maintained if both partners know their responsibilities towards each other. The man is the leader of the home, and that is yet debatable. However, the society makes certain demands of a husband due to his sex. He must be strong, and be able to hold the home together. This demands intelligence, physical strength and courage. Likewise, the obedience of the wife to her husband is one of her responsibilities to the marriage and her husband. As emphasized by Mill, such relationship sometimes demands absolute control from the husband and cooperation from the wife. A deviant attitude from the wife, therefore, suggests weakness on the part of the husband. This idea is highlighted later in the narrative when Mr. Babaji stops Folake from going to school, on a Monday morning. He simply tells Folake to forget about school,butprepare for marriage. When the wife complains, Mr. Babaji demonstrates an assertive attitude, telling his wife, "The matter is already settled. I was only informing you" (22). This response is oppressive and domineering, consequently creating an empowered position for himself despite his wife's reasonable explanation. He disregards his wife's suggestion, and treats her advice with levity. This is an indication of how many families are run, and how women are treated as subordinates in most African families. They are expected to respect the decisions of the husband, no matter how ridiculous. Though, a man is required to hold his family, he is also expected to respect the wishes of his wife. However, Mr. Babaji has subdued his wife by making her, in the words of Mugambi (2010:16), "effectively silenced".

The implication of this image is that it has the tendency to provide young readers with visual cues associated with husbands' domineering attribute. The readers are likely to be exposed to the idea that King Nsabong's and Mr. Babaji's approximation of manliness is directly tied to their insensitivity and their ability to conform to societal expectations. They derive joy in maltreating their household, and this attitude brings to fore the implication of such portrayal of men on male readers.

4.1.3. Absent father-hood, emotional control, and hegemonic masculinity

Closely related to the image of men as dominant is the image of emotionally detached male characters and absent fathers. In some of the narratives, men, especially fathers are portrayed as emotionally detached, insensitive and passive playersin their children's lives. This is linked to the general perception of fatherhood in Africa. Mboya and Nesengani (1999) point out that in Africa, fathers are sometimes expected to be disconnected emotionally from their children as a sign of masculinity. It is taken that an emotional relationship between children and the parent is the role of the mother, hence, when fathers are involved, they are intruding into feminine domain. This idea is properly stressed in *TAAU*, where the king disowns his son because he was born by his most hated wife. He fails in his responsibility to the child, and leaves him in total care of the mother. She takes care of her son without the king's input, and Akpan grows up fast, knowing that his father did not love him as a father should love his own son. In fact he responds to people's call of his name by saying "Owei, I am greater than my father but not my mother" (5). As a king, he is expected to ensure the safety of his wards, but he is an epitome of the father archetype who is not emotionally responsible to his child.

This image is also depicted in *FFB* through the character of Mr. Babaji. Mr. Babaji in the narrative shows no sign of emotional attachment, throughout the story, but rather insensitive to the career of his daughter. In a society where fatherhood is not associated with showing love but in terms of meeting financial responsibilities, Mr. Babaji's only concern is getting his family out of financial mess. Consequently, he turns domineering and ruthless, descending into hegemonic masculinity with its propensity to exploit and dehumanize by giving Folake, her fourteen-year-old girl, out in marriage due to selfish reasons. To him, the only value he sees in his daughter is a means to wealth and power. He points out; "Kassidi is a very rich young man and

I don't want Folake to miss her luck…Folake is very beautiful and has good manners and no man will like to lose her" (6). Mr. Babaji only recognizes his daughter's sexuality as a bargaining chip for financial freedom. In particular, he sees her as a sexual object as well as static and pliant object of desire.

Reading through Mr. Babaji'sbehaviour, the narrative draws attention to how his inability to play the critical role of bread-winner contributes to the emergence of another form of hegemonic masculinity achieved through domineering attitude. This alternative route to hegemonic masculinity is an indication that in Africa, men may seek patriarchal hegemony through heterosexual marriage, economic breadwinner role, physical and emotional fortitude and independence (Ratele, 2008), but may be marginalized by their social, cultural, financial and political circumstances, as well as age range that may require complex re-configurations and renegotiations of their masculinity. In a country where one of the key requirements to attain manhood is meeting financial obligations as fathers, there are suggestions that men are also likely to enact violent masculinities in response to their material, economic, and structural circumstances (Barker and Ricardo, 2005; Ratele, 2017). Although being domineering may not be constitutive of ruling masculinity, it is used by Mr. Babaji as a "shortcut" to reaffirm his masculine power, control, and dominance in a context where the main routes to credible masculinity is unattainable. Thus, Mr. Babaji's dominant attitude becomes an essential communication mechanism to validate a particular model of masculinity in a given space and time. This finding reflects the idea that poor young men are likely to identify a variety of recuperation strategies in response to their material, economic, and structural circumstances (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Ratele, 2017).

The solitary function of the father is also entrenched in *MTP*. The father in the narrative is silentall through. In fact he doesn't have a name. Murphy's father is depicted as a solitary character, despite the positive impact of other members of the family. Reference is only made to Murphy's father when he is described in his provider role; "Murphy's father was a successful architect and they lived in Ajo layout" (34). There is no interaction between Murphy and his father throughout the story. When Murphy is caught, it is the brother that comes to rescue him, further highlighting the father's deficiency in fatherliness. Hence, Murphy's father seems to

play marginal role, and does not play any vital role through the text. Murphy appears to interact more with his mother, though he remembers her only when he is hungry.

The image of man as deeply an unemotional being is equally stressed in Ekpa's*EdidemEyamba and the Edikang-Ikong Soup*. The importance attached to a male child and the justification of polygamy aretwo important issues emphasized in the narrative. It is a story about EdidemEyamba, a wealthy king, who has four wives and fifteen daughters. He is described as a "famous and a great warrior whose fame was well known all around Eburutu" (1). Despite his number of wives and children, he is not happy because he has no son to succeed him. The author highlights the grievous effect of the lack of son in a graphic description of the king's body, "His good looks faded away, wrinkles lined his forehead and his jaw sagged. He grew bald so quickly" (3). Despite enormous pressure from his wives and his obvious deteriorating conditions, the king refuses to disclose his troubles to his wives. He aligns with the hegemonic part of his masculinity which requires him to be less expressive and emotional. Rather the problem is expressed indirectly through the omniscient narrator. When he eventually discloses his problem, he only tells his chiefs, which immediately depicts men as paramount figures capable of solving problems than women. Edidem's decision not to tell his wife can also be read as an attempt to hide his presumed failure to produce a son. In Africa, a king's sexual potency is basically measured by his ability to continue his lineage- to produce a son. Hence, he is considered a failure due to his perceived futile sexual power to bear a son, thereby creating an uneasy link between a male child and the father's sexuality. Though, the king is not impotent because he has fifteen girls already, his decision to become emotionally unopen is due to the fear of putting his masculinity into question.

One of the concerns of this study is the importance given to fathers in some of the narratives despite their limited roles, while the mothers are neglected. For instance, In *FFB*, when Mr. Babaji's sons win scholarship due to their efforts in rescuing Folake from the cult members, the father is the one who is congratulated rather than the mother who has been feeding the family, along with her daughters. Similarly, in *TAAU* when the king's son returns victorious from the deadly journey, his father sent him, the father takes the glory instead of the mother who has been taking care of him. Also, the father is silentin *MTP*, while the narrative makes frequent reference to the

meal of the Murphy's mother whenever Murphy is away from home. However, when Murphy is invited by NDLEA Chairman for conference due to his bravery in dealing with a ruthless gang of criminals, it is the father who follows him. The message here is that fathers enjoy elevated status, no matter their conditions in marriage. Even when the father is poor and makes no material contribution to the upbringing of the child, the narratives point out that it is still considered a great social importance that the child should be acknowledged by both the father and his family. The mothers may have been the undisputed master in the two narratives; it is the fathers who are celebrated at the end. The hegemonic power of the father, however, is not just abstract power, in terms of hisbeing a gateway to the lineage. As noted in the narratives, they are the owner of the children, and take the most important position in their lives. Kiyimba (2010:44) argues that "the other aspect of male power enshrined within the social structures is the understanding that the man is the owner of the children and the ultimate source of social legacy for them". This image of the father as the 'owner' further suppresses the social position and power of women in the family and the society, a view that leads men to view women as "gardens where the man, on behalf of the clan, plants seed" (45). As a result of the power, position, and ownership rights, the pleasure or displeasure of the father can determine one's social destiny. Hence, the image of the father is a significant symbol of masculine power.

4.1.4. Father-figures, Gender Socialisation and Hegemonic Masculinity

One of the stereotypical images of masculinity in the narratives is the image of the mentoring father-figures. Father-figures in the narratives are presented through the archetypal father-figure. The father figure archetypal figure is a "strong male leader and an example of who the hero/warrior will become. Often very hard and stern on the hero/warrior"https://eng331epicrooks.weebly.com/examples-of-literary-archetypes.html. Generally, archetypal father-figures are other males of importance such as uncles, grandparents, teachers, coaches, friends, and other mentoring figures in a child's life. Though biological fathers have continued to play vital roles in the lives of their children, other male figures within and outside the family also fulfill many of the same roles and responsibilities as biological fathers (Caldwell et al. 2011). In Africa, fatherhood is understood as a communal role because it is characterized by collective responsibility. Central to the role of father-figures in the

society is that of gender socialization and policing,which is essential in order to produce the next group of men, who will continue to sustain the patriarchal doctrine. In relation to this, Uchendu (2007:282) confirms that "masculine gender attitudes and roles are learned from infancy [...] through the process of socialization. This is a process through which gender is manufactured or produced". Therefore, since father figures are agents of gender socialisation, their presence in the lives of male children can be associated with boy's display of hegemonic masculinity. They serve as actors involved in a more complex process of accomplishing and maintaining traits of hegemonic masculinity in the society. The image of the father-figures in the narratives as portrayed by writers is to typify among other things features of hegemonic masculinity as evidenced in aggression, limited emotionally, and enforcing masculine traits.

The image of the father-figure is particularly striking in *MTP*. The narrative introduces the readers to the characters of Mr. Samson, a geography teacher. Mr. Samson is portrayed as "merciless and made use of his whip at the slightest opportunity" (2). He is also the school Boy Scout Master,and takes the job seriously. Since the intersection between hegemonic masculinity and father-figures requires that whoever is acting in such capacity should lead by example, Mr. Samson educates his students, who are boys about his "physical and mental prowess when he was a student and other personal achievement" (3). Mr. Samson educates the boys about the importance of physicality and achieving success as a male. As the school's Boy Scout Master, he sums his education by regularly taking the boys on camping exercise deep in the forest. He sees the camp as an avenue where the boys can display their masculinity as boys. During one of his camping exercises, he gives the boys hint of what is expected of a man, through one of his usual stories:

> He told them of his exploits when he was a captain in the army during the civil war. When he got to the part of about how he single-handedly captured an enemy of soldier, he stood up and started jumping around demonstrating how he disarmed and beat the enemy senseless (8).

It has been established that teachers play significant roles in reinforcing traditional gender attributes through different means. They are external role models who mediate between the school and students. They preserve traditional gender behaviours through teaching, reading materials, sport activities and other educational activities. Mr.

Samson becomes a role model, emphasising the societal expectations of masculinity. Through his usual stories, he stresses that a man must be brave, strong and reliable. Hence, his lesson becomes an initial rite through which the boys are inducted into the world of violence. The camping site also affords Murphy, the young protagonist an avenue to display his masculinity. Murphy, a prankster who windup people at every opportunity sees the camp as a platform to play his usual prank as well as enact his masculinity among the boys, by setting off a fire cracker around the camp. Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, aims to indoctrinate boys into a life marked by ferocity, as seen through the taking of the boys for camping and telling heroic stories, as well as by juvenile behaviour, such as setting off a fire cracker. All these are school activities that scholars assert havea way of socialising male students into societal expectations of what it is expected of a man. Connell (1996) opines that as with corporations, workplaces, and the state, gender is embedded in the institutional arrangements through which a school functions: divisions of labor, authority patterns, and social activities. Through these intersecting structures of relationships, schools construct institutional definitions of hegemonic masculinity. Students partake in these social institutions merely by entering the school and existing in its structures. It is this kind of structure that Murphy and his colleagues are introduced to in the narrative, with Mr. Samson acting in the capacity of a father-figure.

The image of a father-figure is also accentuated in *CLL*, through the character of Obinna and Ifeanyi. The narrative portrays the struggles of Chima, a clever and hardworking boy, as he copes with societal expectations of boyhood. Chima is initially portrayed as a gentle boy who has no interests in usual boys' activities. However, Chima's growth into manhood in the narrative is chiefly facilitated by his friends, mostly Obinna and Ifeanyi. Both characters coach Chima in the ways of boys in the narrative, and impart similar notions of masculinity to him. They reflect some particular characteristics of the father-figure image through conveying masculine standard toChima. When Chima is showing a sign of weakness, as a male, they make him realise why weakness is a trait associated with females only. Through teasing and bullying, they show him that a boy must be brave, strong, and show the readiness to distance himself from effeminate attributes.

Early in the narrative, the readers are introduced to Obinna, Chima's first and primary initiator into boyhood. Obinna is Chima's best friend, and equally brilliant. He

believes that being a boy entails taking risk, escaping the feminine space and suppressing inner fear. Sometimes, he is also a victim of bullying, but is able to display balance masculinity. Unlike Chima who has no time for football and other conventional boys' activities, Obinna revels in them. Specifically, he loves fruit hunting which sometimes ends up putting him in trouble. It is through fruit hunting that Obinna first introduces Chima to the rudiments of hegemonic masculinity. For instance, a good example is when Obinna comes to invite Chima for fruit hunting while he is busy helping his mother peel cassava. Chima feels reluctant, at first, but Obinna persists, and Chima agrees, even against the wish of her sister, thereby representing his first lesson as a boy. Here, Obinna instills in Chima the need to distance himself from feminine domain, and encourageshim to excel in male dominated activities. Fleeing from his mothers, sister and the cassava, a food also associated to femininity, therefore, representsChima's flight from the feminine domain. Through this act, Obinna makes him realise that the procedure forsocialisation also involves a breaking away from one's sister, as well as from all socially-constructed feminine qualities and roles. Obinna's father figure's role continues at Mr. Aghamelu's compound. Mr. Aghamelu is a tough man who decides to buy a dog in order to stop boys from coming into his compound. At first, Chima seems nervous, but when Obinna asks: "I hope you are not afraid. Are you?" (31), Chima quickly conceals his fear, and replies: "no, no, why should I? I just wanted to know so that we can plan how to dodge the dog" (31). It reveals that he is not up to the challenge and that he needs to be released from this masculine duty. However, Obinna is quick to make Chimarealise how outrageous it is for a male to express fear. Hence, Chima decides to stay and continue with the plan;an indication of his progress under the tutelage of Obinna. This discourse presents the construction of hegemonic masculinity, which indicates that men can experience fear but it is humiliating for a man to display emotion and fear.

As Chima grows in the narrative, he ventures more frequently outside of his house and comes in contact with Ifeanyi, another character who plays an important role of father figure in the narrative. Ifeanyi is not as close to Chima as Obinna. In fact, he appears twice in the narratives, but is able to fulfil his father figure role within a short while. His father-figure role starts in the narrative, when he visits Chima to invite him to the river. He does this by blowing his whistles in quick succession, "telling Chima

that it was time to go to the river" (65). Chima quickly finishes his food, and prepares to dash out again when his sister cautions him, saying "Chima, remember that Mama said," (65). Chima totally disregards his sister and mother's warning by not even waiting to hear the warning. Chima's neglect of his mother's warning here also becomes a crucial marker of his socialisation into manhood. He yields to his symbolic father figure rather than his mother's warning. Rejecting Ifeanyi's whistles will simply mean a display of weakness. Here, Ifeanyi shares from the primordial function of the father-figure archetype whose major role, according to Jung (1954), "is to promote discrimination of opposites". Seidler (2006) further argues that male identities are defined by the denunciation of vulnerability and emotion still considered feminine attributes and concludes that young men still reaffirm their heterosexual male identity through a refusal of softness. Boys, like Chima, are therefore deliberately separated from female domains, and, consequently, socialised into a gendered identity that requires activities considered manly.

Ifeanyi's father figure's role at the river is germane to the discourse of hegemonic masculinity and socialising boys. One of the roles of a father figure is to put sons through series of what Kimmel (2004:185) contends is masculinity's "relentless test". Hence, the river described as "deep" is a symbol of Kimmel's masculinity relentless test that Chima must contend with. Due to the depth of the river, children have been warned by elders in the village "against going to the middle of the river and other deep areas of the river" (66). Ifeanyi sees no risk at the river, and challenges Chima to paddle a canoe. Chima grudgingly replies: "I can. I'm not afraid you know," (69). Having earlier recognisedChima's timidity, Ifeanyi teases him: "Lair! You can't" (69), generating laughter from other boys. In an attempt to prove his masculinity, Chima enters one of the canoes, and begins to paddle. Here, Ifeanyi teaches Chima that boldness, courage and being independent, even in the face of frighteningcircumstances, are attributes boys should accrue. Also, Chima accepting the challenges implies that such privilege is accompanied by responsibilities that he may not easily refuse.

In conclusion, the narrative presents the image of father-figure from another dimension. Here, friends in school are seen acting the role of the father-figure. The narrative bears the fact that within the school setting, socialising with other young male peers strongly influences the expectations of a boy. The narratives highlight that,

boys showing masculine characteristics and behaviours, especially in front of other men or peers, and proving themselves to be more masculine than others, is a characteristic of hegemonic masculinity.

The father-figure as central to the construction of hegemonic masculinity is further highlighted in *TCE*. The narrative, which focuses on Dimgba, an undefeated champion of Echidime highlights the significance of wrestling matches to boys in the society. Every boy sees Dimgba as a role model, and isso excited to see him fight. In a sport where different forms of skills are utilized in order to defeat an opponent, boys still learning the sport need a role model to follow. A boy says to his friend, excitedly, as they approach the competition arena: "Dimgba will definitely win! I am going to study him carefully, because one day I will be the champion" (3). One of the main ways to socialize young men is through observing other men, especially male role models. Bandura (2004) states that learning from others is a key influence on the bahaviour of male children.This means that young men are inclined to learn about what it means to be a man from observing their fathers and other male role models. This is evidenced in *TCE*, where Dimgba's achievement is germane to the dreams of aspiring young wrestlers. Among the Igbo where the narrative is situated, wrestling matches are organised in age grades, but a young man can go on to achieve great things, including becoming a king or earning a title by winning wrestling matches. It was a means to greatness and a young man's ticket to achieving success in the society by observing a tested winner. Dimgba, therefore, becomes a role model through enacting masculinity. He leads by example because, "no one has managed to defeat [him] in a very long time" (3).

The intersection between masculinity and father-figures is further emphasised in the narrative through the discourse of symbolic father-figures. Symbolic father-figures are men who operate within a larger system in a society. They are powerful figures whose legitimacy extends over a recognizable facet of the society. Such role is played by a King whose role in the narrative also ensures the link between wrestling and kinship. The king is isrevered and respected by his people. He earns respect as a king and as a wrestler. This is illustrated in many circumstances in the narrative. First, the village cannot open the festival without him. Second, the drummers also stop the drums when he is about to enter the wrestling venue. When he wants to open the festival, formally, the town crier also beats the gong, instructing the people to be silentbecause, "His

Royal Highness, Chief Onyeze of Echidime is here and wishes to speak to all" (12). After his welcome address, every wrestler also goes to bow to him,as asign of honour to a king and a former wrestler. This homage highlights the significance of wrestling to masculinity and kingship. Linked to the ancient practice of wrestling as a prerequisite stage toward manhood and kingship, the King in *TCE* becomes a ruler due to his past exploits and a role model to every other wrestler, respectively. This suggests that a member of a society can earn recognition by winning wrestling matches, as in the case of the king in *TCE*. In the narrative, the King is aware of the rank that wrestling brings. He says:

> Once upon a time I was a wrestler. In my youth I was quite the fighter and you can see where my fighting spirit has bought me. So I say to you all, never underestimate the power of a determined spirit (14).

Through this act, he becomes a role model to young wrestlers as well as an important instrument in the deification of hegemonic nature of wrestling. His role becomes more of a symbolic father-figure due to the symbolic nature of *Mgba*. According to Desh-Obi (2008:67), an Igbo wrestler who is able to maintain his heroic character without blemish throughout his life will not only become a king but could also have his burial ceremony marked by the presence of an *Agaba* masquerade;symbolising heroic strength and vigour, thus making his candidacy to become an ancestral hero. Kingship therefore represents the dividend a wrestler gets by maintaining such hegemonic status. It is pertinent to state that indigenous wrestling is no longer a popular event, due to the altering patterns of village/rural life. Most young men now live in the urban centers where they are either pursuing a trade or education. Other sporting activities, such as soccer, appeal more to the children in the villages. Hence, in an attempt to revive the tradition, the narrative provides vicarious pleasure for the readers who consider the wrestlers heroes and role models,withtheir hegemonic feat revered.

In conclusion, the image of father figures, as portrayed in the narratives, suggests that the construction of hegemonic masculinity is also crystallized by other manly models, apart from the father through gender socialization and policing. Examples of manly models in the narratives include friends, teachers, kings and other role models. The first way they enact hegemonic masculinity to boys is by enforcing acceptable traits such as exhibiting manly attributes, taking risk, escaping the feminine space and suppressing inner fear. The implication for the young readers is that masculinity as

enforced by the father figures must be attained and defended, even in the sight of danger, as any indication of weakness is directly linked to femininity. The authors also present father figures in the context of role models. Such role models lead by examples, and set hegemonic precedents to follow by enacting and maintaining attributes and behaviours considered manly in the society. Hence, the implication is that if readers are constituently exposed to such rigid representations of father figures, it will influence their perception of expectations as adults.

The foregoing analysis reveals that the male characters in selected narratives, through various images, convey the traditional traits of strengths andbravery. They flee from the feminine domain, and, as such, project hegemonic masculinity. The discussion shows that the images of hegemonic masculinity that emerge from the narratives promote male dominance. The images are constructed as normal, acceptable and unquestionable. Ultimately, the Chapter concludes that at a time when traditional traits of masculinity are fading out, and also when the country is battling with distressed economy, writers of children's literature in Nigeria must start engaging readers with positive images of masculinity.

4.4. SYMBOLS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

The symbol is an object, a person, a situation, an action or any other item which has a literal meaning or means more than itself in a story itself.It normally occurs in literature in form of a word, sentence, characters, settings or other expression with a complex of associated meanings. This definition suggests that a symbol is regarded as having meaning different from those of whatever is being symbolized. These definitions suggest that some symbols are abstract that evoke a different aspect of reality in order to suggest another level of meaning. In the narrative, this is discussed through the abstract object of sexuality. Other symbols considered are concrete objects such as the male body, animals and food items. Symbols in the narratives are analysed as conventional archetypes, explaining manly values, traits and behaviours, which have additional meaning and implication within the African culture.

4.4.1. Body as Symbol of Masculinity

One of the significant symbols of hegemonic masculinity in the narratives is the male body. The male body in some of the narratives is key to how male characters see and

define their masculinity or lack of it. Traditionally, men are expected to be heavily built and strong as mark of masculinity. Connell, largely responsible for the development of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, writes:

> The physical sense of maleness is not a simple thing. It involves size and shape, habits of posture and movement, particular physical skills and the lack of these, the image of one's body, the way it is presented to other people and the way they respond to it, the way it operates at work and in sexual relations ... The physical sense of maleness grows through a personal history of social practice, a life-history-in-society(Connell, 1987:84).

Here, Connell sees the male body as an important factor in any man's life. His idea of the male body and how it compares with the notion of the physical ideal and the expectations of others colour every area of men's life including relationships with other men, violence, sexual relationship, susceptibility to injury and success at work. This is illustrated in some of the narratives as authors zoom in on specific parts of the male body, including arms, muscles, eyes and face to visualize men as strong, tough, stoic, aggressive and sexually attractive. Such stereotypical body parts indicate that men are immersed in the physical world.

The body as a conventional symbol of hegemonic masculinity is reinforced in the character of Dimgba and Mbonu in Ebonugwu's in *TCE*. The author highlights men's physicality by creating series of terrific wrestling matches in a wrestling arena. The author portrays in the narrative, an Igbo society exuding different shades of male authority which compel male characters to contend with their masculinity by physically challenging each other in wrestling matches. The narrative tells the story of Dimgba, a wrestler, whose victories in the ring have been a source of pride to his community. Early on in the narrative, the graphic depiction of Dimgba's body is presented as central to his identity, as he is described as "fast, strong and skillful in the art of wrestling" (7). This indicates that strong body and muscles with the ability to fight are the tripod on which his success as a wrestler rests. As a result of his wrestling exploits, the villagers call him names such as "elephant" (5), "eagle" (16), "lion" (31) and "terror" (40). Mbonu, who is Dimgba's opponent, is also "well built and looked as strong as Dimgba" (22). Later in the narrative, during a fight between Dimgba and Mbonu, the author captures the exhilarating match between Dimgba and Mbonu:

> They were both equally matched. They pushed and slapped at each other while looking for an opportunity to bring the other down. Mbonu grabbed Dimgba's leg, and started to pull…Dimgba managed to pull his leg free and push Mbonu off. Sweat had started to pour down their faces and their backs glistening in the evening sun. They launched at each other once again, wrapping their arms in a face to face wrestle hold. They snarled and growled at each other, but the hold was fast (34-35).

Here, Dimgba and Mbonu's shuffling feet, clamped legs, glistening backs and sweating faces are symbols of power, strength and aggressiveness that reflect and perpetuate the physicality of men in the society.The wrestlers' masculinity is thus defined by toil, sweat, glistening backs and sweating faces. For Dimgba and Mbonu, bodily strength is a crucial symbol of masculinity. They are portrayed with a similar body symbol evidenced in the character of Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. For instance, Dimbga, just like Okonkwo, is well built and is popular as a result of his war exploits in the society. In the narrative, a man becomes recognisably masculine through several accomplishments as a wrestler, or at least is associated with, some extraordinary physical achievements. Hence, the author presents male body as a crucial marker of Dimgba's masculinity. The narrative is particular about men expected to wrestle as not all men can wrestle. In the narrative, only men with superior physical qualities, bravery and stamina precisely, are allowed to wrestle and more so, men who have higher expertise, like Dimgba and Mbonu, are allowed.

In addition, the author also accented the wrestlers' body as a site of sexual attraction. The ability of the male body to entice females as an essential ingredient of hegemonic masculinity is represented. For instance, the author focuses on Dimgba's body that has erotic significance, or that makes him sexually desirable. This is reflected through some women's reaction to Dimgba's wrestling exploits. After one of his wrestling matches, the narrative pictures Dimgba walking around the village, baring his body. In awe of his body, one of the ladies in the village says; "the dream of every girl is to have a strong man like [Dimgba] as a husband to protect her" (*TCE*, 30). The language here suggests that men too are sexual objects meant for the consumption of women's eyes, as well as for the sexual gratification of women. It is clear from the textual evidence, that the young girl, reflecting the conventional expectations of a man sees big arms and muscle as traits of a perfect husband. These qualities are not only

material exemplars of dominant masculinity; they also contribute to the erotic objectification of a man. Dimgba's bodily traits are assigned value according to prevailing standards of masculine identity. Those who differ suffer the consequence. In addition, the girl's recognition of such manly attributes also stresses the established dichotomy that exists between men and women, as well as the perceived fragile nature of a woman in Nigeria that need constant protection.

In *MTP*, a direct link is also drawn between men's body and masculinity. At the beginning of the narrative, the readers are introduced to Murphy's teacher, Mr. Samson, who is fond of bragging about his "physical and mental prowess when he was a student and other personal achievements" (3). Mr. Samson makes the students, especially the boys, realize the importance of physical strength as a crucial symbol of masculinity. This is typified during a camping exercise in the forest when Mr. Samson is heard telling the boys his usual stories:

> He told them of his exploits when he was a captain in the army during the civil war. When he got to the part of how he single-handedly captured an enemy soldier, he stood up and started jumping around demonstrating how he disarmed and beat the enemy senseless (8)

The allusion to the most brutal civil war in the history of Nigeria points to the social responsibility of a soldier in a war front. According to Ojaide (2010:68), "war is often a masculine art in which physical prowess is displayed to assert the twin manly qualities of courage and power". War becomes the avenue for the manifestation of hegemonic masculinity since only men capable in body and strength are selected. Mr. Samson may have lied about his part in the war as it is revealed later in the narrative; the idea of a soldier provides Mr. Samson an opportunity to express his vital role as a man in the face of threat. During war, strength, courage, and intelligence of soldiers are essential to winning a war. Hence, Mr. Samson's expression of strength and bravery is an attempt to boost his ego as a respected soldier and man.

Later in the narrative, Murphy, the protagonist accidentally infiltrates a drug plantation camp managed by Boka and his men. Murphy had entered a car from his school, but the driver, a member of the camp decides to run an errand by taking Murphy along with other two customers who wanted to buy drug to the camp. As Murphy enteres the camp, he is amazed by the sight of men carrying heavy loads of drugs. While in *TCE*, shuffling feet, clamped legs, glistening backs and sweating

faces symbolize strength, ferocity and male aggressiveness, men's bare backs and ferocious movement of the arms as they carry heavy bags of drugs are distinct semiotics of men's power and strength in *MTP*. This is reinforced through the narrative as the men were referred to as "huge and hefty" (54, 55, 57, 58, 64, and 76). Boka, the camp leader monitoring the activities of the men carrying loads is also portrayed as aggressive and ferocious. He is also referred to as "the huge man" or "the giant in green" (54, 55, 57, 58, 64, and 76). Specifically, Boka's aggressiveness is shown when Murphy throws a pump of human waste into the bush and accidentally falls on Boka while he is coordinating his men. He glares at "Murphy with a mixture of anger, alarm and surprise showing on his face" (53). Boka's stern-looking face is an indication that when men's masculinity is challenged, men react with anger and with an increased endorsement of violence. In retaliation, he moves into his office and is seen "clutching a revolver and gesticulating widely as he shouted out orders to the men" (54). Murphy's infiltration into the camp is not only detrimental to their work, but an indication of a mess of Boka's masculinity. When Boka discovers how Murphy gets into the camp, he suddenly descends on the driver:

> The giant in green suddenly turned his attention to the driver of the car and gave him a resounding slap on his cheek. The slap was so hard that the driver staggered back and had to grab the open door of the vehicle for support or he would have fallen. (55)

Here, Boka's face and actions are evocation of men as aggressive, strong and violent. His stern countenance is bolstered by a violent nature expressed in the ferocious movement of his arms and hands as he slaps the driver. The slap and the resulting driver's staggering are distinct symbols of Boka's physical fierceness. Boka's aggressive and abrasive quality continue to resonate as he organizes the men in a fierce manhunt of Murphy. Armed with his gun, he gives order to his men to bring dogs to sniffle out Murphy. After a relentless pursuit of the tried Murphy, Boka and his men dislodge Murphy in another graphic description of Boka's hand:

> When trying to think of a way to cross the stream, a pair of strong hands suddenly gripped his arms from behind and flung him to the ground. There was a flash of steel as a knife descended towards his throat. He fainted (73).

Here, men's body continues to situate men in a world of violence and crime, while also connecting their body to criminal activities. It highlights the gender individuality of men as agents of violence.

Murphy is able to escape the men later in the narrative but not without injury to his face. In fact, he spends nearly his time on the plantation covered in bruises and wounds. His injuries are visual symbols intended to express his own extreme power and toughness which also connote notions of hegemonic masculine power.Additionally, Murphy's refusal to abandon his heroic and tough masculine personae highlights the relationship between the body and violence. Murphy gets injured and received a scar on his face in an attempt to perform his masculinity. The injuries he sustains represent the outcome of his continued insistence on acting hard, even though the narratives consistently reveal that his character does not represent his actual self and that he can not physically live up to the performance. While masculinity requires endurance and toughness; injuries and other forms of physical scars are negative consequences of adherence to this type of masculinity. The author presents Murphy's scar as a heroic and noble act. In fact, Murphy prays that the scars remain permanent so he can brag about it in school (113). Hence, the recognition by Murphy of his wound and bruises depict the male body as a place of concern as well as physical manifestations of the limits of male strength and endurance.

The male body as an essential element in the construction of hegemonic masculinity is further highlighted in *FFB*. Folake's brothers in the narrative are described as jobless boys who "idled away their time in the house practicing wrestling, judo and karate" (1). Despite their idleness, when Folake is kidnapped, they swing into action by preparing for battle with the cult group responsible for Folake's disappearance. The author pictures the boys singing a war song and also dancing round a circle in a graphically display of the body: "Folake's four brothers were busy practicing a war dance in the courtyard. People gathered to watch them. They were heavily built and the crowd admired their vigour and youthfulness" (30). The description once again focuses on the age, body shape, physical strength and their intimating nature. In addition, strategic parts of the brother's body (arm and head) are rounded with red ropes connoting the higher province of men. Here, masculinity is represented by acknowledgement of men's body. This event illustrates White's (2004:10) idea that masculinity is constructed on different parts of men's bodies rather than on the body as an undifferentiated whole: not just on genitals but on faces, arms and backs". In this instance, acknowledgment of readiness for war and battle is marked by specific cultural symbols in Africa. First, the boys are adorned in a grass skirt and while they

tied rope round their arms and head. The skirt symbolises war raffia always associated with warriors in traditional African societies while the red rope mounted on the head and arms are indication of danger. In addition, the boys were dancing round a circle, stamping their feet on the ground.

While the male body in earlier narratives symbolizes men's strength, endurance, aggression and dominant, comparable descriptions of wrinkled eyes and pale body in *EES* indicate that the world of men can also be soiled and impoverished. Initially in the narrative, Edidem, is described as a perfect man. He is portrayed as a "young handsome ruler who had fought in many battles and had conquered all the towns and villages close to his kingdom" (1). The author zooms on his face to reinforce his masculinity. Here, being a man goes beyond developing big muscles but also looking good. However, he has a big problem. He wants a son who would succeed him as king in Eburutu, despite having fourteen girls already. He had married many wives with the hope that one of them would give him a son. All his wives had given birth to girls instead. The issue weighs him down to the extent that, "the problem made him lean. His good looks faded away, wrinkles lined his forehead and his jaw sagged. He grew bald so quickly" (*EES,* 3). Here, these body parts are indications of lack of manliness which stem from impotency. One visualizes Edidem as a weak, unhealthy and apprehensive man while the face cancel out any potential benefit a man of his status would enjoy. The faded look, wrinkled forehead and sagged jaw make him less manly. The author's description of Edidem's face suggests that Edidem's physical appearance is extraordinary in that his face exempts him from other men.

In conclusion, the body is central to the ways in which the male characters in the narratives define themselves. Different male body parts in the narratives suggest that men's identity is defined almost exclusively by gender. Details about the look, appearance and body structure are intertwined with the ways men and boys act out or perform their gendered identity and this, in turn determine how they are perceived by others. They are all aware of the body images their society favour, and they all express such standards through their bodies. This perception of the male body as crucial symbol of hegemonic masculinity can send young male readers messages highlighting a man's ideal physical look and the general significance of muscles, strength and look to their lives. Furthermore, such body values and ideals sometimes mediate fatal self-concepts to young boys who have the potential to internalize these

perfect body images. This internalization can lead to serious personal consequences such as the development of insecurities, extreme body building and criminal tendency.

4.4.2. Sexuality as a Symbol of Hegemonic Masculinity

One of the most important components that differentiates the two genders in the narratives is sexuality. It is the quality of being sexual, or the way everyone experiences and views themselves as sexual creatures. This encompasses emotional, sensual, social, physical, biological or spiritual feelings and behaviours. It is a broad term, and has varied over time; hence, it lacks a certain definition just like masculinity. However, sexuality, whether it is physical, biological or social is an important indicator of hegemonic masculinity in Nigeria no matter the ethnic group. It is shown at different levels in the society and is expected to be expressed through biologically and socially expected ways. The basis of any sexuality is the biological and physical which invariably influence societal perception of sexuality. It is through the biological and physical aspects of sexuality that the society prescribe sexual behaviours and attributes (Kiyimba, 2010; Maduagwu, 2011).

Sexuality as a symbol of masculinity is highly stressed in narratives to symbolise the virile nature of a man, through the numbers of wives and size of his family. This is reflected in *ESS*. The narrative illustrates the traditional kinship system in Africa, through EdidemEyamba, a very famous king in Eburutu who marries four wives, and fifteen children. In Nigeria, the biological aspect of sexuality largely concerns the human reproductive functions, physical manifestation of love, and the human sexual response circle. This is expected to be shown, through a man's ability to impregnate the female. Patriarchal cultures typically stigmatize female sexuality as inferior because polygyny, apart from underlining the social worth of the man, reinforces men's sexual prowess. In fact, it is believed that "the man with one wife is a chief among the unmarried"(Kiyimba, 2010:43). In such a context, a man with more wives is usually regarded as more masculine than the man with one wife. There might be diverse perceptions about the issue of polygyny in Nigeria, but "there is no doubt that the institution of polygamy is a celebration of superior masculinity" (43).

Sexuality as a symbol of masculinity is also stressed in *TAAU*. In the narrative, King Nsabong marries many wives and rules over a very large kingdom. Like Edidem,

Nsabong's marriages to many wives represent the importance attached to the phallus. Nsabong, in particular, seeshis wives as inferior whose sole purpose is to be dominatedsexually. This is evidenced in his decision to abandon NwanUsua, one of his wives. To him, his wives offer no other worth than to make themselves available for his sexual desire. In addition, representing the kings as polygamous is another way of viewing men as as virile. Both *ESS* and *TAAU* could not defy adequately polygamy as a system that has a long history in the subjugation of women in Africa.For example, Ndabayakhe (2013) argues that polygamy constitutes a stumbling block in the path of women's emancipation and self-expression which in a democratic society cannot be defended.Adesami (2005:304) also confirms that "whether polygamy is depicted as actually functioning...or is introspectively dissected after it has broken down...the holder of power and subalternity respectively is never in doubt". For Adesami and Ndabayakhe, the identity of men and women in polygamy as dictator and subordinate respectively is established from the outset. The behaviour of King Nsabong in *TAAU*corroborates this fact as polygyny provides him a platform to express rigid and oppressive masculinity. In his relationship with NwanUsua, the king frequently verbally abuses her in an attempt to assert his masculinity. To further expand his authority and control over his wife, Nsabong isolates her from himself by building a hut far away from his own. Nsabong assumes that as a man and the head of the family, he is expected to rise to occasion by keeping his wives in check. Accordingly, the failure of the wives to comply is a sign of the man's weakness.

In Africa, beyond possessing it, a phallusis expected to be used for procreation because a degree of male masculinity is dependent on it. Irrespective of the size, if a man is unable to procreate, his masculinity is always going to be subjected to scrutiniy. The phallus is, thus, not just a mark of power; it also symbolises life-giving power. This idea is further stressed in *TAAU*, where the author describes King Nsabong as "a very rich and wealthy king, but not a happy man. Despite the number of wives he has, he had no children. He kept marrying more and more wives but he still did not have children by them" (1). In Africa, the male reproductive organ marks him out as a man. However, the organ is only a biological symbol, but becomes effective when a man is able to procreate with it. Hence, when Nsabong could not initially bear children, he is not happy. Though Nsabong is regarded as successful and rich, however, regardless of a man's success in other areas of human endevours, his

life is considered to have been wasted if he is not able to father a child to perpetuate his lineage. Unlike his favoured colleagues, such a disadvantaged male will not be respected in his family and society. Simply having a male genitaliadoes not attract privileges, but dividends from such possessions (Uchendu2007).

The figurative significance of the phallus to procreation is also emphasized in *EES*, but in a more complex dimension. In the narrative, the emphasis on the phallus, as a symbol of masculinity, goes beyond procreation and extends to a man's ability to produce a male child. This duty is so important that sometimes the whole or ultimate purpose of being a man is the ability to produce a male child who will continue with the heritage and name of the family, so that the family does not diminish or disappear. In any traditional African society, for any man in the society, especially a king, failure to bear a male child can be seen by society as a betrayal of his forefather's lineage, as captured in the following Lugandan proverb; "I will exterminate you; the way an impotent man exterminates his ancestors [by not begetting heirs for them]" (Kiyimba, 2010:46). In *EES*, the king's sexual potency is basically measured by his ability to continue his lineage. As a king, more is even expected of him - to produce a son, the more reason he is worried. Hence, he is considered a failure due to his perceived futile sexual power to bear a son, thereby creating an uneasy link between a male child and the father's sexuality. In fact, the problem begins to "make him lean. His good looks faded away, wrinkles lined his forehead and his jaw sagged. He grew bald so quickly" (3). He had married many wives with the hope that one of them would give him a son but all his wives had given births to girls instead. He offers sacrifice daily, asks all medicine men around to help and spends so much money trying to have a son but he does not succeed (6). The search for a son soon leads to a visit to a great priest in another town who prophesied that the king will marry another woman in order to beget a son. Edidem's inability to have a son is a principal theme and becomes the focal point of the story, rather than his masculine decision to update his wives. This also brings up the idea of the female sex as irrelevant and unimportant. Thus, contrasting with the male sex, the female characters represented by the wives epitomises femininity, passivity, docility and the ability to receive, among other passive attributes.

Hence, both Edidem and Nsabong'sbahaviour and actions are driven by traditional and demanding expectations about what it is to be a man, expectations that emphasize

sexual prowess, multiple sexual partnerships, risk-taking, and procreation. Roberts (1996:14) observes that the "concept of phallus is more or less inescapable in discussions of masculinity". More intriguing is Heath's (1989:125) characterization of the centrality of the phallus symbol in conceptions of hegemonic masculinity as the "eternal problem of the phallus". No wonder, both kings experienced different concerns about their sexual potency. Edidem is worried because he could not bear a son, while Nsabong is unable to bear children until he had help. There is no direct link to their sexual organs as the cause of the problem, however, their decisions to marry more wives in order to solve the problem is an attempt to dispel serious doubts about their masculinity. Hence, it is the peril of such expectations and the centrality of the phallus that the readers are exposed to in both narratives.

At this point, it is significant to discuss how wealth also partly reinforces the ideology of masculinity and the tendency for men to use their monetary power to expand their sexual territory and exercise their sexuality and masculinity over women. Traditionally, men are allowed to have many wives; hence, sex is often a toll of domination. A man who cannot marry is ridiculed and so the number of wives a man has enhances his masculinity. This is even more apparent as marrying multiple wives are connected to wealth. Only the rich can afford to have many wives and concubines. In some of the narratives, the men's wealth is not only equated with their masculinity, but also validates the number of wives they have. In *ESS*, in addition to the strength and bravery of the King, "he was also rich, who had fleets of ship on the high seas, oil palm plantations, big yam farms and very many herds of domestic animals" (2). Such status affords him the opportunity to expand his home by marrying four wives. In fact, when he could not bear a son, the king spent so much money trying to produce a son but he did not succeed. He made his chiefs realize that money is not his problem, and he is ready to spend any amount to get himself a son. Similarly, King Nsabong in *TAU* is presented as "a very rich and wealthy king, but not a happy man. Despite the number of wives he had, he had no children. He kept marrying more and more wives but he still did not have children by them" (1). In the texts, the men use their wealth to marry many wives in their bid to have children. Women, then, become a kind of currency that men use to improve their rankings on the masculinesocial scale.

Sexuality as a symbol of masculinity is further expressed through gender dichotomy in *FFB*. In traditional Africa society, it is through sexuality of both genders that the

society prescribes gender behaviours and attributes. As a result, male children are preferred to female children and this gender dichotomy is still prevalent in many societies. In *FFB*, the author captures this attitude through the story of Folake, a fourteen year old girl who is being forced into marriage. The narrative exposes the reader to the dichotomy that prevails in most homes through the exploration of women's sexuality as a form of currency. Central to masculine discourse in this narrative is Kassidi, a rich young man, who wants to marry Folake. Exploiting MrBabaji's unpleasant situation, Kassidi promises to help the Babaji's family, but on condition that Folake becomes his wife. Stuck ineconomic crisis and limited job prospects for his wife and daughters, Mr. Babaji agrees with Kassidi without considering the future of his daughter who is still fourteen years and in primary school. Mrs. Babaji is not too happy about his decision and reacts:

> My husband, don't let us be selfish. We should also think of what is good for our daughter. As for starving, we won't starve. I will work harder and so will Folake. Kacha will also do her best. It is a pity that my sons just idle away their time wrestling and yet you men say that only sons can save you. (6)

Folake is forced into this ill-fated condition as a result of the socio-economic factors which, in part, are the consequences of a traditional gender order that favours men over women. Her brothers are allowed to finish school, while she is being considered for marriage as a primary school pupil. In fact, Folake's father has no qualms in exchanging his fourteen year old daughter for financial gains. He points out; "Kassidi is a very rich young man and I don't want Folake to miss her luck…Folake is very beautiful and has good manners and no man will like to lose her" (6). Mr. Babaji only recognizes his daughter's sexuality as a bargaining chip for financial freedom. In particular, he sees her as a sexual object as well as static and pliant object of desire. Hence, Folake finds herself in a patriarchal environment, where a woman's profession hinges on the profit that her sexuality can bring. In this way, women are not only subjugated and implicitly encouraged to embrace the patriarchal sexual structure, but their own sexuality is not considered as independent, but shaped predominantly by masculine displays of heterosexuality.The importance, value and function of their sexuality lie in demonstrating and applauding the heterosexuality of men. The story is told in a way that praises the ability of the man to perform sexually and show women his masculinity. This story is an illustration of dominant discursive orientations that

centralise masculinity and its performance as normal, norm and vital. It should be noted that though women's sexuality is receiving positive intervention, such agency does not appear as an empowering discourse for women in the narrative. Instead, the narrative communicates to the readers the idea that women exist mainly as sexual entities through which men realize their hegemonic masculine personality.

4.4.3. Animals as Symbols of Hegemonic Masculinity

In some of the narratives, man is coded as animal/beast to symbolise hegemonic masculine attributes. They also appear in forms of obstacles men have to conquer. However, in both circumstances, man and the animal cannot be separated into discernible categories: they overlap. Freud (1917) argues that man is not a being different from animals or superior to them; he is himself of animal descent, being more closely related to some species and more distantly to others. This way, men's attributes are not only related to animals, they share parallel attributes with animals.

The most obvious representation of animals as symbols of masculinity in the narratives is the idea of linking animals to the male characters' actions and behaviours. In *ESS*, Edidem is referred to as "the tortoise shell which cannot be harmed by the venom of a viper" (10) and "the great lion that reigns in Eburutu" (12). Characteristic traits of lions are domineering, strong, aggressive, and conquering. The conquering traits, especially, match Edidem's character, for it can be detected in his array of wives, children and business. In *TCE*, Dimgba and Mbonu's wrestling match is likened to "two elephants…fight for supremacy" (5). The king also describes the village of Echidime as "a village of great warriors and wrestlers…who are like the eagles" (16). In *FFB*, Folake's four brothers eat "like wolves" (2) but didn't contribute anything to the family. An interesting interpenetration between the animal and human occurs later in the narrative in the scene in which the brothers engage in a fight with the cult to save their sister. In the scene, the brothers "fight like tigers" (32), revealing the blurring between masculinity and animalism. In the narrative, the brothers display brutal and wild bahaviour of animals: they eat like one, fight like one and act like one. In all contexts, animals such as the tortoise, lion, elephant, eagle, wolf, and tiger epitomise power, control, strength and authority in both their predatory and physical presence in the animal kingdom. These animals are erratic and seem to have spells of violent rage directed at whomever or whatever is unlucky enough to

find itself in their paths. For instance, the lion symbolises strength, courage and leadership. Its supreme power, strength and controlling presence have made it almost equivalent to a king across many cultures, warranting praise and worship. Such is the symbol accorded Edidem as "the great lion that reigns in Eburutu" (12). However, in *TCE*, when Nwadibia, a man known for strange metaphysical powers, challenges Dimgba, he replied his challenge by saying; "the lion does not play with the warthog" (32). This does not undermine the power of the lion in anyway, but demonstrates men's unending quest for supremacy among themselves in the society. Dipio (2010:95) avers:

> There are variations of masculinity that exist alongside hegemonic masculinity and at times, challenge it. In order to sustain itself, hegemonic masculinity is constantly on the 'look out' for threats against the status quo-and adjust the balance of power to keep situations under control.

Hence, the warthog symbolises the need for Dimgba to reassert himself against similar hegemonic archetype.

In the narratives, animals also symbolise the binary opposition of the man/animal that falls under the larger opposition of man/evil. The binary is an indication of the constant battle and threats that constantly lurks around the social authority of men in the society. In *CLL*, "a deadly looking dog" is unleashed on Chima and Obinna (57). In *ESS*, Edidem is praised as "the great king that can humble a leopard" (9), "the arrow that blinds the eye of the lion", "the big sword that cuts through the side of the elephant", "the one who went to swim in the sea and there you caught a live crocodile with your bare hands", and "the thunder that frightens all the animals in the forest" (10). There is an interesting reversal of attributes here. Instead, the author uses metaphors of "arrow", "big sword", and "thunder" against animals to explain man's ability as a conqueror. Animals, in this context, become the enemies rather than hegemonic archetypes. Edidem is associated with these war metaphors, and their ability to subdue the animals further alludes to his intense and hegemonic attributes as a king. This can be related to his description in the beginning of the narrative:

> He was very famous and was a great warrior whose fame was well known all around Eburutu. Not only was he brave at war, people also knew him as the young handsome ruler who had fought in many battles and had

> conquered all the towns and villages close to his kingdom (1)

Edidem's victories in battles, therefore, juxtapose the allusions of conquering animals. Animals, as a symbol of binary opposition between man and threats, is further demonstrated in *TAAU*. After all efforts to embarrass his son failed, the king sent Ete Ekpe, the lion to murder Akpan. Ete Eke, known to kill people at the king's command, is promised a handsome reward if he could kill Akpan. Instead, Akpan kills the lion in a brave fight. The fact that Akpan's meek masculinity so effortlessly changes indicates the uneasy closeness between animalistic tendency and Akpan's violent action.

4.4.4 Symbolism and the Gendered System of Agriculture

In the narratives, African agricultural system is presented in ways whereby certain foods support sex-typed gender roles. Crops such as yam serve to emphases the strength and status of men in the society, and it is assumed that a male who can feed his family on yams is a genuine man. On the other hand, crops such as cocoyam, cassava and vegetables are viewed as less important because they are ascribed to women. This reinforces the idea that to be manly is to be supreme and that women are less valuable in comparison.

Particularly, yam is the Ibo's king of crops and the amount of yams that a man can produce determines his worth. This is evidenced in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* where yams are important because they signify masculinity and wealth to the Umuofia clan. Yams are so significant to the Umuofia people that their everyday lives and festivities are planned around this important crop. Yam farming is a venture undertaken by only the men of the Umuofia clan because it demands hard work and constant attention. When Okonkwo speaks about his father, he states that his father was never really interested in agriculture. Ultimately it led to his poverty, as well as his inability to provide for his family, thereby generating debts for him. This suggests that that yams symbolize masculinity because Unoka, according to Okonkwo, was a failure, and not growing yams is the main cause of his failure. At the other hand, Okonkwo devotes his life to being this sort of macho man. He is the full opposite of his father and the way he does it is by farming and including his sons in it too. Achebe (1996:24) in the text accounts:

> Inwardly Okonkwo knew that the boys were still too young to understand fully the difficult art of preparing seed-yams. But he thought that one could not begin too early. Yam stood for manliness, and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed.

This is the kind of significance that is attached to yam as a symbol of masculinity in some of the narratives. Though the topic of yam is not the focus of any of the narratives, however, yam operates at a significant level in some of the narratives. First, yam symbolises wealth, and this is evidenced in the character of two kings in parts of the narratives. In *EES*, Ededem is described as "rich, who had fleets of ship on the high seas, oil palm plantations, big yam farms and very many herds of domestic animals" (2). Similarly, Nsabong in *TAAU* is also represented as "a very rich and wealthy king" who "plants yam in his farm" (1). In both circumstances, yam do not only symbolise their status as wealthy men, but it also provides them with luxury to marry more wives.

Yam also symbolises hard work and man's image as a provider. In *CLL*, Chima's father is not rich but he is hard working. In the text, Chima's father "was a shoemaker but that did not stop him from cultivating his farm. In fact, he had the best yam barn in their village" (25). Mr. Chinazo is poor and could hardly feed in a day, but he knows that yam is vital to his success as a man in life despite being a shoemaker. The relationship between yam and hard work conveyed here is also expressed in *Things Fall Apart* through a conversation between Nwakibie and Okonkwo:

> I know what it is to ask a man to trust anther with his yams, especially these days when young men are afraid of hard work. I am not afraid of work…I began to fend for myself at an age when most people still suck at their mothers' breasts. If you give me some yam seeds I shall not fail you" (Achebe, 2006:15-16).

Okonkwo's words show his masculinity, and Nwakibie is pleased with Okonkwo's enthusiasm and gives him twice of the yam Okonkwo demands. As such, Chima's father just like Okonkwo shows his capability as a hard worker. He shows that the wealth of a man is dependent on his ability to provide all facilities to his family from food, protection, and so on. All in all, Achebe states, "Yam stood for manliness, and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a great man indeed" (Achebe, 2006:23).

Yam is also used to symbolize men's strength. In *MTP*, when the boys go on camping, the author recounts that, "after the boys had sang and danced round the fire, they later sat round the fire and roasted yams and maize". Here, yam becomes a synecdoche for manhood because the boys' association with yam masculinizes them and fortifies their manhood and strength.

The hegemony of yam is further stressed with the dichotomy that is suggested between yam and other food crops. Certain crops such as coco-yam, beans, vegetables and cassava are considered women's crops, while yam is reserved for men. In *CLL,* while Chima's father grows yam, the wife is described as a very diligent woman who "no woman harvested as much cocoyam, cassava and vegetables as she did from her farm" (25). These food crops do not only highlight the lesser importance of women in farming but point out the dichotomy that exists between men and women. Based on the Foucauldian tradition and on the works of Judith Butler, the body can be seen as a product of disciplinary practices, and gender is a part of this, accomplished by markings impressed on the body. Masculinity and femininity modelin a given society leave an imprint on the body by food-related behaviour. Not only do they influence their shape and size, they also have far-reaching implications for health, general physical condition, well-being, and mortality. To this end, Adams (2010:60) argues that vegetable;

> represents the least desirable characteristics: suggesting or like as vegetable, as in passivity or dullness of existence, monotonous, inactive…to vegetate is lead a passive existence; just as to be feminine is to lead a passive existence. Once vegetables are viewed as women's food, then by association they become viewed as "feminine" passive.

Adams further points out that "vegetables are thought to have a tranquilizing, dulling, numbing effect on people, so a man cannot possibly get strength from them…to eat vegetable is to become a vegetable, and by extension, to become womanlike" (61). Hence, men's need to distance themselves from women's food as expressed in the narratives has been institutionalized in sexist attitudes toward women's crops and its usage to express criticism, weakness and disparagement. This is highlighted in *ESS* , where Edikang-Ikong soup becomes both symbols of women's limited role, as well as their survival in the males' world. In the narrative, when the king sent his chiefs to find a solution to his inability to produce a baby boy, the priest prophesies that the

king must look for a slave girl who will prepare an Edikang-Ikong soup for him. In effect, the soup will accelerate the birth of the baby boy. When the prophesy comes to pass, the importance of cooking is brought to the fore. For instance Chief Obasi's daughters who earlier in the story were hostile to Ifiok leant that "they should learn how to cook because a good cook should make a god wife" (77). In fact, the author reveals;

> Queen IfiokAkabom made a law that all girls in Eburutu should be taught cooking and good housekeeping. She also trained women in the palace who in turn trained women in the palace who in turn trained the young girls. Mothers were made conscious of their responsibility to breed good girls, who would in turn be good wives and mothers (78).

This is an indication of the limited roles attached to the female sex in the society and the realization of women of such limitations. The text only equips the girl-child with skills that will help her cope with marital life. This is an example of how children's literature nurture and socialize children based on their sexes, which also limits them only to ascribed role and expectations.

In conclusion, an examination of the construction of hegemonic masculinity through social symbols such as sexuality, animal and food reveals that men are ascribed roles and traits that systematically marginalise, and oppress in the society. It is discovered that most of the symbols discussed and the traits they exhibit cannot be easily separated from its social and historical contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the summary of the research findings and the primary conclusions drawn from the findings. Recommendations and directions for future research are suggested.

The purpose of the study was to examine the constructions of hegemonic masculinity in selected narratives for children in Nigeria. Six narratives for children of ages 8 to 12, published in Nigeria between 2003 and 2016 were subjected to critical and textual analysis using Carl Jung's Archetypal Criticism. All the narratives selected were evaluated in terms of the dominant instances of masculinity put forward in them, while the age bracket considered reflected the stage where children are still learning gender roles, expectations and differences according to the norms of the society. The study examined the constructions of hegemonic masculinity through oral traditions, images, and symbols to highlight the representation of male dominance and gender inequality in the narratives. Also, the study investigated how the narratives express different assumptions and notions of hegemonic masculinity.

The findings from the analyses of oral traditions in the narratives established oral traditions as part of the broader mechanism that perpetuates male dominance in the narratives. Oral traditions were seen as archetypes, representing manly gender behaviours, roles, and attitudes that are embedded in the collective unconscious of Nigerians. Oral traditions were found to be didactic, yet sexist in representation. The study discovered that various elements of oral traditions such aspraise names and chants, wrestling festivals, proverbs, and drums were unconsciously employed by the authors to perpetuate male dominance, female subjugation and gender inequality. For instance, masculinity was constructed through praise poetry in *ESS* where the author adopted an allusive style, with references to animals and natural phenomenon to heighten the masculinity of King Edidem. The significance of praise poetry to the construction of masculinity was equally accentuated in *TCE* where the author also used allusions and metaphors as elements of panegyric to highlight the attributes of

traditional wrestlers such as muscles, endurance, strength, and bravery in traditional Igbo society. The poetry also emphasized personal achievements in wars and hunting as important attributes of masculinity in traditional African society.

The dramatic genre of war dance was also emphasized in *FFB* as a performative expression of masculinity. The genre focused on the physical display of strength through stamping of feet, tying of red ropes around the heads, waist, and arms and dancing around a circle. This performance indicated excitement, unity, and motivation to go to war in the narrative. The war song that accompanied the dance also became a necessary ingredient in the performance of masculinity in the narrative. Finally, the dramatic genre of war dance and song also highlighted the structure of gender system in traditional African society by depicting active male warriors and docile female singers.

Hegemonic masculinity was also constructed in three of the narratives through the dramatic art of wrestling. In *FFB* and *TAAU*, wrestling was employed to enhance the physical attributes of the male characters. However, wrestling in *TCE* was mirrored as an indication of the contributions of the Igbos to the rich narrative of African martial art, known as *Mgba*. The author adapted the art of *Mgba* to reinforce wrestling as essential to the masculinity of men in life and how victories in rings can distinguish a man in the society, elevate him to the highest leadership position and earn him the most beautiful girl in the society.

Lastly, drum as a dramatic art was also employed in the narratives to underscore the importance of drum in the construction of hegemonic masculinity, especially during wrestling festivals. It was discovered that apart from the didactic and entertaining function of drum in the society, it was employed in *TCE* as an evocation of emotions. The vicious sound of drums was used to trigger fire and desire in the male characters to fight with greater strength. Drum was also employed as an instrument of power only associated with men during wrestling festivals in the narrative. The narrative demonstrated how gender dichotomy is reinforced through drumming in the context of wrestling whereby drummers are marked as masculine and dancers as feminine.

As observed, constructions of hegemonic masculinity through oral traditions in the narratives presented a glorified image of men and assign them a more elevated social position. They reinforced strength, toughness, honour, protection, respect, the

capacity for revenge or retaliation and the projection of self-pride as acceptable and embraced values of masculinity in the narratives. On the other hand, they associated femininity with meekness, weakness, indignity, powerlessness and constantly in need of protection. Oral traditions continue to play a significant role in terms of social role and relationship in Africa. However, as suggested in the narratives, some of them appeared in the narratives as archetypes, expressing manly values and behaviours, which are deeply seeded in the collective unconscious of many Africans. This implies that such notions of masculinity that emerged from the oral traditions provide vicarious pleasure for the male readers who consider them as acceptable, norms and value.

In essence, this study deviated from the standpoint of many studies that have focused on the moral and entertaining function of oral tradition in children's literature in Nigeria by establishing a connection between oral traditions and hegemonic masculinity in children's literature.

Hegemonic masculinity was also constructed in the narratives through images. The analyses of the images of hegemonic masculinity were captured under the following: boyhood, manhood, absent fatherhood and father-figure, and were analysed through the following archetypes identified by Jung: hero archetype, father archetype, and father-figure archetype.

The study discovered that the boyhood image, analysed through the hero archetype, expressed a range of assumptions about boys in the narratives.First, the narratives present a glorified image of the baby boy, and assigns him a more elevated position than that of the girl. In the narrative, male child preference has implications for the status and health of women due to prevailing cultural norms that place superior emphasis on the male child, in all aspects of the socio-cultural life. The narratives also portray gender power difference through socialization and policing. Boys in *MTP, CLL, TAAU, and FFB* were portrayed as brave and adventurous. Evidence from these narratives shows that boys were not only encouraged to be brave but were also forced to suppress their emotions and inner fears in an attempt to prove their masculinity. For example, in *CLL*, Chima is aware that in order to authenticate his masculinity,he must hide his fears about going on adventures with the boys and also hide the secret about his inability to paddle a canoe. Similarly, Akpan in *TAAU* and the four brothers in

FFB were socialized into the world of boyhood and were forced to exhibit traits of hegemonic masculinity before they were welcomed into manhood. This archetypal image showed bravery and adventure as exclusive traits to becoming men; suggesting that boys must be brave, display strong mental attitude among their peers, take risk even in the sight of danger and must be ready stay away from perceived feminine attributes. This image suggested that boys are only limited to masculine portrayals, representing the stereotypical image of males of being independent and tough while any indication of weakness is directly linked to femininity. By implication, young male readers have the potential to identify with these male characters that are not only expressing dominance, as they traditionally have, but encouraged not to display fears, emotions, and sensitivity. This representation, therefore, does not only promote male dominance and female subjugation, but such image is also stereotypically unhealthy and dangerous for male readers in the society.

The image of manhood was explicitly represented in the narratives through the father archetype. The analysis of this archetypal image indicated that men within the context of marriage exhibit traits of hegemonic masculinity. The study revealed that men as husbands were portrayed as having the stereotypical male traits of aggression, oppression, and, therefore, the source of their wives' unhappiness. In *FFB* and *TAAU*, the authors manipulated patriarchy to justify these traits as socially expected. While the men in the narratives generally adhere to traditional ideas about masculinity, there are instances of masculine uncertainties. In cases of masculine confusion, men renegotiate exposure to patriarchal hegemony by employing a variety of strategies within very limited context.Young male readers may internalize these images of oppressive and insensitive males and also develop expectations related to masculinity and normative male bahaviour. Put simply, boys will grow up thinking boys and men who show such traits and behaviours are masculine.

Men, especially fathers were also portrayed as family men but absent, emotionally detached, insensitive to the feelings of their children and are only interested in self-expression and personal growth. Mr. Babaji, King Nsabong and King Edidem are illustrative of such men in *FFB, TAAU,* and *ESS* respectively. The solitary function of the father is also entrenched in *MTP* where the father is quiet throughout the narrative, despite his son being lost for days. In addition, one of the narratives: *TCE* had no father character, while the only positive representation of father is found in *CLL*. This

is an evidence of the limited roles of fathers in children's literature in Nigeria. The study, however, discovered that despite these negative images, fathers were given social importance while mothers were neglected. This image highlighted the belief that a man is a man despite his drawbacks (Ndungo, 1998).

The father-figure image presented through the archetypal father figure was depicted by male role models in the narratives. Father-figures in *MTP* and *CLL* were portrayed as strong male characters who conveyed masculine standards for boys through teasing and masculine testing. The intersection between masculinity and father-figures was further emphasised in *TCE* through the discourse of symbolic father-figures. As observed, symbolic father-figures are men who operate within a larger system in a society. They are powerful figures whose legitimacy extends over a recognizable facet of the society. As played by a King, he is portrayed as a king, and as a role model to young wrestlers in the narrative. The narratives highlighted; that boys' display of masculine behaviours, in the presence of the father-figures, and proving to be less feminine, are characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. A motivating factor contributing to boy's hegemonic behaviour in the narratives is that boys feel obligated to showtheir worth and display their masculinity to the father-figures. A good example is seen in *CLL* where Chima initially rejected the ideals of hegemonic masculinity in the narrative. He helped his parents at home and doesn't get involved in boyish activities. However, pressure from his friends made him abandon his initial tender masculinity and turn to the mainstream hegemonic masculinity. In an attempt to avoid being ridiculed as a weakling, Chima went out with his male friends to several adventures where he was exposed to ideas of hegemonic masculinity.

As observed, hegemonic masculinity was also constructed in the narratives through symbols. The study identified symbols such as the male body, sexuality, animals, food and other concrete and abstract objects as representations of male dominance, female subjugation and gender inequality in the narratives.

The male body was found to be an important component of masculinity in the narratives. The portrayals of the male characters' body reinforced the traditional traits of masculinity in many Africa societies. The male body was discovered to symbolise male strength in *TCE*, *MTP,* and *FFB*. These narratives indicated that strong body, big arms and big muscles with the ability to fight is the tripod on which one of men's

success rests. For instance, Dimgba and Mbonu's shuffling feet, clamped legs, glistening backs and sweating faces in *TCE* were accented to symbolise power, strength, and aggressiveness that reflect and perpetuate the physicality of men in the society.In addition, the author also accented men's body to portray them as sexually attractive in *TCE* and *FFB*. As observed, men's body also has an erotic significance that makes them sexually desirable to women. For instance, women were seen appreciating big arms and muscle as traits of a perfect man. This is an indication that women also concurred with the body attributes associated with men. Body Injuries and scars were also heightened in *MTP* as visual signifier to convey men's excessive power and toughness. In the narrative, Murphy's scars during the adventure and his acceptance of the scars depicted the male body as an external reflection of masculine strength and endurance.

In conclusion, male body as symbols of hegemonic masculinity in the narratives suggests that a character's identity is defined almost exclusively by gender. Details about the look, appearance and body structure are intertwined with the ways men act out or perform their gendered identity and this, in turn, determine how they are perceived by others.

Sexuality as an important indicator of hegemonic masculinity in the narratives was found to be represented through the phallus. The phallus, as a symbol of masculinity and men's authority, was highly stressed in *ESS* and *TAAU* to symbolise the virile nature of men, through the numbers of wives and children. It played a role in reinforcing the social worth of the men and their sexual prowess. The identity of men and women in polygamy as dictator and subordinate respectively was also stressed in the narratives.

Phallus as a symbol of masculinity also defined male's fertility in the narratives. It highlighted Africa's emphasis on children as well as the preference for male children. In *EES*, the king's sexual potency was basically measured by his ability to produce a boy who will continue his lineage while *TAAU* also emphasized on man's ability to produce children as a measurement for masculinity. Men's bahaviour and actions in the narratives were driven by traditional and demanding expectations about what it is to be a man, expectations that emphasize sexual prowess, multiple sexual partnerships, risk-taking, and procreation. Hence, it is the peril of such expectations

and the centrality of the phallus that the male readers were exposed to in both narratives.

Sexuality as a symbol of masculinity was further expressed to highlight gender dichotomy in *FFB*. The male characters were prescribed achievement, wealth, and popularity while women's sexuality was used to symbolize stagnant and pliant objects of desire. In the study,it is discovered women's sexuality lies in serving to demonstrate and applaud heterosexuality among males.

Animal symbolism appeared in almost all the narratives to symbolise the male characters' actions and behaviours. As observed, animals such as the tortoise, lion, elephant, eagle, wolf, and tiger epitomise masculinity in the animal kingdom, symbolising strength and power in both their physical and predatory presence.

African agricultural system was also employed to symbolize sex-typed gender roles in the narratives. Crops such as yam emphasised the strength and financial status of men in *CLL, ESS, TAAU*, and *MTP*. It was discovered that the topic of yam is not the focus of any of the narratives, however, yam operated at a significant level in them. On the other hand, crops such as cocoyam, cassava, and vegetables are viewed as less important and ascribed to women in *CLL* and *ESS*. This reinforced the idea that to be manly is to be supreme and that women are less valuable in comparison.

In essence, an examination of the construction of hegemonic masculinity through social symbols such as sexuality, animal and agricultural system revealed that men are ascribed roles and traits that systematically not only heightened their masculinity but also marginalise, and oppress women in the narratives. It is discovered that most of the symbols discussed and the traits they exhibited cannot be easily separated from its social and historical contexts.

This research has attempted to shed light on the children's narrative constructions of masculinity in Nigeria. Based on the results of this study, it is noted that hegemonic masculinity is constructed through oral traditions, images and symbols in the selected narratives. These social constructs promote male dominance, female subjugation, and gender inequality. This shows the high level of hegemonic masculinity in the narratives and as such established that Nigerian prose narrative for children is replete with masculine ideologies and messages which could impose rigid traits of masculinity on young male readers, as well as negatively influence their gender

relations in the society. However, the authors examined in this study, to construct their characters, draw from a pool of experience. The male portrait of the writers derives from their observations of people in their respective circles and shares the views of the writers on male behaviours at the same time.It also reveals, however, that writers do not seem to be making strides towards more correct and meaningful depictions of male characters in Nigerian children's literature.

It is important to note that despite some limitations, this research can be seen as a valuable starting point for further inquiry into the portrayal of masculinity in Nigerian children's literature. Consequently, the study can support and guide future research into how children perceive gender roles, attitudes and stereotypes. One of the limitations is that this study focused on narratives, specifically written for children of ages 8 to 12 in Nigeria. That is, the narratives in the sample are only meant for the consumption of children in that age bracket. Future research would benefit from an analysis of narratives meant for pre-teen. These "first readers" are also exposed to gender stereotypes that have the potential to shape their perspectives at an early age.

Another limiting factor was the fact that the study did not do a comparative analysis of masculinity from different cultural and ethnic groups in Nigeria. Although Nigeria has three major ethnic groups, the selected narratives are reflections of general traits of masculinity in Nigeria and not ones peculiar to different ethnic groups. However, the dearth of literature in northern Nigeria influenced our decision not to embark on a comparative analysis. A comparative study of the representation of masculinity in the nearer future would be better.

Reader response approach, an analytical approach that focuses on how readers make sense out of texts, should also be used for further study. This can be done through the selection of narratives and working with a group of boys who would read the narratives. Such research will focus on the reactions of boys to the narratives and what sense do they make of the ideological content. It will also bring to the fore how boys' experience of the larger hegemonic masculinity discourse in popular culture affect their interaction with the narratives. Such a study would have relevance for any kind of educational literary experience, particularly those fueled by the notion that reading a specific text may have some effect on life choices and the importance of specific images.

Therefore, since Nigeria is taking steps towards building a society that respects each of its people, it is important to recognize the potential of children's literature in providing positive role models, particularly for young boys. Nevertheless, the current state of children's literature in Nigeria and, more generally, Africa, remains critically neglected. Given the fundamental role of gender in the socialization and formation of individual and national identity, myths and negative or indifferent attitudes concerning children's literature remain. This is illustrated by the abysmal response to the call for papers for the new edition of *African Literature Today* dedicated to children's literature and storytelling in Africa (Stephanie and Tamara, 2006). It is important to state that the production of children's literature in Nigeria is gradually picking up after years of abandonment and exciting books are currently being written by prominent writers such as AkachiEzeigbo, OlajireOlaniran, Ifeoma Onyefulu, and NnediOkorafor. Yet, this important development is going relatively unnoticed by critics and academics.The lack of interest in this critical genre must therefore be made clear not only to recognize the important role children's literature plays in the formulation of individual, social and national identities, but also to further promote more gender-based children's literature.

Therefore, this study has been able to expand previous work in this field and provide new insights into the study of gender equality in children's literature in Africa. This research adds to the current literature by exploring gender issues not previously explored and showing that male domination, female subjugation and gender inequality are still reflected in Nigerian children's literature. In addition, the research has been able to highlight the pontential of children's literature for influencing the socialization process of boys and men in the society.

The study has also identified the importance of men studies as germane to the issues of men crisis and gender stereotypes often neglected in the study of children's literature in Nigeria. It is important to note that most studies on gender issues in children's literature have been predominantly about female due to the idea that women are the only victims of patriarchy. Hence, this study highlighted the possibility of the male gender through various images as also a victim of stereotypes. It is also significant to point out that although the writers studied in this study often depict and accept the bahaviour of men and boys as norms, they do not recognize that men themselves are victims of certain gender stereotypes that need to be liberated from

certain masculine expectations within society. In Ratele (2008), he argues that while we acknowledge the danger of patriarchy in the lives of women and girls, we must equally be critical on how patriarchal norms generate damaging feelings among men and boys. This way, there will be a shift of research focus from solely focusing on men as the enemy to locating the problems that also dehumanize men within the broader socio-cultural context. In addition, both men and women need to mutually help each other, as men and women need to understand that existing social structures need to be modified if Africans are ever to experience the fullness of their humanity.

Finally, this study has been able to break fresh grounds, and justify the need to reconstruct what it means to be masculine in children's literature in modern Nigeria society and make scholars, parents, and teachers realise that traits of hegemonic masculinity, as perceived in Nigeria, are not fixed and natural.

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