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Manipulation, Socio-psychological Impact of False Promises of Marriage to Shona Women in Selected Shona Novels

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Abstract

This article discusses the victimisation of women who were promised false marriage by men in selected Shona literature. It unravels why women fall prey and quizzes why men manipulate the marriage institution for personal satisfaction. The article utilises the feminist literary theory to interrogate two novels, *Makudo Ndomamwe* (Men are All the Same) (2004) by R. Makaya and *Imbwa Nyoro* (1982) (Innocent Ones are Often Guilty) by R. M. Mumvuma. Patriarchy as a major tenet of the feminist literary theory is used as a key guide in the interrogation of female manipulation after they are promised marriage in these novels. A qualitative research methodology utilizing a textual analysis approach is adopted. Additionally, scholarly views are gathered through questionnaires to draw their insights on the interplay of the patriarchal system in manipulating marriage proposals by men among the Shona people. The study discovers that women in the novels succumb to suppression. They are suffering from sexual objectification, violence and male centeredness, female silencing, male domination and control. This transpires because among the Shona, marriage accords women a perceived social status and it acquires them lifelong companionship and attains them much more respect in the community where they were born. The article concludes by providing recommended solutions to women and the society in preventing and raising awareness on the manipulation of the marriage proposals.

Keywords: *marriage; feminist; Shona; novel*

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Introduction

In Zimbabwe, as portrayed in novels and shared by scholars, issues concerning romantic relationships have resulted in perceived heartbreaks, disappointments, and deception due to unfulfilled promises. To understand reasons that underline the

manipulation of marriage proposals and why women fall victim to such deception, the definition and value of marriage is vital. Marriage institutions have been defined by diverse cultures and scholars. It goes beyond being defined as the union of a man and woman from different families.

Holleman (1969) explicates that, "marriage relates to a state of mutual dependence between families" (p. 57). Relations of the in-laws have important, exclusive and unique ties. These families benefit from their newly established relationship. For instance, the father-in-law may rely on financial, manual or social assistance from his son-in-law. Reciprocally, sons-in-law benefit from social fathering, where fathers-in-law share knowledge and advice on employment, marriage, or raising children (Lewis, Lemmons, & Woolley, 2022). One is compelled to state that the mutual benefits received for both families make marriage valuable.

To show the paramount importance of marriage among the Shona when two people are believed to be related, they are not supposed to marry as this will be incest. If they get married, a process of terminating the non-romantic relationship is conducted so they can stay as husband and wife. Gelfand (1970) describes the process by stating that, when relatives get married the man should conduct ritual payment known as *cheka ukama* terminating relations between families. Marriage becomes a vital process that supersedes familial relations. Meanwhile, the existence of several types of marriage ways is an indication that it is of immense value. To mention just a few types of marriages, *kutema ugariri* is when the man must work for in laws as bride price if he does not have the bride price. *Kutizisa* or *kutiziswa* (eloping) a young woman gets pregnant before her bride price is paid to her family and she elopes and secretly relocates to her lover's home. *Kukumbira* is a hand in marriage request to the woman's family and bride price is paid. It may be argued that all these ways ensured that marriage was conferred its indissolubility and importance.

Marriage ensures lineage continuity through procreation. Chivaura (2015) says, "*mombe yeuMai* (Cow of motherhood given to the mother-in-law) represents reproduction and fertility" (p. 25). This cow's reproduction is symbolic of the Shona peoples' reproduction and continuation of the lineage as a product of the marriage. Moreso, marriage becomes a principal component for continuity, procreation and mutual benefits in relations therefore, it is associated with social status and validation from the society.

Traditionally, for one to be able to marry and settle they should experience romantic relationships. Unfortunately, as portrayed in novels and experienced in society, most relationships have ended in disappointment. This has been led to by false promises of marriage. Srivastava (2023) says, "false marriage promises, describe circumstances in which a person purposefully deceives another by making a fictitious commitment to marriage" (p.31).

The dating fraternity has affectionately been referred to as *Umjolo/mjolo* which is a Zulu colloquial word for dating. Zimbabweans have adopted this term to describe relationships that in most cases end without the promised commitments of marriage. Legally, according to Sharma and Anil (2023),

> *false promise to marry cases, also called as 'breach of promise to marry' or simply as 'promise to marry' is a body of case law, … a violation of sexual autonomy of women* (p.349).

Therefore, it is fundamental to study the impact of false marriage promises to women in Shona novels as this leads to profound emotional distress resulting in low self-esteem, depression among other detrimental effects. Examination of such betrayal is essential in supporting victims by orchestrating adequate mental health support structures by the community.

To prevent social ostracism faced by victims of false marriage promises, this study is pivotal as it will raise awareness and identify the patriarchal traits of manipulators and why they should be held accountable to their shortcomings. Furthermore, it unpacks the dynamics of gender inequality and male

dominance in romantic relationships. The study of such inequalities in relationships assists in identifying manipulative motives. Jha and Kumar (2022) write,

> *marriages are seen as a holy bond between two individuals that crosses all physical, emotional, and spiritual barriers. It is more than just a ritual, rather a bond based on trust and using it as a form of deception just to acquire or form sexual intercourse is an offence* (p. 6318).

Undertaking this study will facilitate development of systems that will hold accountable perpetrators of injustice.

This article analyses Shona literature paying attention to how male protagonists in selected texts manipulate marriage offers. The article responds to the question, "to what extent does the patriarchal system manipulate the marriage institution to suppress women in Shona literature?" In the novel, *Imbwa Nyoro (1982)* an adulterous married man, *Mufundisi* (Pastor) Kunaka, impregnates his niece, Sekai. He also wrecks Tsitsi's family, a female church congregant when he promises them marriage. In *Makudo Ndomamwe* (2004) a young teenage girl, Revai, falls in love with a local Agritex officer-Gutsa, who promises to marry her. Unfortunately, he inflicts pain by impregnating and dumping her. Revai falls in love again with a former school mate Nyengerai, who also impregnates her before he leaves to study abroad. When Nyengerai returns, he brings back a new lover.

The feminist literary theory informs the theoretical paradigm of this article to challenge the oppressive presentation of men in literary works as dishonest and perpetuate the suffocation and suffering of women in relationships. Utilizing this theory in this study enhances the understanding of female characteristics in literary texts and their experiences after false marriage proposals and equally exposing the actual female victims lived experiences in the Shona society.

Major tenets of the feminist literary theory are patriarchy, sexual objectification, silencing and marginalization, analysis of gender representations and reclaiming women's literature. (Showalter, 1981). This article adopts this theory to analyse the manipulation false marriage proposals to women in selected novels.

To respond to this article's research, question the discussion mainly utilises patriarchy in the feminist literary theory. The article intends to unpack elements of patriarchy to determine circumstances surrounding manipulation of the marriage offers. Considering this, it is vital to examine the main elements of patriarchy. Patriarchy has been widely defined as men's superiority to women. Johnson (2004) states, "patriarchal culture includes ideas about the nature of things, with manhood and masculinity most strongly associated with being human and womanhood and femininity relegated to the marginal position of "other" (p. 29).

Key tenets of patriarchy are male dominance, male identification, male centeredness, male control and non-compromising nature of men, sexuality and violence. Patriarchy is characterised by male violence against women to make them submit (Pierik, 2022). Furthermore, sexuality is a patriarchal construct that is powerful in suppressing women with men using sex as a controlling measure.

The adopted feminist ideologies, particularly the patriarchal system in literary works has been extensively done by several authors from various viewpoints. To identify the gaps and essentiality of this discussion, a review of previous work is important.

Pillado (2023) discusses the role of patriarchy in the boom and post boom era in Western novels. He analyses *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (2006) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *Recollections of Things to Come* (1996) by Elena Garro as the post-boom novels. These novels elaborate on women empowerment in the 1980s. He selects boom novels which are, *The House of the Spirits* (1993) by Isabel Allende and *Like Water for Chocolate* (1992) by Laura Esquivel. He makes a comparison of women in these texts with women in the 'boom era', in the 1960s. He argues that novelists depict women in the boom era as oppressed, stereotyped and

women in the post-boom era as assertive and fight for their sexual freedom. Women in the boom phase as portrayed by the novels, are docile and ruled by patriarchy and post-boom women reject patriarchal rule. His study is divergent from the current study in that the selected novels pay attention to all the facets of life in these women's lives. Both studies are aligned in that there is collective agreement that the suppression of women in novels is derived from patriarchy.

Ajidahun (2020) interrogates Ngozi Omeje's *The Conquered Maiden* (2000) and Amma Darko's *Faceless* (2003). His analysis is guided by feminist ideologies to explore the socio-cultural challenges faced by girls in Ghana. He examines the co-existence of patriarchy and matriarchy to suppress young girls while supporting the male child. The feminist sociological theory adopted indicates that the girl child is a victim of segregation in Nigeria and Ghana. Ajidahun (2020), pays attention to gender discrimination in Africa as presented in the selected novels because of patriarchy. However, this current study aligns with Ajidahun (2020), as it analyses limitations women face due to patriarchy. In this current discussion it is further deliberated that men in the Shona novels control women by presenting fake marriage offers.

Emelone (2020) analyses the issues of marriage and procreation in Africa using Lola Shoneyin's novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. She looks at how the female gender is subjugated using a feminist approach to literary criticism. Emelone 2020, realizes that marriages are contracted due to some patriarchal reasons as well as its perception by the female folk as a fortress from life's ugly experiences. Rallying from this analysis, the current article argues that the presentation of false promises to marry women is manipulated by men as they know that women cherish and value marriage for socio-cultural validation.

Harry and Vijayakumar (2023) discuss the gender inequality during the Nigerian Civil War in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2010). They scrutinise the narratives of Olanna, Kainene, and Ugwu's mother in the text as they face diverse socioeconomic backgrounds which are accentuated by patriarchal suppression. The novel presents the unjust hands of patriarchy during the war and female suffering as well as their quest for freedom. They indicate the importance of gender equality and transformation. Harry and Vijayakumar (2023) study dovetails with the current discussion, as it acknowledges the impact of patriarchy on women. Although this was placed during the war, this present article pays attention to the manipulation of false marriage promises.

Makaudze (2016) examines *Makudo Ndomamwe* (2004) and *Sekai: Minda Tave nayo* (2005) (Sekai, We now have the land). In both texts, he discusses how women are oppressed by patriarchy. In *Makudo Ndomamwe* (2004) he states that education liberates women from patriarchal rule. As a result, the two books focus on challenges and drawbacks of being a woman and how to overcome them for self-empowering education. Makaudze (2016) asserts that both writers of these texts highlight that the patriarchal system hinders women from elevating and rising in society and their careers. Makaudze's (2016) study and the current discourse are similar in the data analysed. However, Makaudze pays attention to the utilisation of education for female emancipation from patriarchy.

The above scholars in relation to this study;

i. make a comparative analysis of generalized issues that affect women in their lives.
ii. examine how culturally matriarchy and patriarchy silence women in support of men.
iii. unfold how women suffer the effects of war and at the same time the challenges of patriarchal dominance.
iv. indicated that marriages are social contracts the validate women's functionality and acceptance on the society.

Emanating from this, the current discussion intends to pay attention to the effects of romantic relationships that shape the mental health of women and bring them their perceived self-worth, and validation as well as fulfilling the socio-cultural expectations of

marriage. As these are some of the core factors that contribute to the women's mental health stability, scrutinizing the effects of false marriage promises to them is indispensable. The paper unpacks the role of literary work in addressing the impact of false marriage promises. The objectives of the study are to:

a) To present the role of patriarchy in perpetuating false marriage promises in the selected novels.
b) To show the effects of false marriage proposals to women in the texts.
c) To establish ways of supporting victims of fraudulent marriage proposals.

The article argues that in the selected Shona fiction, through patriarchy, women suffer abuse, marginalisation and violent treatment when they encounter men who promise them fraudulent marriage proposals. It considers scholarly views on false marriage promises. The article concludes by sharing solutions on how to minimise manipulation and exploitation of marriage promises.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research method utilising textual analysis and questionnaires. This study is a feminist study, it is suitable for examining the primary texts, Makudo Ndomamwe (Men are All the Same) (2004) (1982) (Innocent Ones are Often Guilty) because these texts portray the socio-cultural systems of inequality surrounding marriage proposals to women. The selected novels are critical for the current study as the stories depict the highest forms of female marriage offer manipulations through patriarchal systems.

Additionally, a questionnaire designed by the authors, was deployed to three academics to gather their perspectives on false marriage proposals. The deployed questionnaire focused on three major factors that include, the manipulative nature of patriarchy of utilizing false marriage offers, the role of matriarchy in suppressing women in issues regarding false marriage promises and the proposed solutions to the challenges and effects of false marriage promises to women. To maintain anonymity, the scholars will be called Academic A, B, and C in the discussion.

This study employed template analysis to organise the data into meaningful themes. According to Cassell & Bishop (2019), this method involves developing a structured framework or analytic template that facilitates the categorisation of data based on recurring patterns and concepts. After categorization of the data, the researcher makes an analysis of the recurring themes that formulate the template of challenges faced by female victims of false promises of marriage in the identified novels. In the texts, male dominance, male identification, male centeredness, male control and non-compromising nature of men, sexuality and violence are the recurring thematic issues which are a direct replica of patriarchy in literary feminism. This provides the chronological presentation of facts and events from the data collected on the themes.

Results and Discussion

1. Portrayal of Patriarchy in Imbwa Nyoro (1982) and Makudo Ndomamwe (2004)

Patriarchy is evident in the selected novels with female characters bearing the oppressive nature of patriarchy. Men use patriarchy domination to manipulate the marriage proposals. This section of this article unpacks the main characteristics of patriarchy in relation to the manipulation of marriage proposals embedded in the two selected novels.

a. Female Silencing, Male Domination and Control

Men control and lead in society in most spheres. Academic A noted that men in the society ensure total female control through making false commitments, emotional blackmail, as well as gas lighting the women they offer false marriage promises. To ensure that the domination of women is achieved, the feminist literary theory points out that female silencing is present. Uwakwe (1995) as cited by Ifechelobi (2014) states that, "silence comprises all imposed restrictions on

women's social being, thinking and expressions that are religiously or culturally sanctioned" (p. 22). This article acknowledges the concept of female silencing to enable full domination of women. Female domination and silencing are enabled by giving gifts which is manipulative gifting. In *Makudo Ndomamwe* (2004), male characters, like Gutsa, are dominant. He dominates their relationship with Revai by providing all valuable gifts. In his efforts to win Revai's heart, he stalks Revai to church with gifts.

The findings indicate that those gifts meant love for her, but this is done to control. Gutsa after giving Revai a beautiful pair of shoes, tells Revai that it was going to be a special day in their lives since Gutsa was proposing marriage to Revai. She is excited by these words and feels that her wish not to disappoint her mother is transpiring. Ever since she heard neighbours gossiping about her parents, because they had sent her to secondary school, she pledged never to disappoint them by not marrying. Academic B responded to the questionnaire noting that women fall prey to this modality of control exerted on them because of social expectations, peer pressure and desire for companionship. Emelone (2020), discussed how marriage in Africa is viewed as a validation modality for women therefore, according to this study they will openly receive the gifts expecting marriage.

The Shona people's social construct streamlines how men are to determine the course of events. Therefore, this ideology influences the manipulation of events that lead to marriage. One is compelled to ascertain that to ensure full domination Gutsa utilises gifts to lure Revai to make her think he will marry her. Furthermore, Nyengerai utilises gifts again to completely dominate Revai. He brings gifts to her at the nursing school. It is imperative to note that when both men present gifts to Revai she drops her guard, and inadvertently she succumbs to false promised marriage.

Vaughan (2000) proposes that,

> *gift giving has been branded as the cause of women's victimization, but it is the dominance of the exchange paradigm that has been causing the subservience of women and the oppression of most of humanity* (p. 67).

Deriving from the quotation and predicated on feminist literary perspective, silencing is a patriarchal weapon of control, used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure (Ifebeochi, 2014). Drawing inference from this proposition it can be argued that male dominance is exerted through showering gifts to silence and control women. Manipulation becomes an integral part of patriarchal behaviour. Academic C indicated that men in the relationship play with the emotions of the potential victim. Additionally, when a person is in love, he tends to overlook several factors including the potential red flags that the person's intentions might not be genuine, so mere mention of marriage is enough to win a person's heart. It is a form of emotional abuse that aims to exploit, control, or otherwise influence others to one's advantage. It targets and controls how someone feels, thinks and behaves for the manipulator to get what they want (Holland, 2022).

Gutsa targets Revai by giving her gifts consistently so that he controls her and silences her even if she wants to raise any questions of doubt. When Revai discovers that Gutsa had another girlfriend, Gutsa buys her some gifts just to muffle her thoughts and doubts. One may argue that this was an act of love, yet the gifts were a silencing modality to Revai. In addition, he continues to remind her that he wants to marry her so that he thwarts any thoughts of doubt in her mind. Women in the selected Shona fiction are manipulated through gifts and think that the marriage proposals were authentic therefore, they were never doubtful. Academic C pointed out that, the perpetrator continuously talks to the victim and pampers them with lies and ensures that they do not associate with other people as this will enlighten them and discover the falsehoods of the marriage proposals. Revai freely without giving much thought to it, engages in premarital intercourse and regularly visits Gutsa.

Makaya (2004) employs onomastic configurations in the text that resemble

dominance radiated by the characters. The author attaches cratylic names to characters. Windt-Val (2012) alleges, "names in the novel will convey essential information on many distinct aspects of the persons – family history, social setting, environment, self-image, personal ambitions, social status, and relationships between the characters" (p. 279). Gutsa is a Shona name that is derived from the verb, *-gut-* (to make full or satisfy). Collocating this name with his behavioural traits he dominates and satisfies Revai's needs that she is unsuspicious of any maliciousness. Gutsa ensures Revai is satisfied materially and physically with clothes and delicious food.

Moreso, the name Nyengerai, morphologically dissected exhibits that the name is derived from the verb stem, *-nyenger-meaning* to persuade, gaining influence over. Nyengerai, pursues Revai's love by utilising gifts and introduces her to his family as a way of assuring her. Nyengerai, subtly influences and dominates Revai who, unfortunately, is overridden by his plans. Nyengerai applies for school out of the country leaving Revai behind. It is important to note that Revai agrees to all arrangements as she was promised marriage. In *Imbwa Nyoro* (1982), Mufundisi Kunaka, is named *Kunaka* meaning something beautiful. His name and role as a pastor suggest that he is morally upright. Ironically, his behaviour and his name are a classical mismatch. Mary praises him when she goes to her rural areas saying that he was a faithful husband incapable of cheating. One is compelled to state that the text is an epitome of sarcasm. This study argues that victims never question the intentions of the perpetrators because the meaning of their names indirectly gives them comfort to remain content and silent.

Kunaka proposes marriage to his two victims, Sekai, his niece and Tsitsi, a church congregant. He does this so that he manipulates them and abuses them. He dominates his victims by taking advantage of *chiramu* (relationship between a man and his wife's young sister), sexual dalliance and abuse of office to Sekai and Tsitsi, respectively. It is imperative to note that he promises and uses words such as, '*Ndokuroora*.' (I will marry you) as a carrot for both women to buy into his intentions. Srivastava (2023) postulates that,

> *false marriage promises to refer to situations where one party makes a false or fraudulent promise of marriage to another individual with the intention of inducing them into engaging in a sexual relationship or obtaining some other advantage (p.35).*

Therefore, deducing from this, Kunaka is patriarchal as he dominates women's thinking using marriage offers.

Patriarchy entails male control; therefore, men make decisions in a union or relationship. As Pillado, (2023) discusses male dominance, in *One Hundred years of Solitude*, as men being the focus and merit of the society female characters are usually silenced in literary texts (p.238). Gutsa controls Revai by stipulating when she should see him because he had promised her marriage. The marriage proposal and gifts melt her, and this gives Gutsa controlling power. Women, like Revai are willing to foster docility, submissiveness and passiveness, not that they are, but because marriage has been presented, hence, they are controllable. Kunaka intentionally offers marriage to Sekai who inadvertently allows him to control her. Kunaka relocates Sekai because he did not want his wife to know about Sekai's pregnancy.

Several factors converge to facilitate the suppression of women through false marriage proposals. Academic C highlighted that there are many factors that converge that lead to the manipulation of marriage promises. These include the economy, authoritarianism, cultural hegemonies to name just a few. As a cultural practice sexual dalliance facilitates patriarchal control. This relates to *Chiramu* in Shona, which is a value system described by Mahachi Harper (2004) as cited by Mawodza (2013) as, "a situation where brother-in-law (*babamukuru*) has the 'rights and/or privileges' to have a casual romantic or sexual relationship with his wife's younger sister or niece (*muramu*)" (p.19).

In this regard, Sekai is engulfed by this practice that her capability to detach herself from this system is impossible. Intersectionality, from a feminist literary perspective as defined by (Carastathis, 2014) is an interlocking system of oppression. He

further notes that, "Intersectionality is a phenomenological claim that oppressions are experienced simultaneously and an ontological claim that the systems of oppression that women face are convergent, co-constituted, imbricated or interwoven" (p. 32).

Sekai is oppressed by converging circumstances. She is caught between *chiramu* and patriarchal control which leads to her sexual objectification. Kunaka manipulated *chiramu* and promised Sekai marriage. *Chiramu* is a scapegoat for men to exercise patriarchal control by presenting unfulfilled marriage promises. Harry and Vijayakumar (2023) discussed the exacerbation of female oppression in Nigeria because of patriarchy and the civil war but this study identifies that women suffer in their romantic interactions due to false marriage promises and not only from known factors in the society.

b. Non-Compromise and Male Centeredness

Feminist literary theory contemplates that women in literary texts are intersectionally affected by several factors that impede them from exercising their ability to make decisions. The hindering factors are culture, societal views and patriarchy. Therefore, this leads to them being manipulated when offered marriage. For instance, Revai, is under pressure to meet the demands of the marriage social-cultural expectations. Simultaneously, she feels that since Gutsa has offered her a marriage proposal she has met the cultural expectations of marriage.

The patriarchal system impedes women from parading their views silencing them. Non-compromising tendencies are evident in patriarchy. When Gutsa rejects Revai and her pregnancy he is self-centred and is inconsiderate of how Revai feels. He sarcastically says to her on page 41, "*Mwana wauchazvara ndicho chipo chako kubva kwandiri…*" (The child you will give birth to is your gift.) He thinks of his wellbeing and foregoing Revai's feelings. Nyengerai also dumps Revai without informing her. Nyengerai's mother pushes for her son to leave Revai because she has a child out of wedlock.

Ajiduhun (2020) as reviewed earlier, dissects the cultural interconnectedness that exists between matriarchy and patriarchy in silencing women. She (Nyengerai's mother) represents culture that converges with patriarchy to oppress Revai which is an example of intersectionality in the feminist literary theory.

When marriage is promised, men in both texts are subtly persuasive and never compromise. Women unconsciously allow this because they value marriage. Traditionally, women are raised to be submissive and obedient. This upbringing enables their dehumanization as they aim to qualify themselves for marriage.

Kteily and Landry (2022) state that, "dehumanisation focuses on the tendency to overlook or deny others complex mental states, consisting of agency (capacity to think and act) and experience (capacity to feel.)" (p. 223). The observation is that women are subjugated to dehumanisation as they want to fulfil the need to marry. Revai, Tsitsi, and Sekai are deprived of the capacity to reason and question what happens to them. The patriarchal rule disengages the woman from her adequate mental state resulting in them at times performing inhuman acts like Tsitsi, who mentally deranged, poisons her children so that she marries Kunaka and fully submits to him. The article points out that women in the texts are shifted from their usual state of life after they are promised marriage. However, men in turn utilise fake marriage offers as a way of exploiting women who are yearning to have partners.

When the holy matrimony has been promised to young women, everything in the relationship becomes male-centred and it never leads to marriage. Male centeredness in patriarchy is when everything in a society is focused on men (Evans, 2023). Gutsa rejects Revai and indicates he had a serious girlfriend and he informs his family to chase away Revai if she decides to proceed to his homestead with her pregnancy. Gutsa's father and relatives are

in solidarity with their son to chase away Revai.

The standpoint of this discussion is that men in the novels use false marriage offers to suppress women, women in the novels contribute to their victimisation by being submissive and not questioning certain behaviour of men. Considering, how marriage is valued as discussed earlier in this article to ensure that young women attain or get into holy matrimony, sisterhood is essential. Clenora Hudson Weems (1997) discusses genuine sisterhood in which notions of fellow women recognize the same struggles they have with the patriarchy hence they must sympathize with each other. Anchoring on this dogma, this article argues that to revoke shattered dreams and fake marriage promises, genuine sisterhood should take precedence. Unfortunately, this is absent in both texts. Patriarchy is exacerbated by women in both cases. As such the deployment of patriarchal tendencies is facilitated by both men and women in society.

Makaudze (2016) reviewed the same text as the current study paying attention to education as a liberating tool for women from patriarchy, however he pays less or no attention to the conspicuously dominant problem in the novel, *Makudo Ndomamwe*, which is the fake marriage promises that throw Revai in a recurrent conundrum that troubles her from the onset of the novel to the end. This shows clearly that although women are emancipated by education, false marriage promises affect them the most.

2. Sexual Objectification, Sexual Dominance, and Violence

Sexual objectification in the feminist literary theory is prominent. Papadaki (2010), describes and defines this abstraction and says, "objectification is a notion central to feminist theory. It can be defined as seeing and/or treating a person, usually a woman, *as an object*. The focus is primarily on sexual objectification, objectification occurring in the sexual realm" (p.1).

Sexuality and sexual dominance are at the core of patriarchy hence feminist literary discourses have taken much study and scrutiny into this tenet. Nussbaum (1995) identifies seven types of sexual objectification. These are instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership, denial of subjectivity, reduction to body, reduction to appearance, silencing. This study links three of these to the victims in the texts; Revai is subjected to denial of autonomy, explained as the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination. She experiences sexual objectification in the form of silencing, this is, the treatment of a person as if he or she is silent and lacking the capacity to speak. Furthermore, Sekai and Tsitsi are also subjected to sexual instrumentality which is the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes. (Nussbam, 1995)

Gutsa lures Revai to sexually indulge with her. Additionally, Nyengerai seduces her and becomes intimate with her when he takes her to his Bindura apartment. Kunaka fondles Sekai, rides on *chiramu* then sexually indulges with Sekai. In both texts, the two male protagonists use sexual indulgence as the main form of control and dominance over their victims.

Walby (1989) says, "I want to argue that sexuality is more important in constructing social relations. MacKinnon sees male control of women as taking place through sexuality. It is via sexuality that men can objectify and dominate women" (p. 226).

While Kaufman (1987) shares Freud Sigmund's (1905) granular breakdown of the view of sexuality in society that supports why men tend to be viewed as superior to women. He notes that,

> *Our embrace of future manhood is part of an equation: male = penis = power = active = masculine. The other half of the equation, in the language of the unconscious in patriarchal society, is female = castrated = passive = feminine* (p.19).

Sigmund equates the male organs to power and being active while women are castrated and represent docility. However, male has power over female. Gutsa, Nyengerai

and Kunaka ride on their masculinity and sexual power to manipulate and abuse women after offering them fake marriage proposals. Pillado (2023), as reviewed earlier, explained how women in literary texts have to fight for sexual freedom as a result of how society shapes their sexuality however in the texts under analysis women lack the freedom to fight for their sexual freedom as they are deceived.

Violence is central in patriarchal ideology. The feminist literary theory comments vehemently on violence and sexual objectification of women. Carastathis (2014) notes that, "selective use of violence as an agent of change in repressive states and situations is recognized as, "man's faculty of action" (p.35). Kunaka becomes violent to Sekai as she is about to give birth, he takes her to Christmas Pass, in Manicaland in a forest and attempts to murder her by strangling her. He does this as he accuses Sekai of not taking family planning pills to prevent pregnancy.

While in Makudo Ndomamwe (2004) Gutsa violently rejects Revai and throws her out of his home. Similarly, Gutsa's parents violently send away Revai with her bags from their homestead. Walby (1989) says, "men use violence as a form of power over women. It is constituted as a set of various practices including rape, wife-beating, flashing, sexual harassment at work, sexual assault" (p. 225).

The novels under review have gender representations that show how women are viewed and where they are placed in the society. Madsen (2000) notes that, "the representation of women in the male literary works…reveal a great deal about mechanisms of women's oppression" (p. 73). Utilising this view, the three men under discussion from both texts have reputable occupations, *mudhumeni* (agricultural officer in the rural areas), medical doctor and a pastor. These occupations are highly respected in society. The women in the text are not allocated any serious roles or recognisable positions in the society. To buttress male identification and recognition in society there is manipulation of their respectable roles and professions to suppress women. In their role in cultural relations such as *chiramu,* men are accorded much power that they take to their advantage to abuse women, in this case, Sekai falls for the man because he is a priest.

3. Alleviating the Challenge of Manipulation of Marriage Proposals

This article establishes that there are two groups of women that require support that is those who have fallen victim to false marriage proposals and those who are young and yet to get married and get into the dating fraternity. Female victims of manipulation of marriage proposals require support, empathy and understanding. Interviewed academics suggested that there is need to create a safe space for them to share their emotions, offer emotional support and validate their feelings. In addition, they require professional counselling to help them as they recover.

This article proffers that there is need to raise awareness and educate both young boys and girls on female emancipation. Makaya (2004) reclaims how women are viewed and injects the value of education to women. Sen & Das (2021) state that, "feminist literary criticism as criticism schools is marked by gender, widespread gender awareness, and feminine consciousness is its elementary characteristics" (p. 20). Makayi (2004) redefines Revai's freedom and indicates that in as much as she was manipulated through the marriage proposal offers, she reclaims her independence through education. Young women require consistent education on economic emancipation without relying on lovers. Revai lacks moral support and enlightenment on elements of emancipation. Secondly, there is a need for an elaborate, awareness to women on cultural values of marriage and what marriage entails. To avoid cases of women falling victim to manipulated marriage offers.

Awareness should be raised that *chiramu* may lead to sexual victimisation. Unwanted sexual exploitation is done in the confines of *chiramu* abuse. Sekai expressed her discomfort with how her uncle was treating her. The article advances the reconsideration and emphasis of the practice of exchanging tokens known as *chuma* of expressing love

commitments to each other before marriage. This may display a level of seriousness from the male perspective in the event they behave otherwise their action comes with consequences. Women should practice genuine sisterhood and support other women when they face patriarchal suppression.

The community and society leadership, including the church, should take an active role in raising awareness about false marriage promises. Their teachings should be clad with the reality, presence and psychological effects of false marriage promises. Additionally, parents must take a lead role in engaging in conversations with young women. Over and above society should groom responsible young adults who are self-aware and understand dating, courtship and marriage institutions.

The young people should take responsibility for their actions and stand against societal pressure and expectations which drive them to fall victim to false marriage promises. Young women require teachings about self-sufficiency and emphasis that marriage does not make them complete. There is a need for them to embark on a journey of self-discovery and self-awareness before they settle for marriage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study recommends research on legal systems in Zimbabwe and the Shona community that eradicate the manipulation of marriage offers to women. Additionally, cultural and community formulated approaches may be further explored in order to curb the victimization of women in this regard. Limitations of this study were on the absence of elderly peoples' philosophical input on how and what their experiences were with the patriarchal influence on false marriage proposals.

This study highlighted the major reasons why women have been subjected to victimization and segregation when they are given marriage offers by men. A detailed analysis using the patriarchal system tenets that include male domination, control, centeredness, violence, sexuality and sexual dominance, and non-compromise to examine how men in the selected texts take advantage of women. The findings are that marriage as a rite of passage, subjects' women to their dehumanisation as they aim to qualify themselves for marriage without being judged by society. It is evident from the discussion that, men manipulate and control women through the gifts that they offer them promising fake marriages. The study unpacked the notion that women are in concurrence with men in exercising patriarchal rule in society.

Lastly, sexuality and sexual dominance are instrumental in overpowering women as men consider themselves more sexually powerful than women. Recommendations are shared and pay attention to the importance of traditional ways of committing to each other in a romantic relationship, raising awareness on what marriage entails to young women before they are deceived and providing an in-depth understanding what *chiramu* entails as well as it a form of abuse. The conclusion is that the marriage institution is given much attention and respect leading to abuse in all its stages, especially in the pre-marital stages. This is because women allow themselves to be unknowingly and inadvertently undermined and manipulated so that they get married.

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