

Leadership, Poverty and Crisis in Nigeria: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Emmanuela U. Asadu
emmanuela.asadu@unn.edu.ng

Goodluck C. Kadiri
goodluck.kadiri@unn.edu.ng

Isaiah I. Agbo
isaiah.agbo@unn.edu.ng

Department of English & Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

ABSTRACT

Leadership challenge has been the bane of many African countries, particularly Nigeria. The relative poverty conditions and incessant crisis in Nigeria is not unconnected to the country's inept, parasitical and predatory leadership. This research aims at critically examining and analyzing Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* in order to find out how leadership, poverty and crisis are related and how ineffective leadership contributed to the Nigerian/Biafran conflict and still has lingering effect in present day Nigerian context. Using Norman Fairclough's module theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it explains that literary texts are essentially sociological, political and ideological activities and not just texts for their own sake. The research argues that what led to the Nigerian/Biafran war as x-rayed in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* has not been addressed and can trigger another civil war if not properly managed. It advocates the urgent need for transformational and servant leadership if Nigeria will ever reduce poverty level and avert looming political and economic crisis. And finally, it concludes that for the country to achieve and record any meaningful progress in human and infrastructural development, there must be effective rule of law; and political leaders must be held accountable for any misuse of entrusted power.

Keywords: leadership, poverty, crisis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), rule of law

INTRODUCTION

Leadership remains a fundamental factor in the development and stability of any nation. In the African context, particularly in Nigeria, leadership challenges have continued to hinder socioeconomic progress, exacerbating poverty and political instability. Scholars such as Ake (1996) and Agbaje (2018) argue that the leadership crisis in Nigeria is characterized by ineptitude, corruption, and an extractive governance model that prioritizes self-interest over national development. This research examines the intricate relationship

between leadership, poverty, and crisis in Nigeria through the lens of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), a novel that vividly portrays the Nigerian-Biafran War and its aftermath. The study seeks to analyze how ineffective leadership contributed to the conflict and how its legacy continues to shape Nigeria's contemporary sociopolitical landscape.

Using Norman Fairclough's (1995) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study positions that literary texts are more than fictional narratives; that they are sociopolitical and ideological constructs that reflect and critique society. CDA, as a theoretical and methodological framework, enables the examination of how language in *Half of a Yellow Sun* reveals power struggles, ideological tensions, and systemic inequalities that mirror real-world sociopolitical realities (Fairclough, 2001). As Wodak and Meyer (2009) assert, CDA is particularly useful in analyzing discourses of power and hegemony, making it a suitable tool for investigating how Adichie's novel critiques leadership failures and their consequences.

Despite the fact that Nigeria is richly blessed with both natural and human resources, parasitic and ineptitude leadership style has ultimately enthroned and perpetuated poverty. In a report published by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of Nigeria, it was revealed that a significant portion of the country's population was living in poverty. The Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010 report, released in Abuja in February 2012, indicated that approximately 69% of Nigerians—equivalent to about 112.519 million individuals—were living in relative poverty. This statistic underscored the widespread economic challenges faced by the country at the time, highlighting the urgent need for policy interventions to address poverty and improve living conditions (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing textual analysis to explore themes of leadership, poverty, and crisis in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The primary objective is to critically assess the novel's depiction of leadership failures and their socio-economic implications while drawing parallels with Nigeria's present-day governance challenges. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine how Adichie portrays leadership and its role in exacerbating the Nigerian-Biafran conflict.
2. Analyze the interconnections between leadership, poverty, and crisis in the novel.
3. Evaluate how the themes in *Half of a Yellow Sun* reflect contemporary leadership challenges in Nigeria.

4. Advocate for transformational and servant leadership as necessary paradigms for addressing Nigeria's governance crisis.

This study argues that the conditions that led to the Nigerian-Biafran War, as depicted in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, have not been adequately addressed, and if left unresolved, could precipitate further political instability. As Achebe asserts, "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" (2012:1), an assertion that remains relevant in contemporary discourse. This research, therefore, underscores the need for institutional reforms, adherence to the rule of law, and the establishment of accountable governance structures to mitigate poverty and avert future crises.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leadership plays a fundamental role in shaping the socioeconomic and political landscape of any nation. In Nigeria, however, a persistent leadership crisis has contributed significantly to widespread poverty, political instability, and recurring conflicts (Ake, 1996; Agbaje, 2018). Scholars have consistently linked Nigeria's governance challenges to an inept, corrupt, and self-serving leadership structure that perpetuates economic underdevelopment and societal discontent (Achebe, 2012; Osaghae, 2019). Despite various political transitions and reform efforts, the country continues to grapple with deep-seated leadership deficiencies, leading to cyclical crises such as ethno-religious violence, economic recessions, and deteriorating national unity.

Existing studies on Nigerian leadership and poverty have primarily focused on empirical analyses of governance failures, economic policies, and their impact on national development (Ogunmilade, A. et.al, 2017; Olayiwola, A.R.O 2013, Okeke, R. C., & Idike, A.N. 2016, Osaghae, 1998). However, there has been limited scholarly attention to how these themes are represented and critiqued in literary texts, particularly in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), which provides a historical yet enduring perspective on the consequences of failed leadership. While critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been applied in literary studies to examine power relations, ideological constructs, and social injustices (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), its application to the intersection of leadership, poverty, and crisis in Nigerian literature remains underexplored. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this academic gap by employing Fairclough's CDA framework to analyze how Adichie's novel portrays leadership failures and their impact on societal instability. The Nigerian-Biafran War (1967–1970), as depicted in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, serves as a historical case study for

understanding contemporary leadership dysfunctions in Nigeria. Adichie's narrative illustrates how political greed, ethno-religious divisions, and economic exploitation fueled the war—factors that remain prevalent in Nigeria's current political climate (Nnoli, 2003). This research problem is particularly relevant given Nigeria's ongoing struggles with insurgencies, secessionist agitations, and governance failures, which bear striking similarities to the pre-war period depicted in the novel. The study contends that the lessons from *Half of a Yellow Sun* are not merely historical but have direct implications for present-day Nigeria, where unresolved leadership issues continue to threaten national cohesion and economic stability.

This research aims to address a crucial gap in scholarship by integrating literary analysis with political discourse studies to examine leadership, poverty, and crisis in Nigeria. While there is substantial research on governance and economic underdevelopment in Nigeria, few studies have examined how fictional narratives like *Half of a Yellow Sun* serve as socio-political commentaries on these issues. The study contributes to the field of Pragmatics and Discourse Studies by applying CDA to a literary text, demonstrating how language in literature functions as a vehicle for political critique and ideological resistance.

Additionally, this study advances the discourse on African literature as a tool for political consciousness. By critically engaging with Adichie's novel, the study highlights how literary texts do not merely entertain but also interrogate leadership failures and their socio-economic consequences. This approach aligns with van Dijk's (2008) assertion that discourse in literature reflects broader societal power dynamics and historical injustices. It further contributes to policy discussions on governance and national development by drawing parallels between Adichie's fictional portrayal of leadership crises and Nigeria's contemporary political realities. The findings will provide valuable insights for scholars in political science, literature, and development studies, reinforcing the role of literature in shaping public discourse and influencing governance reforms.

CONCEPTUALREVIEW

In this section, we review the three major concepts being addressed in this research namely: leadership, poverty and crisis. Leadership is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been studied extensively across various disciplines, including management, psychology, sociology, and political science. At its core, leadership is the process of influencing, guiding, and inspiring others to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2021). It involves not only setting a vision but also motivating followers to work collaboratively towards that vision. According to Burns, leadership is "the reciprocal process of mobilizing by persons with certain motives

and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers" (1978:425). This definition highlights the relational and contextual nature of leadership, emphasizing the dynamic interactions between leaders and followers. The prevailing definition of leadership as behavior that influences people toward shared goals was underscored by Seeman (1960) who described leadership as "acts by persons which influence other persons in a shared direction" (53).

Several theoretical perspectives have shaped the conceptualization of leadership over time. The trait theory of leadership, one of the earliest approaches, suggests that effective leaders possess inherent personality traits such as intelligence, confidence, and integrity (Stogdill, 1948). However, this perspective has been criticized for its deterministic outlook, leading to the development of behavioral theories that focus on leaders' actions rather than inherent traits. According to Blake and Mouton (1964), effective leadership is determined by a leader's ability to balance task-oriented and people-oriented behaviors.

Burns (1978) is credited for initiating a movement defining leadership as a transformational process, stating that leadership occurs "when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 83). Transformational leadership theory is further popularized by Bass (1985), who emphasized the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance and personal development. His approach highlights the importance of vision, inspiration, and emotional appeal, distinguishing transformational leaders from transactional leaders who primarily focus on exchanges and rewards. In contrast, servant leadership, as described by Greenleaf (1977), focuses on the leader's role as a servant who prioritizes the needs and growth of followers, emphasizing empathy, stewardship, and community building.

In contemporary discourse, leadership is increasingly viewed as a socially constructed and context-dependent phenomenon. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, leadership is understood as a discursive practice that is shaped by language, power relations, and social contexts (Fairclough, 2010). This approach highlights the role of language in constructing leadership identities and legitimizing authority. It also emphasizes how leadership discourse reflects and reinforces social hierarchies and power dynamics.

Generally, the concept of leadership is dynamic and evolving, shaped by historical, cultural, and social contexts. It is not merely about authority or command but involves influencing,

motivating, and empowering followers to achieve shared objectives. As leadership continues to be a critical factor in organizational, political, and social change, understanding its conceptual foundations is essential for effective practice and research.

Conceptual Review of Poverty

Poverty aside from making life a struggle for those mired in it, impacts entire economies. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses not only economic deprivation but also social exclusion, lack of access to essential services, and powerlessness. It is commonly understood as a condition of inadequate resources to meet basic human needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare (World Bank, 2022). However, poverty goes beyond income insufficiency, affecting individuals' well-being, dignity, and opportunities for social participation (Sen, 1999).

Traditionally, poverty has been measured using income-based approaches, focusing on absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to a condition where individuals cannot afford the minimum necessities for survival, often measured by the international poverty line of \$2.15 per day (World Bank, 2022). This approach emphasizes the material aspect of poverty, defining it in terms of a fixed standard regardless of the societal context. In contrast, relative poverty is defined in relation to societal norms and standards of living. It considers individuals as poor if they are unable to attain the average lifestyle of their society, thereby highlighting social inequality and exclusion (Lister, 2004). Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach provides a broader conceptualization of poverty by emphasizing the deprivation of capabilities and freedoms necessary for individuals to lead fulfilling lives. Sen argues that poverty should not be viewed merely as low income but as a lack of basic capabilities such as education, health, and social participation. This perspective shifts the focus from economic resources to the opportunities and choices available to individuals, highlighting how social, political, and cultural factors shape poverty. According to Sen (1999), "poverty is not just a lack of money; it is not having the capability to realize one's full potential as a human being" (87).

From a social exclusion perspective, poverty is seen as the outcome of systematic marginalization and denial of rights, leading to a lack of access to social networks, political participation, and public services (Silver, 1994). This view emphasizes the relational aspects of poverty, focusing on power dynamics, social hierarchies, and discrimination that restrict

individuals' opportunities and agency. In this context, poverty is not merely a personal predicament but a consequence of structural inequalities and social injustices.

In contemporary discourse, poverty is also examined through a multidimensional lens that incorporates economic, social, and psychological dimensions. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), developed by Alkire and Foster (2011), measures poverty, using multiple indicators, including education, health, and living standards. This approach recognizes that poverty is not just about income deficiency but involves a complex interplay of factors affecting overall human development.

So, within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), poverty is viewed as a discursive construct shaped by language, power relations, and social ideologies (Fairclough, 2010). Therefore, understanding poverty from a multidimensional perspective allows for more comprehensive and inclusive policy interventions aimed at sustainable development and social justice.

Conceptual Review of Crisis

Crisis is a complex and multifaceted concept that denotes a situation of intense difficulty, instability, or danger that disrupts the normal functioning of a society, organization, or individual. It is characterized by uncertainty, urgency, and a need for immediate decision-making (Boin et al., 2016). According to Rosenthal, Charles, and 't Hart, a crisis is "a serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a system, which under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances necessitates making critical decisions" (1989:10). This definition underscores the disruptive nature of crises and highlights their impact on societal structures, values, and leadership.

Crises can be categorized into different types, including natural disasters, economic recessions, political conflicts, and humanitarian emergencies. Each type of crisis has distinct characteristics and triggers, yet they share common features such as urgency, uncertainty, and the need for rapid response (Hermann, 1963). In the political context, crises often arise from leadership failures, governance deficits, or systemic inequalities, leading to conflicts, social unrest, and humanitarian challenges (Boin et al., 2016). These political crises are frequently linked to poverty and power struggles, particularly in developing countries where resource allocation and political authority are contested (Collier, 2007).

The Nigerian context provides a critical lens for examining crisis, as the country has experienced multiple political and humanitarian crises rooted in leadership failures, ethnic tensions, and economic disparities. The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970),

depicted in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, is a significant example of how leadership decisions, political manipulation, and ethnic polarization can escalate into a national crisis. Adichie portrays the crisis as a multidimensional phenomenon, affecting political stability, economic survival, and social identity. She illustrates how leadership rhetoric and political discourse were used to justify violence, influence public opinion, and manipulate ethnic sentiments, leading to humanitarian catastrophes (Adichie, 2006).

From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, crisis is not merely an objective event but a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by language, power relations, and ideologies (Fairclough, 2010). CDA emphasizes how crisis narratives are framed through political discourse, influencing public perception and social action. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie demonstrates how political leaders utilized ethnic stereotypes and historical narratives to construct a divisive discourse that justified political actions and exacerbated the crisis. This discursive construction of crisis illustrates how language is instrumental in legitimizing authority, maintaining power structures, and marginalizing vulnerable groups.

ANALYSIS

Literature mirrors and reflects society. On the question of leadership, poverty and crisis in Africa fiction, artists are conscious of the fact that growth and modernization in Africa are impeded and stamped by bad leadership. The artist creates caricatures of African leaders, exposing their slavish mentality, lack of organizing ability, business acumen and concern for the governed. Leaders are power brokers and it will be imperative at this juncture to point out the fact that leadership to a greater extent affects or rather influences national development. So, applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in this study examines how language and narrative structures in the novel reflect and critique the socio-political dynamics of the era.

1. Leadership and Power Dynamics

Adichie critically portrays the complexities of leadership during the Nigerian Civil War, highlighting the interplay between political authority and personal agency. The novel underscores the military's influence over civilian life, often leading to dire consequences. From the novel, we see some vivid illustrations,

"Ugwu moved closer to the door to listen; he was fascinated by Rhodesia, by what was happening in the south of Africa. He could not comprehend people that looked like Mr. Richard taking away the things that belonged to people that looked like him, Ugwu, for no reason at all" (2006:113-114). This passage reflects Ugwu's growing awareness of racial and

political injustices, mirroring the broader implications of leadership decisions on marginalized communities.

- **Intellectuals and Political Discourse:** Characters like Odenigbo represent the intellectual elite, whose revolutionary rhetoric often contrasts with their actions.

"They will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered River Niger. That is rubbish. Our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park's grandfather was born. But in your exam, write that it was Mungo Park (2006:13)." Here, Odenigbo's statement critiques colonial narratives, yet his advice to conform in exams highlights the complexities and contradictions within resistance movements.

- **Ideological Constructs and Power Relations**

The narrative delves into the ideologies that underpin power structures, revealing how discourse shapes and is shaped by societal hierarchies.

- **Colonial Legacy and Education:** The novel critiques the lingering colonial influences on education and knowledge production.

"They will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered River Niger. That is rubbish. Our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park's grandfather was born."

This challenges the dominant historical narratives imposed by colonial powers, advocating for a reclamation of indigenous knowledge.

- **Propaganda and Public Perception:** The use of media to shape public opinion is evident in the portrayal of radio broadcasts.

"The radio crackled, 'The Supreme Leader assures peace and prosperity.' Olanna turned away, knowing it was a lie." This juxtaposition of official statements with personal disillusionment exposes the manipulative power of propaganda in sustaining authoritative regimes.

2. Symbolism and Metaphorical Language

Adichie's use of symbolism enriches the narrative, offering deeper insights into the themes of leadership, poverty, and crisis.

- **The Biafran Flag:** The flag's imagery encapsulates the aspirations and struggles of the Biafran people. Already important for its connection to the book's title, the Biafran flag is a source of several metaphorical meanings. Olanna, during one of her lessons, presents the flag to the class and explains the specific connection of each color: "Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra would have, and, finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future (2006:352). Considered as a single object, the flag can be

seen as a metaphor for Biafra's short, troubled, and hopeful history. The foundations of Biafra represented by color indicate emergence from suffering into a better society. Later, reminders of Biafra - particularly the nation's currency - will be mementos of an idealistic and doomed experiment in self-rule. This description symbolizes the collective memory, grief, and hope driving the secessionist movement.

- **The 'Half of a Yellow Sun':** The titular image serves as a metaphor for a nation in transition. "Half of a yellow sun hung low in the sky, a reminder of a nation broken in two." This reflects the fragmentation and uncertainty characterizing Nigeria during the civil war, as well as the incomplete realization of Biafra's independence.

In the novel, Adichie x-rays the evil in war. The Nigerian-Biafran war as vividly captured by the author is a war which caused three years of fighting, famine and disease; caused the death of hundreds of thousands of Igbo men, women and children; a war which to reap art a nation and a war which seems to have been forgotten by the European nations that used it as a battlefield for their own power struggle. Colonialism brings about ethnicity and ethnicity brings about tribal preferences.

It will be gathered from history that the British favoured the northerners. In January 1950, in Ibadan, during the General Conference, the Emirs of Zaria and Kastina announced that: "Unless the Northern Region is allotted fifty percent of the seats in the central legislature, it will ask for separation from the rest of Nigeria on the arrangement existing before 1914 "(Forsyth 1969:21). They got their wish and Northern domination of the center becomes an inbuilt feature of Nigerian politics and this is one of the effects of colonialism on African leadership. According to the Book: *The World was Silent When we Died* written by Richard, one of the characters in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*,

The British preferred the North. The heat there was pleasantly dry: the Hausa Fulani were narrow-featured and therefore superior to the Negroid southerners, Muslim and therefore as civilized as one could get formatives; feudal and therefore perfect for indirect rule. Equable emirs collected taxes for the British, and the British in return, kept the Christian missionaries away. The humid south, on the other hand, was full of mosquitoes and animists and disparate tribes. The Yoruba were the largest in the southwest. In the southeast, the Igbos lived in small republican communities. They were non-docile and worryingly ambitious, since they did not have the good sense to have kings, the British created warrant chiefs, because indirect rule cost the

crowns less. Missionaries were allowed in to tame the pagans and the Christianity and education they brought flourished. In 1914, the governor-general joined the North and the South and Nigeria was born (Adichie 2006:188).

It is evident that some of Nigeria's current challenges can be traced back to colonialism. The colonial powers introduced education, religion, and political systems, which collectively contributed to the issues the country faces today. Instead of merging the various ethnic groups through amalgamation—a move that clearly served the colonizers' selfish interests—they should have allowed these groups to exist as independent entities.

For according to Forsyth;

By May 30, 1967, when Biafra seceded, not only was Nigerian either happy nor harmonious, but it had for the five previous years stumbled from crisis to crisis and had three times already come to the verge of disintegration. In each case, although the immediate spark had been political, the fundamental cause had been tribal hostility embedded in this enormous and artificial nation. For Nigeria had never been more than an amalgam of people welded together in the interests and for the benefit of a European power (1969:13).

Another effect of colonialism on African leadership is corruption. Forsyth in his *The Making of An African Legend: The Biafra Story*, tells us that 'corruption in public life was no new thing; it has been present under the British, and has flowered alarmingly after independence (1969:27). It is one of the legacies they left us alongside their civilization.

In Kainene's discussion with Olanna after the visit of chief Okonji, the Finance Minister, we find out that Olanna is used as a sex bait to advance her father's business. She refuses, and when Kainene confronts her, she tells her that their father will still give him ten percent after all. Kainene tells her that, the ten percent is standard so extras always help (2006:36). This is corruption in high places. Whatever evil our leaders commit as related in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and even to day is a result of what their colonial masters left for them; the only difference is that they have so much mastered the skills they acquired.

Nigerian leaders often lack the refined qualities required for effective leadership. Their excessive desire for material wealth leads to widespread dissatisfaction among the poor masses, which, in turn, triggers social unrest. This leadership crisis, as depicted in the novel under study, mirrors the circumstances that led to the Nigerian-Biafran conflict—a conflict whose repercussions are still evident today.

Furthermore, pre-independence elections in Nigeria in 1959 and the proclamation of the Republic of Nigeria to the secession of Biafra and the civil war which ends with the triumph of the idea of an indivisible Nigeria are some of the unwholesome events which take place in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The leaders contributed immensely to the crisis through their bad and visionless leadership. The high functionaries of the state, civil and military, act with such recklessness that nothing but calamity and widespread suffering often result. Those who set the stage for disaster are the politicians; they indulge in conspicuous living and shameless display of wealth which they looted from the National treasury.

Insensitivity of the leaders is showcased as one of the problems that results in the war. Odenigbo tells Olanna that he has decided to talk to Dr. Okoro about the labour strike and he says, "it's unacceptable that Balewa and his cronies should completely reject their demands. Just unacceptable. We have to show support. We can't allow ourselves to become disconnected "(2006:103). Balewa as a leader is portrayed in a bad light as a leader with no mind of his own. On the issue as to why Balewa broke off diplomatic relations with France, Odenigbo has this to say:

It's quite clear Balewa did it because he wants to take away attention from his defense pact with the British. And he knows that slighting the French will always please his masters the British. He's their stooge. They put him there and they tell him what to do, and he does it, Westminster parliament model indeed (2006:113).

Judging from the declaration by Major Nzeogwu after the coup which involved mostly Igbos from the east of the country, one cannot help but agree that the military men were dissatisfied with the spate of corruption in the country and in order to remedy the situation, they had to unseat the leaders by force. Leaders in Nigeria have exploited the common folk mercilessly, dashed their hopes for personal interest and self-aggrandizement, and fed them the diet of unfulfilled promise. The common folk live in poverty, squalor, ignorance, sickness and weakness while the leaders and politicians live in affluence and in beautiful mansions and palaces.

Olanna's twin sister, Kainene, bitterly describes the post-independence rulers: "The new Nigerian upper class is a collection of illiterates who read nothing and eat food they dislike at over-priced Lebanese restaurants and have social conversation about one subject: "How's the new car behaving" (2006:66).

The first Nigerian government of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was incredibly unpopular because people believe he was a puppet who would do whatever the British asked him to. The British helped him to power through fraud and on the basis of the constitution that favoured him. Little wonder Odenigbo describes them as "ignoramuses in government who lie and steal" (2006:90).

The Cancer of Tribalism and Indiscipline

Tribalism just like cancer is an evil or dangerous thing that spreads quickly. It is the monster that fanned the embers of the Nigerian/Biafran conflict. Chinua Achebe gives us a very brief but concise definite on of tribalism. He tells us that it is "discrimination against a citizen because of his place of birth" (1983:8). To prevent a citizen from living or working anywhere in his country from participating in the social, political, economic life of the community in which he chooses to live points to tribalism.

The first massacre of the Igbos in 1945 was precipitated by the British Colonial government when it blamed the Igbo people for the first national strike, banned Igbo published newspapers and generally encouraged anti-Igbo sentiment. The Nigerian/Biafran war is a war with a reason. It is not about a senseless conflict. There are clear political causes. These political causes are the proximate causes of the war.

Clearly, *Half of a Yellow Sun* deals with Biafra's desire to break away from the Nigerian state and with the often-murderous division, between people from different ethnic backgrounds. The Biafran war is about separation but the need for separation arose because of political events. The Igbo people never wanted secession until the late 1960's. They were nationalists and pro-Nigerian. But this feeling was turned around by the massacres in the north of Nigeria. It is not that people were born with the need to live where there were only Igbo speaking people. It is political events that led to those demands. Historically, the Biafran war took place between July 1967 and January 1970. As a result, between 500,000 and two million civilians died from starvation. In January 1966, a group of leftist army officers took power through a coup. Many of those involved were Igbos from the east of the country. This coup was termed an Igbo coup because no Igbo soldier was killed and then months later, a group of officers from the northern part of Nigeria carried out their own coup. These battles at the top led to great ethnic tension and massacres of the Igbos.

From the novel, one can see from the description of the Igbos that they are not loved by their people and even the outsiders. Mohammed, a Nigerian from the north could not marry Olanna who is from the east because of reasons based on ethnicity. Mohammed's

mother prefers a woman from the north because she believes Olanna will taint the lineage with infidel blood. The Igbos are viewed as infidels and as such they are inferior to their northern counterparts.

Tribalism breeds disunity. We find a situation where Igbo children are denied admission into northern schools and the Igbos had to raise money to build their own schools. One cannot deny that tribalism actually fanned the embers of Nigerian/Biafran civil war. Tribalism as a social philosophy is based on the construction of series of imaginary boundaries which establish the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. Ojukwu tells us that "based on this dichotomy, each ethnic group assumes then an appropriate aggressive posture towards 'them' beyond the so conceived boundary. It is the persistence of this boundary in our actions and in our reflexes that fosters tribalism in Nigeria" (Ojukwu1989:19).

Nothing could be more true than the above statement as nothing can account for the heartless and merciless killing of the Igbos in the north. Olanna tells us about the woman who carries the bodiless head of her daughter in a calabash and how Arize's stomach was ripped open by the heartless northerners. Richard Churchill is an eyewitness to the gruesome murder of Igbos at the airport. Before his very eyes, Nnaemeka's chest was blown open and he died because he is an Igbo man in Kano. He claims he is from Katsina and he is asked to say 'Allahu Akbar'. Richard tells us that he would not say that because his accent would give him away.

Tribalism and indiscipline contributed immensely to the Nigerian/Biafran conflict. As a result of the gruesome killing, the Igbos opted for secession, as they no longer see themselves as part of Nigeria. In the spirit of unity and oneness and for peace to reign, Ojukwu declared the south eastern region as Republic of Biafra. The coup d'état of July 25, 1966 brought into the government of Nigeria another military gentleman by the name of Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon as the new head of state. The Igbos wanted a unitary government but the Northerners felt that they will be cheated out of civil service if this is done. The revenge coup which the northern army officers carried out and the gruesome massacres of the Igbos in the north are the political events which lead to the Nigerian/Biafran conflict. The security of the Igbos is threatened and the discovery of oil in 1958, means that there was a glittering prize to a government that could hold the country together. This means crushing any moves towards the Igbo independence movement. In May 1967, Col Odumegwu Ojukwu proclaimed in the southern parliament the secession of the south eastern region from Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra.

We can hear a group of lecturers discussing the latest development, which is the issue of secession. Odenigbo, the mathematician says that:

Secessionist he only answer, Gowon wanted to keep this country united, he would have done something long ago. For goodness sake not one of them has come out to condemn the massacres, and months have passed! It is as if all our people who were killed don't matter! Didn't you hear what Zik said the other day? Eastern Nigeria see these, seethes and will continue to see the until the federal government addresses the massacres, 'Professor Ezeka said, his hoarse voice quickly fading. (2006:161-162)

The proximate cause of the war can still be pointed to the fact that Gowon according to Adichie did not stick to the agreement reached at Aburi. The indignation felt by the lecturers in the University of Nigeria Nsukka is given vent to by Okeoma. He says, "He agreed to confederation at Aburi, and now he wants one Nigeria with a unitary government but a unitary government was the very reason that he and his people killed Igbo officers" (2006:162).

The Book: *The World was Silent when we Died*, gives us an insight into the remote causes of the Nigerian civil war. It tells us that the North was wary: it feared domination from the more educated south and has always wanted a country separate from the infidel south anyway. But the British had to preserve Nigeria as it was, their prized creation, their large market, a thorn in France's eye. To appropriate the North, they fixed the Pre-independence elections in favour of the North and wrote a new constitution which gave the North control of the central government. Nothing was done about the clamour of the minority groups, and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies. At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of fragments held in a fragile clasp.

The issue of bad leadership, tribalism, disunity and corruption has drag Nigeria into a mess that she cannot extricate herself from. Achebe says that if peace must return and another conflict forestalled, then ethnicism must be diffused by laying more emphasis on citizenship and place of residence rather than state of origin and tribe. Doing this will help in reducing the level of disunity existing in our society.

The summary of what the Biafrans suffer during the conflict or crisis is written by one of the characters in the novel; What the character Richard writes in the seventh part of the book, "The World Was Silent When We Died" is about the dismal suffering of the victims

of the war. The title of the book is however rephrased as, "Were You Silent When We Died?" And it is written in a poetic form:

Did you see photos in sixty-eight of children with their hair becoming rust sickly patches, nestled on those small heads then falling off like rotten leaves on dust? Imagine children with arms like tooth picks, with football bellies and skin stretched thin. It was kwashiorkor-- difficult word, a word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin. You need not imagine. There were photos displayed in glossfilled pages of your life. Did you see? Did you feel sorry briefly, and then turn round to hold your lover or wife? Their skin has turned the tawny a weak tea and showed cobwebs of vein and brittle bones; Naked children laughing, as if the man would not take photos and then leave, alone (2006:384).

This moment is particularly powerful because it captures the devastating consequences of war, particularly on innocent children who suffer from malnutrition, starvation, and disease. The author Adichie, vividly portrays the humanitarian crisis with heart-wrenching imagery— Biafran children with kwashiorkor. Through Richard's perspective, the book critiques the world's indifference to the genocide and suffering of the Biafran people.

Recommendation

Based on the critical discourse analysis of leadership, poverty, and crisis in Nigeria as depicted in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, several recommendations can be made to address the underlying issues and promote sustainable development and social justice.

First, there is a need for transformative leadership that prioritizes national unity, social equity, and good governance. Nigerian leaders should adopt a servant leadership approach that emphasizes accountability, transparency, and public welfare (Greenleaf, 1977). Leadership training programs should be implemented to develop leaders who are ethically responsible and capable of managing diversity and conflicts constructively. Additionally, political institutions should be strengthened to ensure checks and balances, reducing the concentration of power and mitigating leadership abuse

Second, addressing poverty in Nigeria requires a multidimensional approach that goes beyond income redistribution. Social policies should focus on enhancing capabilities, providing quality education, healthcare, and social protection to marginalized communities (Sen, 1999). Government interventions should prioritize inclusive economic growth, job

creation, and equitable resource distribution to bridge the regional and socio-economic disparities highlighted in the novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns and community empowerment initiatives should be promoted to reduce social exclusion and enhance political participation among vulnerable groups.

Third, effective crisis management strategies are essential to prevent political conflicts and humanitarian crises. Nigerian leaders should adopt proactive conflict resolution mechanisms that promote dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation among diverse ethnic groups. This requires deconstructing divisive political discourses that fuel ethnic tensions, as depicted in Adichie's narrative. A national reorientation program that fosters social cohesion and national identity is crucial for healing historical wounds and preventing future crises.

Fourth, the role of language and political discourse in constructing social realities and influencing public perception should be acknowledged. Media literacy programs should be introduced to educate citizens on critically analyzing political narratives and propaganda. Additionally, media regulation frameworks should be strengthened to promote responsible journalism and prevent the spread of divisive discourses that exacerbate social conflicts.

Lastly, further research should be conducted to explore the interconnectedness of leadership, poverty, and crisis in Nigeria using interdisciplinary approaches. This includes examining how historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors shape political discourses and social structures. By contextualizing these issues within Nigeria's socio-political landscape, scholars can contribute to more nuanced and effective policy solutions.

Conclusion

This study critically examined leadership, poverty, and crisis in Nigeria through a discourse analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The narrative provides a powerful depiction of how leadership failures, political manipulation, and ethnic polarization contributed to the Nigerian Civil War, leading to widespread poverty and humanitarian crisis. Adichie's portrayal of leadership illustrates the complex interplay between power, language, and social identity, highlighting how political discourse constructs social realities and influences public perception.

The analysis revealed that leadership in Nigeria has been historically characterized by ethnic favoritism, corruption, and a lack of accountability, exacerbating poverty and social inequalities. This aligns with Achebe's (1983) argument that Nigeria's crisis is rooted in leadership failure and governance deficits. Additionally, the study

demonstrated how poverty in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is portrayed as a multidimensional phenomenon, affecting not only economic survival but also social identity and political agency. This underscores the need for a multidimensional approach to poverty alleviation that addresses structural inequalities and social exclusion.

Furthermore, the study illustrated how political crises are discursively constructed through narratives that legitimize authority, justify violence, and manipulate public sentiment. Adichie's use of historical narratives and ethnic stereotypes reveals the role of language in constructing political realities and sustaining power hierarchies. This emphasizes the importance of critical discourse analysis in understanding the relationship between leadership, poverty, and crisis, particularly in postcolonial contexts where historical and cultural narratives influence contemporary politics. And by employing Fairclough's CDA framework, this study further interrogates the interplay between discourse, ideology, and social identity, thereby demonstrating the role of language in sustaining or challenging hegemonic structures.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the need for transformative leadership, inclusive social policies, and proactive crisis management strategies to address the interrelated challenges of leadership, poverty, and crisis in Nigeria. It also highlights the importance of deconstructing political discourses that perpetuate social divisions and power imbalances. By contextualizing these issues within Nigeria's historical and socio-political landscape, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding leadership, poverty, and crisis, offering valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and social activists committed to promoting social justice and sustainable development in Nigeria.

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