

Vol. 8 | Social and development concerns in Africa (c)

Vol. 8 Article 7/10 | October 2019

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(An International Publisher for Academic and Scientific Resources)

PORTRAYAL OF THE FATHER FIGURE IN REFERENCE TO THE ESSENCE OF AN AFRICAN CHILD’S SENSE OF BELONGING IN RICHARD WRIGHT’S *NATIVE SON* AND ALICE WALKER’S *THE COLOUR PURPLE*

Authors: ¹Lokanga Nkamaka, ²Lucy Nabukonde and ³Shem Mwalwa

^{1,2&3}The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya. P.O BOX 62157 00200, Nairobi, Kenya

Website: www.cuea.edu

Corresponding author: Lokanga Nkamaka. Email: patricklok2017@gmail.com

<p>Chief Editor Web: www.ijsdc.org Email: info@ijsdc.org</p> <p>Editing Oversight Impericals Consultants International Limited</p>	<p>Abstract: <i>Literature is a tool with which literary authors deliver an important lesson to the society. Therefore, his study sought the essence of an African Child’s sense of belonging in Richard Wright’s Native Son and Alice Walker’s The Colour Purple. The selected authors are contextualized in America but they are Africans through and through as far the essence of an African Child’s sense of belonging is concerned. This article captures: the portrayal of the father figure in reference to the essence of an African child’s sense of belonging in Richard Wright’s Native Son and Alice Walker’s The Colour Purple by starting with statement of the problem: literary works have endeavoured to demonstrate how humanity strives to belong somewhere or to some group but most especially to the human family in which they have been created. The literary authors suggest that belonging somewhere is the most prestigious thing that a human being can have in life. They equally declare that the worst gift that humanity could offer to members of its community is to deny them and mistreat them. Psychoanalytic theory is justified by the fact that: the protagonists in the two texts suffered a lot in their family or society because of the lack of the essence of the sense of belonging. Due their suffering these characters were psychologically affected. The manner in which Richard Wright has portrayed Bigger Thomas enlightens the understanding of those who have been denied by the family members and societies. The study used this objective: To examine the portrayal of the father figure in reference to the essence of an African child’s sense of belonging in Richard Wright’s Native Son and Alice Walker’s The Colour Purple: The father’s roles in African texts have an impact on the life of their children. The lack of the father in the family created several problems in the child’s life. All the problems encountered by the main characters were caused by the lack of the father figure in the family.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>father figure, an African child, sense of belonging, Richard Wright’s Native Son and Alice Walker’s The Colour Purple</i></p>
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1.1 Background of the Study

Literature plays an important role in the society. Literary writers demonstrate in an aesthetic way the reality of what happens in the contemporary society, therefore, literature is the perfect mirror of society. Upon reading Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* and Richard Wright's *Native Son*, the experiences that struck the researcher were those of the essence of an African child's sense of belonging to family ties. Referring back to the history of Africa, the researcher realised that Africans used to exist peacefully in their own continent, however, the rude behaviour of the Europeans and their selfishness introduced slave trade whereby Africans were dismembered in their society to the extent of displacing some of them in the Southern America.

The African Americans also referred to as Black Americans are a group of people whose origin is Africa. Black Africans who are in America suffered the lack of identity due to discrimination, oppression and mistreatment as illustrated by Richard Wright in his *Native Son* and by Alice Walker in her *The Colour Purple*. In the *Native Son*, the protagonist made a lot of mistakes because of lack of the sense of belonging to the society. In writing his *Native Son* Richard Wright seems to confront issues that destroy humanity in a human person especially if that person has lost identity which is indeed his being and entire essence of life. Similarly, in *The Colour Purple* the same happens to Celie and her mother who are forced by one man to hate each other.

African people held strong relationships with the family members and an essence of an African child's sense of belonging to family ties performed an important heroic part. As children started advancing body wise and mind wise they eventually achieved a sense of self-worth. When African children experience a sense of identity, and a sense of belonging to their families or societies, they grow morally upright and emotionally stable to cherish friendship and to escalate acceptance of the diversity of other human beings. No wonder Frederic Douglass in his biography argues that, it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men (Douglass, 1817). The broken hearted men that Douglass refers to in his biography are the people who trouble the world and make it to suffer every now and then. It is almost true that all Africans who have suffered some abuse and damage in human development are the very ones who are gangsters stealing at gun point, killing other people without any good reason, torturing citizens in some countries and joining rebels in countries where wars have become daily friend of some man. In essence broken men are the people who rape women just like the step father of Celie in Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*. The broken hearted men do not know the word love or mercy. So this type of men is the human poison in the human society.

Several psychologists, fiction and nonfiction writers alike identify a sense of belonging as a basic human need (Erikson, 1969:238; Maslow, 1970:43; Alderfer, 1989:351; Max-Neef, 1991:33). Studies have been conducted from various fictional writings on identity of Africans who are very proud of being black as part of their identity. It is the reason why these people are happy about who they are. The Africans have mastered that black is a brand which cannot be changed and will never change because; it is good the way it is. For instance W.E.D du Bois 's *The Souls of Black* (1903), Marita Bonner's *On Being Young-a Woman-and Colored* (1925), Zora Neale Hurston's *How it Feels to be Colored me* (1928) and Chimamanda Ngozi's *Americanah* (2013), demonstrate that black and its different shades should be tolerated for its uniqueness .

Literature captures people's values, philosophy, cultural milieu, feelings and family experiences on the pages of a book. Many a literary authors suggest that the sense of family participation is

very important for the construction of a home in Africa. The family ties are significant for African people since they define who they are. This is why Africans usually guard their family ties jealously. As a people, Africans know that once a person loses an essence of the sense of belonging, it will be hard for the African society to recuperate him or her into one. The study assumes that the essence of the sense of belonging in the literary texts by Wright and Walker seems to be the strongest personation ever produced by these writers.

In Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*, Celie only finds ground when Shug Avery tells her that she was very important to her just like a virgin.

Therefore, literary authors especially the two under investigation seem to propose that the essence of the sense of belonging is fundamentally necessary for all human beings. The family is there in order to support the children and to help them to make good choices in life. The family ought not to stand against a choice of someone by accusing him or her that he or she has this or that. It is in the family that people learn how to love, forgive or even how to work independently and also in a team. African literary authors argue that it is in a family that an African child learns good manners and it is where he or she learns how to speak to the elders and other members of the society. The family also teaches one history and tradition of his people and of the entire society. The family prepares good citizens for the society or the country. The good family experience is the best preparation one employs to establish himself or herself for serious roles in the society. The family is a school where people learn how to cope with the life and the environment. The literary scholars seem to advocate that the family is critical for helping African children acquire values and behaviours that might make it easier for them to adjust to their surrounding (Parke & Buriel, 1998). It would be important to scrutinise in the real stories of Richard Wright and Alice Walker to establish how tactfully these two endeavour to explain the struggles that alienate people of their identity and the essence of the sense of belonging.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Over the centuries literary works have endeavoured to demonstrate how humanity strives to belong somewhere or to some group but most especially to the human family in which they have been created. The literary authors suggest that belonging somewhere is the most prestigious thing that a human being can have in life. They equally declare that the worst gift that humanity could offer to members of its community is to deny them and mistreat them (ones' own people) or to remove the essence of their sense of belonging. As a matter of fact the essence of an African child's sense of belonging in Wright's *Native Son* and Walker's *The Colour Purple* has not been exhaustively studied under its main umbrella of African Literature.

Understanding of African people especially those who were depressed or those who continued to be depressed is very critical for the literary study. When parents or caregivers cannot fulfill the basic needs, like a sense of belonging for their children; the children grow up with feelings of insecurity, which may lead to behavioural and relational problems. No wonder Charlotte Peters argues that there are many perspectives with which to discover what it means for one to belong to a family. What do these characters see in their families? How important is it to feel like they did not belong? May be they ought to have returned to a community to really feel like they belonged there?

This is how that identity of an African becomes a serious issue that needs attention. In order to

understand the relationship between the aesthetics and the essence of a sense of belonging in the two texts under study, a study needs to be done. The lack of an essence of a sense of belonging of the Africans children who were alienated shows need for more literary inquiry and criticism in the contemporary society. This is the reason why this study focuses on the two texts of the twentieth century by Richard Wright a man and Alice Walker a woman to fill that gap that exists when texts are written on a singular subject from both male and female perspectives.

1.3 Research Objective

To examine the portrayal of the father figure in reference to the essence of an African child's sense of belonging in Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alice Walker's *Colour Purple*.

1.4 Justification of the Study

The study investigating the essence of an African child's a sense of belonging in Wright's *Native Son* and Walker's *The Colour Purple* is exceedingly justified in that literature as the mirror of society directly or indirectly concentrates around this issue yet there is limited critical commentary on the same.

Literary writers seem to suggest that the essence of sense of belonging somewhere especially to the family is crucial for the formation of every person's identity. Therefore, identity becomes necessary for all human beings simply because it makes them feel at easy and happy as people. It has been realized that in our two narratives especially *Native Son*, the protagonists made a lot of mistakes simply because they had been alienated of their identity rendering the sense of belonging to family messed up. In both Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* the protagonists have been badly affected psychologically, socially, physically and culturally hence lack of self-identity, the essence of humanity and a sense of belonging to the family or in the society.

Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* seem to portray a negative family depiction of the essence of an African child's sense of belonging to the family. Moreover these negative family experiences might have a strong negative impact on the social life of the protagonists in both narratives and this becomes urgent to undertake a study so as to establish how the two authors unfold the subject.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study may contribute to the body of knowledge not just that of African literature but also to the international one. It might also provide valuable information for scholars, researchers and academicians; even those who might be interested in the subject of literary presentation on the essence of an African child's sense of belonging to the family. It may demonstrate the consequences of an African child missing the essence of the sense of belonging to the family and the society.

The characters in the texts under study seem to have been affected by rejection and psychological torture hence this study might inspire a corrective action towards restoring human dignity among African youths and children. Suggestions of from the study might caution future society to avoid its further consequences.

1.6 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study dealt with two primary texts: Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*. These works seem to treat human identity and an essence of the sense of belonging to the family. The protagonists in these works face sharp rejection. Any attempt on their side to achieve self-estimation meets with trauma, violence and poverty. There is no consolation except sociological problems and other issues which make a fertile ground for studying them under the psychoanalytic and naturalistic literary aesthetics.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to dealing with the essence of an African child's sense of belonging to the family in the two sampled literary texts. This was the purpose of allowing an in-depth analysis of Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*. The researcher considered the two novels, both from African American literature but in African point of view since the sense of belonging to the family seems persistent in the contemporary society particular among the African race.

So, the essence of a sense of belonging is very important area of the research because every human being needs to belong somewhere most especially in the human family. The contrary of belonging somewhere is disastrous. The protagonists of the two narratives seem to suffer simply because of the lack of an essence of a sense of belonging to the family and society. In *Native Son* Thomas Bigger appeared to make a lot of mistakes because of fear and lack of a sense of belonging. In Alice Walker's *Colour Purple* Celie seems to become a victim of rape by a family member.

1.8 Literature Review

Theoretical review

This chapter analyzes the existing literature that is related to the research problem. Kombo and Tromp (2016) argue that "literature review" refers to the analysis of textbooks, magazines, journals, dissertations and research manuscripts. The literature review in terms of scholarship in this study means the works the researcher has consulted in order to investigate the research problem and to understand it better, therefore, the literature review in this study forms an account of what has been published and that which has a bearing on the topic of study according to accredited scholars and researchers. For that reason, this section examines the available literature review in such a way that it may make valuable contribution to the study and form an integral part of the entire research process at almost every operational step, objective by objective (Kumar, 2014: 48).

Some studies in various fields have been conducted on an essence of the sense of belonging in general and scholars are of the consensus that an essence of an African child's sense of belonging forms the foundation of adulthood. An essence of the sense of belonging basically designates the security of every individual in the society.

Nevertheless, most of these writers who have written about the essence of an African child's sense of belonging come from other fields of studies especially psychology and not necessarily from literature. There is a mention of the essence of an African child's sense of belonging in the exodus of African American Literature and yet this has undergone through the different stages. Among them we have one group of African who denounced slavery and its abuses and another group; the Harlem Renaissance who placed great emphasis on the African identity. The other group that

deserves mentions is that of pioneering African American writers who strongly held African perspectives on a sense of identity. This is whereby African Americans after acquiring formal education started to write about their experiences during slavery. In that writing they narrated their wholesome experiences that particularly demonstrated what they went through since they lacked an essence of the sense of belonging to their larger African community.

During those days most of their writings were; autobiography, slave narratives or letters which not only denounced slavery but also portrayed African identity through the pen commitment. Phillis Wheatley (1773) wrote *Being Brought from Africa*. This writing pleaded with the consciousness of most people in regard to the manner in which African Americans were being treated.

Empirical review

In his *Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Mystery Story* Howard discusses and compares the methods of the detective work of the protagonists in Shakespeare's Hamlet and Sophocles' Oedipus Rex as they seek to discover the killers of their fathers. He argues that although Oedipus did not know that the man once murdered by him was his father, set out at one time to hunt for him. Hamlet knew proximately that the killer of his father was probably not far away from the bedroom of his very late father. Therefore, Howard observes that though the two protagonists suffer the great loss of their fathers, their bereavement is not the same. What is clear here is that both boys are orphans and the absent state of their fathers might cause future problems in their entire lives. Consequently, Howard's view informs this study on an essence of an African child's sense of belonging in Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*.

Commenting on the two poems concerning *Father and Son Emotional Bond* Kirszner et al (1963) argues that the strongest bond that has ever existed is the one between a father and his son. In the *Father and Son Emotional Bond*, the father has taken to alcohol hence has abandoned his son but the son refuses to accept a sense of despair ;instead he calls upon his father to denounce the wretched state which is taking way his light and to reclaim his sober state once again. This means that a positive portrayal of a father figure is very important for any child's normal development. Kirszner et al 's views are closely related to David (2013)'s confession in *The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* Where he likens his father to God the true loving Father:

As I (David) reflect upon my childhood, I am reminded that my dad modeled for me what it means to be a man of faith. Two times, my family moved from one coast to another coast with either a low salary or none at all. My dad believed both times that these moves were the will of God for our family. The first time, I was nine years old and simply traveled with my family, but the second time, I was fifteen. My dad included me in the discussion. He taught me that obedience to God was more important than financial gain and that God would always meet my needs. Later, as a man in my thirties with my own family, I believed God wanted us to relocate overseas to Costa Rica and then Spain as missionaries. My dad questioned me, as any loving father should, but in the end, gave us his blessing. I was able to relocate my family with relative emotional confidence because I had remembered that God provided for my dad's family while we were growing up and I knew he would provide for mine. It is our hope that our children may follow our examples in trusting God because they heard about how their grandfathers and great-grandfathers believed God. Furthermore, when they encounter life's adversity, we hope they remember how Dad trusted God and persevered under difficult circumstances. May another generation be taught of God's mighty deeds and continue to follow in the well-worn path of obedience.

(The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry 3.2: Spring/Summer 2013).

David is able to declare these noble words simple because of his own father's example and lessons taught to him by the same. Moreover, Arthur Miller wrote his play *All My Sons* to argue that immorality impacts badly on all people especially one's own sons. Wagonseller et al, (1997) in his article entitled *Learning Style and Its Relation to Exceptionality at Both Ends of the Spectrum* observes that a family should be made up of a mother, a father and two or three children, however this is not the case as some American teenagers nowadays wake up to find themselves in a single-parent home. Wagonseller et al seems to observe that fathers are abandoning their roles so quickly leaving their children to mothers to raise them single handedly. Wagonseller et al may not be literary scholars however, the observation is important for the understanding of our study concerning an essence of an African child's sense of belonging in Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*.

Furthermore, the researchers of *Portrayal of Sitcom Fathers from the 1950s to the 1990s to present* studied the portrayal of men and the portrayal of family. surprisingly the findings revealed that that 41% of all deliveries in 2008 were born to unmarried mothers, forming an increase of 55% compared to that of 1990 which was only 35%. Rendering to that research, 4 children out of 10 children were potentially growing up without a father figure. Fatherless boys were generally not being taught what it meant to be a man. Nobody coached them on how to interact with girls being boys and how to treat young ladies as real gentlemen. Worst of all was that nobody tipped them on what it means to be future fathers. Instead, they were being cultured to a certain degree that a father was not very necessary for the proper training up of an adolescent, and that adjusting to society without a father was without noticeable consequences. Therefore in the research established in *sitcoms* the portrayal or the image of the father figure had deteriorated from a father who knows best to a father who was unnecessary after all (Scharrer, et al 2009).

Darnton in his Berlin *journal discusses how* the relationship of childhood sexual abuse in adolescences affects the society and he remarks that the abuse is connected with a variety of psycho-emotional behavioural problems in both adolescence and adulthood stages. However these exploitations were deemed very dangerous for the future life of children. Darnton argues that in the case of incest between fathers and their daughters the trauma is most likely to rank very high not just for children but for fathers as well. Father-daughter incest is identified as a major cause of a number of problems in the lives of its victims. There are several theories which seek to explain the causes of father-daughter incest. This problem is an important component in relating the adult relationships of the victims. Some theorists connect the oedipal fantasy in the father to daughter relationship and vice versa. When this happens it tends to cause shame and headaches. Incest is said to be predominantly disabling a person's imminent interactive affairs. This is important for this study in that it will inform the character of the protagonists in the two texts.

Richard Eyre demonstrates by William Shakespeare's *King Lear* that this character is a typical patriarchal duplicate in literature. Eyre argues that personified in the title character in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, King Lear is portrayed as a patriarch who fails at a key point in his life to live up to the patriarchal figure. *In her article: How might We Interpret Sylvia Plath's Symbolic portrayal of a father figure in 'Daddy' ? Kondo argues that* Kafka's *Metamorphosis* demonstrates father and son relationship very well. As the play begins, the father exploits Gregor setting him as the sole family bread winner. The family affair makes Gregor overwork without keeping anything for himself. In the meantime, the father reserves part of the money for himself,

given the fact that he reared Gregor. As Gregor toils at a tiresome job to pay off his father's arrears, he counts down the years he would have to keep working until he will be free of the obligation. Meanwhile, his parents and sister continue enjoying a relaxed life at home. Nevertheless, after Gregor changes into a cockroach, he is no longer able to work hence become dependent on his father who is not able to care for him properly the way he did when he was well.

Psychoanalytic literary theory was championed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in the 1890s. Originally the theory was meant to aid the treatment of patients diagnosed with neurotic disorders. These syndromes were described as psychological problems which affected human beings by certain fluctuating degrees of distress within them, without necessarily impairing their entire reason and memory faculties. Freud had observed that psychoses did not generally impair people in their daily living, but they tended to frequently surface in the symptoms of their ailments. The nature of those sicknesses of the patients who flocked to him for treatment eventually attracted Freud's critical attention to conduct a research through case studies and laboratory tests (Hossain, 2017). The fruits of that powerful discovery are now applied to all disciplines including literature. In fact, when a reader reads a text with the lens of Freudian theories, he or she realises that psychoanalysis was meant for literature and only literature not anything else in the world.

When analyzing literary actual texts therefore, the psychoanalytic literary theory will be utilized to decipher or interpret the concealed meaning within Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*. Psychoanalytic literary theory will direct the reader to the better understanding of the selected authors' intentions in the presentation of their entire works. Freud's psychoanalytic literary theory is hoped to aid the analysis of the motives and the actions of the main characters, language use and whether or not Wright and Walker discuss the same meaning, the same way in their texts all the time.

The Freudian literary proponents seek the possible motives behind the literary work, reading "between the lines" for the author's and the characters' psychological conflicts. Freud's literary theory is a belief that most of the characters' actions are motivated by psychological forces over which people have limited control. Psychoanalysis is friendly to literary analysis only there are some abuses and misunderstandings of psychological approaches such as its heavy tendency to limit interpretation and disregard the aesthetic value of a text in favour of psychoanalyzing the authors' and characters' minds. Nevertheless the Freudian literary proponents' (Carl Jung, Jacques Lucan, Frederic C. Crews, Norman Holland, [Harold Bloom](#) and James Joyce) principles vary greatly while remaining ideally self-contained theories within theories.

This study recognizes the theorists for developing a wide corpus of knowledge ranging from human instincts to life and death, psychosexual development and defense mechanism and many others (Shehamlet, 2015). It has already been emphasized above that Freud's literary theory is a belief that most characters' actions are motivated by psychological forces over which people have limited control. Despite the cognizance of all these very powerful ideas that almost seem to summarize the entire life of a human being in both fiction and reality; our study shall be limited to selective tenets of personality and the mind. Sigmund Freud proposed that human behaviour and human personality were caused by the continuous and the distinctive interface of some contradictory psycho forces being controlled at three different levels of responsiveness. (Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman & Willingham, 2011: 222). He argues that these three altitudes were

basically; the preconscious, the [conscious](#), and the [unconscious](#) parts of the mind which were significantly responsible for prompting the type of behaviour manifest in each individual (Sandra Cherry, May, 2018).

According to Freud the preconscious mind entails anything that could hypothetically prop up in the conscious mind; whereas the conscious mind represents all the thoughts, memories, feelings, and wishes a human person is aware of at an appropriate moment. The conscious mind is the intellectual processing whereby people refer to in their rational thinking and chatting. The conscious represents people's memory though not that which is part of unconsciousness but that which is easily retrieved into awareness without difficulty. The unconscious mind on the other hand is a pool of feelings, thoughts, urges, fantasies and memories lying outside people's conscious mindfulness.

The unconscious encompasses the repressed undesirable painful feelings, hidden memories, habits, thoughts, desires, and reactions of anxiety, fear and conflict. Freud observed that the unconscious mind continues to influence peoples' behaviour and experiences, even if such individuals were unaware of their underlying motivating forces behind their actions. Moreover, the thoughts and emotions outside people's awareness continue to exert powerful influence on their behaviour. (Fogoros, May, 23, 2018). The concepts conscious and unconscious will help us to understand more fully the behaviour of the main characters in the two texts namely; *Native Son* and *The Colour Purple* simply because most of their actions in the texts are done unconsciously.

The use of psychoanalytic theory in our work is justified by the fact that in the two texts; Wright's *Native Son* and Walker's *The Colour Purple*, the main characters have undergone through the situations which somehow brought them psychological problems.

Sigmund Freud also discerned three other integral components of the human personality that is, the id, the ego, and the superego which work hand in hand with the three parts of the mind. The id is usually located at the unconscious level forming the urge (pleasure principle) to want to do something for immediate satisfaction. This aspect of personality acts according to the pleasure principle, following all the instincts and drives that are inborn in every human being.

The superego is stored within in the preconscious and it functions as the moralist and principled (ideal principle) part of one's personality including one's brain. The superego usually explains how people are raised under different environmental forces of their individual development. The superego enables every individual person to differentiate between right and wrong. The third and last part of the human personality is the ego which is found in all the three levels of awareness: the conscious, the subconscious, and preconscious. The ego is the one which usually negotiates between id and superego so that the needs of both of them may be perfectly satisfied. The ego works under the reality principle attempting to control the pleasure-seeking activity of the id that it might actualize the high demands of the outside world ([Saul McLeod](#), 2018).

Consequently, a psychoanalyst could apply Freud's analogy of the iceberg to conceptualise the mindset in human beings or characters. The conscious mind is said to represent the upper part of the iceberg towering above the waters. Moreover, the part of the iceberg that is flooded beneath the water yet, it is somehow observable is the preconscious. Furthermore, the unconscious mind is that part of the iceberg which is unseen completely, making up the gigantic underneath substance.

This is represented by those painful memories, emotions and some other embarrassing shameful junk deposited deep within the mind of the individual. (Sandra Cherry, May, 2018), (Fogoros, May, 23, 2018). This is exactly what happened to the protagonists of the two texts under study whom their behaviour was totally affected by the events experienced in childhood. This knowledge is helpful to the study because Thomas bigger and Celie underwent many ugly experiences that have influenced how they behaviour, act and react to certain stimuli within themselves and the environment.

As far as the unconscious is concerned, Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman and Willingham (2011) argue, in “Anatomy of the Mental Personality,” Freud carefully discriminates between the levels of conscious and unconscious mental activity to enable the reader gauge the main problem disturbing people in the texts. Therefore, the psychological approach may provide useful insight into the thematic and symbolic mysteries of a work of literature and it might also enhance specific readings such as Wright’s *Native Son* and Walker’s *The Colour Purple*.

The study of the essence of an African child’s sense of belonging constitutes an enormous study which must bring in the psychoanalytic literary theory in order to study the behaviour of the child who has lost an essence of the sense of belonging to a family or a society in the aforementioned texts. The employment of the psychoanalytic literary theory is urgent in this study because it will probe the mind to acquire an understanding of certain behaviour of the characters that have lost an essence of the sense of belonging in wright’s *Native Son* and Walker’s *The Colour Purple*. The sense of belonging is a basic human need no wonder, the first developmental task during a baby’s first two years is to develop a feeling of trust (Erikson, 1969:238). This can only happen if the baby is cared for, fondled, and loved.

If the parents or caregivers cannot fulfill this need the child is left with many insecurities; this may lead to several behavioural and emotional problems in future. In Africa the essence of sense of belonging is very important. Some African countries have war just because of tribal problems since they always seek to reserve the essence of the sense of belonging to a particular tribe. People do not like to be removed or displaced from their roots. The family gives identity and a sense of belonging for a person. This explains the reason why in the African communities and families, members are all secured by the theoretical idea of ancestors, myths and legends.

1.9 Research Design and Methodology

The study was qualitative in approach, guided by a descriptive research design blended with a case study. Richard Wright’s ‘Native Son’ and Alice Walker’s ‘The Colour Purple’ constituted the case while entirely presentation of findings from the case was descriptive. The sampling of the case was purposive owing to the inclination of the major theme of the study towards the African child’s sense of belonging. A document analysis guide was used charted with indicators of the African child’s elements reflecting a sense of belonging. These indicators were the ones that guided the analysis into embedding the themes of the study with concrete sense of belonging for the African child.

1.10 The study Findings

In their texts Richard Wright and Alice Walker portray the father figure as initiator of the essence

of an African child's sense of belonging. Clearly Wright and Walker seem to argue that not only does a father figure determine the essence of an African child's sense of belonging genetically but also physically and socially in the up-bringing environment. The literary authors demonstrate that in the African societies the essence of the sense of belonging cannot be claimed outside the father of the child. Father is supreme as the head of the family comprising of other members: mother, children, cousins, nephews, nieces, aunts, uncles, grandmothers, grandfathers, fathers-in-law, mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law to name but a few. Therefore Wright and Walker write their master piece to satirize the African remnants in the mainstreaming, in the diaspora or in former slave land. They seem to question: what has happened to our men that had been so empowered and privileged by the culture in African communities to chastise the essence of an African child's sense of belonging? Who can loathe the significant presence of the father in the family given his endless roles as the provider, disciplinarian, guardian, decider and president of the home? Unfortunately the above crucial roles responsible for African children rearing are totally inverted. Richard Wright and Alice Walker portray a father figure as the absentee father, the rapist, the coward, the vanished and the 'dead' one. Consequently, the stereotype father impinges on the essence of an African child's sense of belonging either in the family or the society. Walker and Wright argue that any attempt to reconstruct the essence of an African child's sense of belonging demand that the characters find a replacement, someone who takes on the father role, either literally or figuratively or a companion or a contemporary of one's missing father. In most cases the absentee father is dead and their offspring are left with their mother or else they are orphans. For instance Richard Wright in his *Native Son* argues that Bigger was too strong for the mother to control single handedly:

“How come you looking at me that way, Bigger?” “Hunh?” “You are looking at me so funny” “I didn't know it .I was thinking ” “What?” “Nothing.” His mother came in the room with more plates of food and he saw how soft and shapeless she was” (Wright, 1940:138). Wright is suggesting that Bigger expects the mother to look at him straight in the eye and to reprimand him against what he has just messed up but instead she draws attention to herself leaving Bigger to the surrounding fate. Bigger was a type of a person that needed a father figure around him since the mother instructions were unwatchful and unwatchful to his reproof. Wright shows clearly that any time Bigger's mother exchanged with him there was loss of the essence of a sense of his belonging to the family as a result of lacking one the parents. In his *Native Son* Richard Wright takes the reader back to the circumstances that surrounded Vera after Bigger had killed the rat Bigger's mother had desperately scolded and denied him before his siblings.

Naw! Nothing like that ever bothers you! All you care about is your own pleasure! Even when the relief offers you a job you won't take it till they threaten to cut off your food and starve you! Bigger, honest, you the most no-countest man I ever seen in all my life! 'You done told me that a thousand times,' he said, not looking round. 'Well, I'm telling you agin! And mark my word, some of these days you going to set down and cry. Some of these days you going to wish you had made something out of yourself, instead of just tramp...We can get along without you. We can live in one room just like we living now; even with you gone” (Wright, 1940:39)

Wright argues that everyone in the society contributed to the anxieties of Bigger and that eventually affected his essence of sense of belonging to somewhere. It is unfortunate that Bigger's Father was long dead leaving Bigger to the fate of no mercy society. The mother of Bigger never understood him a bit. Bigger was an orphan of the father and had never known any essence of a sense of belonging to a father, a family or a society:

"Where's your father?"
 'Dead,'
 'How long ago was that?'
 'He got killed in a riot when I was a kid-in the South,' (Wright, 1940: 106).

Similarly in her *The Color purple* Alice Walker demonstrates the scenario that surrounds the absentee and departed father who has left his children among wolves disguised as fathers when everyone is present yet mere wolves when none is there. Celie is forced into rape by her step-father: "she went to visit her sister doctor over Macon and left me to see after others. He never had a kind word to say to me. Just say you gonna do what mammy wouldn't ... You better shut up and get used to it... But I don't never get used to it. And now I feel sick every time I be the one to cook. My mama she fusses at me and look at me. She happy cause he good to her now. But too sick to last long" (Walker, 1982: 3). Walker argues that though the father is supposed to be the decider, the director and the leader in African families, Fonso gives directives in the opposite direction. Alice walker is of the view that the mere rapist should not have the last decision in other words; the future of Celie should not be decided by Fonso. When Alphonso forces Celie to marry Mr. ---- (Albert) whom she didn't love, Walker suggests that he has further impinged on Celie's essence of a sense of belonging to whom she loves.. "Mr- marry me to take care of his children. I marry him cause my daddy made me. I don't love Mr- and he don't love me" (Walker, 1982: 61). Alice walker also argues that Shug Avery is the only boyfriend replacement that acted true to the nature of love. Even though she teaches this orphan of the father bad manners (lesbianism), she happens to be Celie's only escapist from damaging forces from the surrounding in her conscious mind, sub-conscious mind and in un-conscious mind. 'I start to cry, Shug links the water falling down my chick.' In another instance Celie confesses that Shug tells her not to mind about what happened to her in the past in the following words. 'In fact you are a virgin'. Walker is questioning the reader; 'has anyone courage to blame Shug Avery for improvising the love Celie missed to get on first wedding day?' Or the one that the biological father would have given according to the postulation of Freudian complexes, whereby young girls unconsciously marry their fathers and young boys unconsciously marry their mothers (oedipal complex). Therefore Walker's text fit the Psychoanalytic perspective very appropriately for this study.

1.11 Conclusion

The study concluded that the two authors portrayed the lack of essence of an African child's sense of belonging in their novels, *Native Son* and *The Colour Purple*. It also inferred that the protagonists of the two texts lacked the sense of belonging in their families and the society. The protagonists' experiences in the family and the society affected them psychologically and had negative impact on the society. It has also highlighted the various reasons of lack of an essence of the sense of belonging to the family or society. The study implied that the father is supreme as the head of the family, he plays roles of provider, disciplinarian, guardian, decider and president of the home, but in their texts they portray father's figure as the absentee father, the rapist, the coward, the vanished and the "dead" one. The father's roles in African texts have an impact on the life of their children. The lack of the father in the family created several problems in the child's life. All the problems encountered by the main characters were caused by the lack of the father figure in the family.

1.12 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher recommends future studies to focus on: the role of the mother on the essence of the African child the sense of belonging in feminist and Marxist perspectives in the context of *Native Son* and *The Colour Purple*. They could also be a Study of the characterization in *Native Son* and *The Colour Purple*. Feminism in *Native Son* and *The Colour Purple*; Astudy of Human rights in *Native Son* and *The Colour Purple*.

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