

## **Psychological Implication on Characters of a Nation in Crises in Frank Ogbeche's Harvest of Corruption**

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**Abstract:** African literature is always chained to the experiences of the people of the continent. Existing researches have tried to validate the point that youths have borne the weight of Nigeria's failed leadership and political marginalization since independence which has led them into acts of violence and aggression like armed robbery, kidnapping, rape and even hooliganism. This essay examines youth violence especially in the Nigerian society on self, as a result of the state of the society as reflected in Frank Ogbeche's *Harvest of Corruption* where characters whose duty is to make laws, interpret and enforce them are presented as agents of breaching the law, thereby leading innocent and gullible characters to follow their warped path which ultimately violates their moralistic background and leads to their irritable violence which is motivated by frustration. The paper concludes that self-harm is a form of violence which is brought about by the socio-economic context in which the major character finds herself.

**Keywords:** Self-harm Violence, Lawlessness, Corruption, Crime.

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### **1. Introduction**

Young people all over the world are vital, eligible and important segments of the society in which they live. They make and sometimes mar the growth of their society. They are generally referred to as youth's and are termed pillars of any nation and leaders of tomorrow. Youths are democratic, agile and full of life. On most occasions, they are sometimes prone to provocation when their gentility is taken for cowardice. A disciplined, focused and law abiding youth can create a bright future for any nation; but a lawless, indulgent and violent youth is a great threat to a nation and security threat to the society. Most Niger Delta set plays in Nigeria have in most recent times focused on the Niger Delta oil crisis and youth militancy. In framing their themes around the conflict of state mismanagement and local youth resistance these narratives have become trend setting platforms which sensitize the public and also edify youth aggression and violence.

On this note, Stella (2008) avers that "...youths are bricks of a society. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development, sociological and political attainments. In their dreams and hopes, a nation gets her motivation on their energies, she builds her vitality and purpose, and because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of a nation is assured. This statement is acknowledgeable because youths are bedrock of any nation. They build and can destroy a nation. As a result of these traits delineated by Stella, it is proven that youths should be adequately recognized and provided for. Their future ought to be adequately protected as the fate

of good development lies in their hands. Any negative influence against them would aggravate them to restiveness which is emphasized through violence (Mark, 2015).

Youth restiveness is therefore a sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths. It is marked by violence and disruption of lawful activities (Elegbeleye, 2015). This statement is tenable owing to the fact that violence championed by youths disrupts lawful activities such as sanity and order. On a broader note, youth restiveness is a sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce a desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths. It is also a combination of any action or conduct that constitutes unwholesome and socially unacceptable activities engaged in by the youths in any community (Peter, 2012). This violence by youth's ranges from - terrorism, incessant killings, politically motivated assassinations, lethal car bombings, armed robbery, child abuse, drug abuse and other social vices (Bartolotta, 2011).

In the Nigerian situation, it is difficult to trace the historical development of youth restiveness if not referring to development of youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, the Movement of the Sovereign States of Biafra in the South East, and other heinous activities carried out by youths in our tertiary institutions. The factors that propel the youths in Nigeria to go into restiveness are many. Emphatically, youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region became most visible in the early 1960s over tensions between foreign oil corporations and a number of Niger Delta minority ethnic groups who felt they were being exploited. This exploitation ranges from - the increase of marginalization, environmental degradation and the failure of the state to ameliorate the suffering of the people. These notions have forced the inhabitants of the region specifically the youths to the edge. These amongst other issues have made the youths to become very hostile and restless therefore creating an atmosphere of fear, chaos and tension over the years. Example of such is the rebel group formed by Isaac Jaspa Boro (1966), which was for the declaration of the Niger Delta Republic from the country. Another group according to Mark (2015), was the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) which was a non-violent group founded by the foremost human right activist, Ken Saro Wiwa in 1990. These and other reasons prompted the present agitation of the groups which are diversified in nature; they are also given the opportunity to self-expression, manifesting in the form of violence. Their activities include illegal oil bunkering, pipe line bombing, political assassination, massive killings, rape, kidnapping, and so many others. This is caused as a result of rapid rate of corruption, nepotism, lack of development and lack of employment opportunity. These acts are largely responsible for the backwardness of the country, as they have brought poverty, unemployment, pain, death, and suffering amongst the people in the region (Ifeanyi, 2005).

In the Northern part of the country, issues of youth restiveness are always visible as youths are continually agitating as a result of religious coalition of interest. The violence between the Christians and the Muslims that led to the loss of lives and properties began in 1953. It was also visible in the year 1999, 2000 and 2001(Yusuf, 2017). The most severe was that of the Boko Haram insurgency in the North Eastern Part of Nigeria which was believed to have been founded in the year 2002 by Muhammad Yusuf. This terrorist sect made up of youth has of recent created so many tensions and has contributed to the suffering in the Northern region of the country (Sani, 2015). Youth restiveness in the East can also be traced from the period of the Biafra Nigeria Civil war which started in May 30, 1967, and ended in January 15, 1970. Sani on the history of youth restiveness in the South East stated that "...this struggle by some Igbo people to secede from Nigeria started when on May, 1967, late Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, a military officer and politician announced a breakaway of the Eastern Region under the new name Republic of Biafra..." The war was generated as a result of some fundamental issues ranging from marginalization, favouritism, divide and rule, and nepotism to mention but a few. The aftermath of this war brought so many tensions as the issues that prompted the war are yet to be rectified. This has also prompted the formation of the Movement for the Sovereign States of Biafra. The body is seen as a non-violent group, but some uncultured youths amongst them see it as an avenue for agitation, violence and other means of social vices.

In the Western part of Nigeria for instance, a restive group with the name Odua People Congress (OPC) was also terrorizing the region. The group was founded in the year 2000 and stopped existence in the year 2013. It lasted for only thirteen years. The group members were believed like the MASSOB group to be a non-violence

group, since they do not carry attacks like bombing and kidnapping. Ben quoted the statement by Gani Adams, that "... the factional leader of the Oodua People's Congress, Gani Adams, has said that the group is a legitimate organization recognized by the United Nations. We are not a terrorist organization. We don't do kidnapping, we don't bomb government installations, and we are a self-determination group..." Youth restiveness in Nigeria today is more effective than those of the past due to constant increase in technological advancement, effective communication medium, extensive worldwide connection and the availability of smaller size weapons. Most of these terrorism activities are carried out by extremists who are negatively influenced by what they believe in.

This paper examines disappointment in the novel of Ogbeche's play *Harvest of Corruption* as responses to psychological reactions to outcomes that do not match up with expectations of the individual. Because of its close link with hope, desire, and promise we expect disappointment to be emotion caused by a situation which is appraised as an absence of a positive outcome. Disappointment could be seen as not getting what one wants or getting what one does not want and it could be also absence of a positive outcome or the presence of a negative outcome. Disappointment is traced to the Middle English by way of the old French word disappointer. Its use in the sense of general frustration goes back to the late fifteenth century, and it first appeared recorded in English as an emotional state of dejection in the middle eighteenth century. Disappointment is an emotional and psychological experience and can have the same emotional effects with such powerful emotions such as love, hate, fear, sadness, grief, anger and jealousy. Disappointment is a psychological stress. Freud finds ways for an analyst to help a patient uncover the painful or threatening events that have been repressed in the unconscious to make them inaccessible to the conscious mind. Sigmund Freud (1856-1938) advanced his startling theories about the working of the human psyche to understand why people act as they do. Efforts to explain the growth, development and structure of the human personality and all such questions and theories are psychological. The Freudian theory has provided a framework for making more perceptive characteristic analyses. Freud manages to find convincing evidence that most of our actions are motivated by psychological forces over which we have very limited control Guerin (27). One of Freud's most important contributions to the study of the psyche are his theory of repression: the unconscious mind is repository of repressed desires, feelings, memories, wishes and instructed drives; many of which have to do with sexuality and violence. They may also appear in other disguised forms, like in language (sometimes called the Freudian slips), in creative art and in neurotic behaviour.(psychological outburst). In view of the fact that Freud's theory deals with perception, human psyche and emotions, it is used as a framework for this paper which deals with disappointment as emotion of perception, human psyche and it is elicited out of one's failure of achieving his aims or objectives. It is based on the premise that our actions are the result of forces we do not recognize and therefore cannot control. There are many emotions like grief, love, hate, sadness, anger etc. But this paper is on emotional disappointment. In considering the responses of disappointed protagonist in African novels particularly the novels of Tsi Tsi Damgarembaa, Chiemenam, Ezeigbo, Shimmar Chinodya and the Biafrans story in Chinua Achebe's "Girls at War" we see the psychological trauma assigned to them by the disappointments they pass through. Bell (1985) defines disappointment as, "a psychological reaction to an outcome that does not match up against expectations and is typically experienced in response to unexpected negative event that is caused by uncontrolled circumstances or by another person (85). It makes people reluctant to take subsequent decision. Levine (1996) states that Sadness is associated with the belief that goal cannot be reinstated. Regret is considered as related to choice and personal responsibility and it is an experience when realizing or imagining that our present situation would have been better. Regret focuses on the foregone action and increases as a function of personal responsibility. Anger has been included as an emotion that can be elicited by restraint, frustration, and stupid actions, which are aspects entailed in forced choice negative outcome, and sad choice respectively. Anger towards oneself ensues from the self-attribution of a poor result and involves a self-blame component for having taken the perception of an obstacle preventing the achievement of one's goal and from a sad result. The slide into crime in Mwangi's novel *Kill Me Quick* can be regarded as merely one dimension of a wider and deeper struggle between the exploiters and the exploited. Given the tortuous experiences of the frustrated boys, it is no surprise that very soon they have recourse to criminal acts and become paranoid. One cannot excuse Maina's,

Meja's and their cohorts' sudden slide into crime, but the real issue is to see beyond their acts (which are only symptoms) and identify the circumstances that could have turned once normal and innocent young men into such recidivists. And this is the important message in the novel. Meja makes a similar observation when he ponders on the allegation of murder levelled against his friend, Maina:

More than anything else, Maina had always wanted to remain clean... He would rather eat from dustbins than steal. I knew him well. He would not just kill people. It is not like him to hurt anyone. I don't even understand how we came to be among criminals. I honestly don't know. We never even thought of it when we were together. It is so... so... He shook his head painfully and the tears overflowed. He did not dry them. Why did this have to happen to him? They say it is fate but is it really? Is it? (149).

Among the main characters in the novel, there are portraits of people suffering from deep physical and mental atrophy. They look forward to the simple and unvaried pleasures of their lives. When frustration is intense and the individual's inner controls are poorly developed or temporarily lowered, assaultive or homicidal acts may result. This, perhaps, accounts for Maina's attempted suicide in the novel. After he has had frustrating experience of abortive job seeking, he attempts suicide. In the text, Mwangi shows repeatedly the frustration of energy and ambition plaguing the postcolonial African masses.

Irobi and Yerima's plays periscope youth characters, their moral dilemma and hostile social space. Irobi, in particular highlights his slur of combative social vigilantism through evocative diction, imagery and psychotic characters revealed in stark morbidity. Violence, according not only comprises physical conflict but psychological constructs of hate and idealism. Youths occupy the lowest rung of the social ladder and have the associated psychological problem of low self-esteem that come with the status thus making their actions emotional based and inarticulate at times. This is primarily one of the reasons youths resort to gang activities as a psychological defense measure. Most Nigerian militant interviewed by the Nigerian Television Authority, after they renounced violence and accepted the 2010 federal government amnesty, confessed they had no hopes or dreams for the future.

Papa, Doye's father, in Garrick's *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* (2010) is a fisherman, who loves drinking at the town square. When he becomes drunk, he tells his war stories and then lapses into a curse, in no particular order – against God, the Biafra War, the politicians, the Amayanabo and his chiefs, Imperial Oil, the prostitutes and any other person he can remember. He then returns home, beats his wife, Doye's mother, and anybody he can see at the time. Papa's attitude is borne of a systemic frustration that has ravaged Asiama and denied youths enabling opportunities. The systemic frustration is further explained as follows by Grundy (1971, 8): 'By and large, the major form that systemic frustration takes in Africa is that perceived as denying the attainment of values which the frustrated individual does not possess, but which he has been conditioned to desire and believes that he can attain'.

Papa's frustration soon graduates into dementia when one day he comes back home drunk but does not find anyone to beat. He calls out to all his children and wife, but they are all hiding from him. He brings out his rifle and begins to release volleys of gunfire into the night. The people of Asiama switch off all their lamps and quake behind their doors till Papa eventually runs out of bullets and falls asleep. His wife, Mama, runs away the next day, and that is the last Doye sees of her. When the activities of Imperial Oil result in a spillage destroying plants and animals of the Asiama people, Papa goes to Asiama base camp to shout at the workers at Imperial Oil. They apologize and send some money to all the fishermen through the Amayanabo's palace. Papa's courage as a dogged fighter pays off when the Amayanabo pay him seven hundred naira, while the rest get nothing. The village's head and his chiefs squander the money. It is remarkable to note here that Papa's frustration is an embodiment of a deep-seated failure collectively borne by every unemployed individual adult in Asiama. Eventually Papa loses his first son, Soboye, to a pipeline explosion, where he and others were siphoning oil, a development which makes Doye miss his scholarship exam in Lagos. Papa, despite his delirium, becomes sober

momentarily but is even more devastated afterwards.

## 2. The Failings of Disappointment in *Harvest of Corruption*

The play tells the story of Aloho, a young Nigerian female graduate, who is not only desperately looking for a job but is also ready to sacrifice her long nurtured moral and legal values for same, as a result of disappointment in the Nigerian system. Ogbeche's *Harvest of Corruption* clearly and systematically examines the consequences of the violation of law. He identifies corruption, desperation, despair, stubbornness as psychological implication of youth crises. The playwright paints a picture putting side by side the principles in Aloho's knowledge of God and that of her friend, Ogeyi, who is a foil to her. Aloho laments the seeming inability of the law to save her from her ordeal of joblessness despite her faithfulness to its principles "You Work here? What on earth is happening to me? (She looks upward, hands skyward.) God in heaven what have I done wrong? Why is it that those who try to serve you never get it easy?" (3) Her apostrophic voice suggests her depression and resignation. She muses about the seeming good life her former schoolmate, Ochuole, now enjoys despite her penchant for pranks in their school days:

Imagine how we despised you and your group for living reckless lives. First we thought you won't even make your papers but you came out in a two two class and here, again, you are comfortably working while I am still searching for one. (She addresses God above.) Look at me, where do I belong now? What have I done wrong? Have I not served you faithfully? (Tears dropping from her eyes). (3)

Aloho acknowledges the supremacy of God as the basis of all law. She is very much aware of that exalted portraiture of the natural law and the need for a total allegiance by all human subjects. However, the unfortunate socio-economic circumstances around her continue to question the authority of the natural law in her consciousness. She wonders why a social and moral disputant like Ochuole who is not academically brilliant in their days in school will be so fortunate and comfortable at the expense of good girls like her. This fact challenges her moral will and resolve.

Having endured the psychological trauma of obeying the natural principles and not getting much positive results for too long, Aloho makes a u-turn. She is psychologically ready to violate the law. For her, it is the way of the world, if you cannot beat them, you join them. There is always something about the law which confronts us positively or negatively; our perception of its principles and the social influences we have around us. As a moral foil to her friend, Aloho, Ogeyi continues to play her emphatic roles. She scolds and admonishes Aloho for fantasising about her meeting with Ochuole: And she what? (Clasps her palms together) say again, have you forgotten her life style? And why should you get yourself mixed up with Ochuole of all people, why? That girl, who has soiled the reputations of all decent girls in this Jabu. Is that the girl you ran into? I won't have you associating with her. (8) It is ironical that Aloho now chooses to be like the indecent Ochuole that she once despised because of her behaviour. She sounds heartbroken and reborn. For her, of what use is an unreserved obedience when life hits you so badly, and you know full well that your supreme factor has the power to shield you but has refused to do so. Anyway ...she asked me to come to her ministry tomorrow morning. She assured me that her Oga will employ me. Ogeyi, I am going. Right now, I want to get a job." (9). In other words, her moral and legal consciousness can be suspended as she really does not care about the consequence of her actions anymore. At the moment, it is about the gratification of the self. Ogeyi's doting concern is not necessarily about Aloho's willingness to get a job but about her willingness to do just about anything good or bad to get it. Ogeyi knows that Aloho's readiness to explore other options having tried the positive option will only end her up in misery hence, her doting concern. But Aloho looks unperturbed as she continues:

Look at me... with all the decency what have I achieved. Where has decency or dignity taken me to? I am tired, I need some rest. Just leave me alone I need to think (soberly). But Ogeyi, you see, I tried to live outside the world all along right from my youth. I see that the world is leaving me behind, can't you see? You can call me a

rebel, but I need a job. That's what matters to me now. Have I not tried to live a holy life all along? What has become of that, joblessness! Failure, eh? People look at me as a failure. Can't you see? (9) Aloho in order to meet her daily needs indulges goes into drug business. She has wished for a government job despite her desperation. Chief deceives her into believing that she will be nothing more than a protocol officer. He informs Mrs. Obi: "Yes. We are about to have a new staff. She is in fact going to be one of my protocol officers. See what you can do to assist her settle down. The permanent secretary will handle the necessary appointment formalities. Okay?" (35). It is evident that while the law operates on the Freudian principle of superego, characters' interests often resonate the pride and selfishness of the id. Hence, the perpetual conflict between these two unconscious fields sometimes leads to psychosomatics. Aloho is obviously disillusioned by the perceived excesses of the legal system and its components. She practically gives up on the law and decides to locate meaning within the confines of her feelings. Her friend, Ogeyi, continues to perform that all-important function of an arbiter as she consistently mediates between Aloho's psychological rivals – their selfish feelings and the law. As a neutral and liberal arbiter, Ogeyi is defeated by the arrogance of her friend's self. She has suddenly become an outlaw and was caught with drugs.

The registrar points out Aloho's offence before Justice Odili: "My Lord, the case is that of one Miss Aloho vs the State. The fact of the case is that Miss Aloho is charged for carrying substances suspected to be cocaine, an offence which is punishable under the law of the land. It is alleged that she was arrested at the Airport on her way to the United States of America when luck ran out on her. (51)

The debauched behaviour of Chief and the Commissioner of Police completes the beastly metamorphosis of Aloho which starts when she first encounters Ochuole. She is willing to disobey the law having deliberately ensured its moral death in her consciousness. Her new attitude to the law is visible in her response to the doctor's insistence that her intention to commit abortion was a crime in Nigeria: "my dear young lady, you know that it is against our profession to do such things. Indeed, it is criminal and one can end up in jail for life and even lose his medical license for ever."(66) To his worry and concerns, she replies: "please Doctor, help me. I am ready to pay any amount you charge." (66) She has suddenly become defiant and hardened. In fact, she is able to recruit the doctor into their bohemian camp because he succumbs to her appeal. In submitting to her emotional concerns, he makes the law functionally passive in his heart: "okay lady, how much can you pay! I shall assist you even though I am taking a risk." (66) Her response reeks of negative interpretant – total despair, "the whole life itself is risk Doctor. I shall give you whatever you charge." (66) Aloho is not willing to reason with the law because she has become drunk with the recklessness of herself. Obviously; the failure of her leaders cannot be exonerated from the bestiality that has become her new identity.

### 3. Conclusion

The characters do not just become out laws they are often aided by the depraved audacity of the microscopic few. In addition, socio-political agents such as unemployment, corruption, peer group influence, bad leadership, and injustice, contribute greatly to the violation of law in the texts. Sometimes, laws are broken circumstantially and not wilfully. When this happens, the culprit is seen as a victim of a dysfunctional society. The psychological implication on youths of a nation in crises as represented by characters are disappointment, anger, frustration, loss of morals, verbal outpour which can lead to violence on self or on others.

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