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Empowerment in *The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Daré

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Abstract

This study focuses on women's empowerment reflected in *The Girl with the Louding Voice* novel by Abi Daré. Using a descriptive-analytical research method, this study applies Collins' Matrix of Domination and Self-Definition theories to analyze how the female characters are oppressed and empower themselves to resist it. The finding of this study shows that within four domains of power, namely structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal, the female characters experience intersecting oppressions of age, gender, and social class. Values, ideas, and practices of patriarchal culture within Nigerian society such as son-preference oppressed Adunni and other female characters to obtain equal rights and opportunities. They lost their rights to school, forced to marry in adolescence, and pressured to give birth to a son. Women must be quiet and obedient to men as respect. Women's achievement is seen as meaningless if they are not married. Not only between men and women but oppression also occurred within women's relationships. However, the relationships of women who experienced the same thing motivated Adunni to resist the oppression and devaluation upon herself. Adunni and other female characters built their self-definition through self-valuation and respect, self-reliance and independence, and personal empowerment as a resistance. Adunni's empowered mind maintains her struggle to achieve freedom, thus she able to empower others. The female characters show to mutually empowering through their free mind despite the limitations.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Patriarchy, Self-Definition, Matrix of Domination

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berfokus pada pemberdayaan perempuan dalam novel *The Girl with the Louding Voice* karya Abi Daré. Menggunakan metode deskriptif analitis, penelitian ini menerapkan teori Matrix of Domination dan Self-Definition oleh Patricia Hill Collins untuk menganalisis penindasan yang dialami tokoh perempuan dan bagaimana mereka memberdayakan diri sebagai bentuk perlawanan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa dalam empat domain kekuasaan yaitu struktural, disipliner, hegemonik, dan interpersonal, perempuan mengalami penindasan berdasarkan usia, gender, dan kelas sosial. Berbagai nilai, ide, dan praktik budaya patriarki di masyarakat Nigeria seperti preferensi anak laki-laki menindas Adunni dan tokoh perempuan lainnya dalam

memperoleh hak dan kesempatan yang sama. Mereka kehilangan hak sekolah, dipaksa menikah di usia remaja, dan melahirkan anak laki-laki. Perempuan harus diam dan patuh terhadap laki-laki sebagai bentuk hormat. Pencapaian perempuan dianggap tidak berarti jika tidak menikah. Penindasan tidak hanya terjadi antara laki-laki dan perempuan, tapi juga dalam hubungan antar perempuan. Bagaimanapun, hubungan para perempuan yang mengalami hal serupa memotivasi Adunni untuk melawan penindasan dan devaluasi terhadap dirinya. Adunni dan tokoh perempuan lainnya saling membangun definisi diri mereka sendiri melalui penilaian diri dan penghormatan diri; kepercayaan diri dan kemandirian; dan pemberdayaan diri sebagai bentuk perlawanan. Pikiran Adunni yang berdaya menjaganya tetap berjuang meraih kebebasan agar ia mampu memberdayakan perempuan lainnya. Para tokoh perempuan menunjukkan untuk saling memberdayakan melalui pemikiran yang bebas meski dalam keterbatasan.

Kata kunci: Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Patriarki, Self-Definition, Matrix of Domination

INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is the process to empower women as individual or groups to have the equal rights, to resist being oppressed, and dominated by discovering the power within themselves. Nurturing empowerment in an individual woman's mind is important. An individual woman with empowered mind can foster others through sharing the similar experiences and turn into an empowered people group. Collective empowerment could bring encouragement to change the conditions of their lives. Empowerment is a tool for women and girls who were disempowered to obtain equality (Kabeer, 1999, pp. 436–437). It is a tool to challenge the negative cultural and social definitions that degrade women as valueless. The degrading perceptions, unjust treatments, and unequal rights prevalent in a patriarchal society relevant to the existing idea of son preference such as in Nigeria. The idea influences its society to value male child over female child. The desperation for a male child will make the women as a mother suffer from adjacent pregnancy and the daughters are pushed away to become a child bride by get married at early age. The suffers will be repeated as the daughters who married at early age are pressured to undergo the similar situation as their mothers. These young girls are supposed to have a chance for a better life. But they were force to marry and quit their schools instead. Therefore, empowerment is important to eliminate oppression against women and girls.

Empowerment as a form of resistance and the issues of oppression against women in Nigerian patriarchal society are depicted in the novel which was written by New York Times bestselling author Abi Daré. It is entitled *The Girl with the Louding Voice*, an Instant *New York Times* Bestseller, the winner of the UK Bath Award in 2018, and a Book Club pick of *Read with Jenna Today Show*. The story follows the life of Adunni, a fourteen-year-old Nigerian girl. Lived and raised in a fictional rural village of Ikati which is a patriarchal society, she was denied from her rights to acquire education in school and was forced to be a third wife of an old man by her father. Adunni with her bright mind attempts to change her life and other girls like her. Her aims to achieve education, to resist oppression, and the struggle to empower herself and others are portrayed in this novel.

The depiction of empowerment and oppression in this novel are analyzed by

deploying Patricia Hill Collins' Self-Definition and Matrix of Domination theories. Her theory of Self-Definition is stated as the key to women's survival, it is essential to empowerment. Self-Definition consists of three important ideas that emerge from safe places namely, self-valuation and respect; self-reliance and independent; and personal empowerment. Self-Definition is applied to analyze the process of empowerment occurred among Adunni and the female characters. Meanwhile, Collins' Matrix of Domination theory is used to analyze the female characters' experiences of oppression in the patriarchal society. Matrix of Domination theory refers to the overall organization of hierarchical power relations that work to maintain a certain group as a dominant and the rest as subordinates (Collins, 2000, p. 299). It also refers that domination and oppression keep working for a long time because its four interconnected domains of power namely structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. Race, social class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, ethnicity, and age are overlapping each other and lead into intersecting oppression. Means that one's oppression keep occurring and lingering because of more than one factor.

In conducting this study, the writer has researched similar previous studies conducted by other researchers that related to women's empowerment, women's oppression, and theories used in this study. Such as the first one that focused on African-American women's voices and life experiences who are living in a city of Chicago that known for its high levels of violence, Englewood. The study is entitled "Chicago African-American Mothers' Power of Resistance: Designing Spaces of Hope in Global Contexts" by Mendelhall et al., (2017). Black mothers' resistance against ideologies and stereotypes about their mothering, beauty, socioeconomic status through self-definition which includes descriptions of themselves, their current situations, and the changes they would like to see in their neighborhoods and the larger in U.S. society are highlighted in this study by applying Collins' Self-Definition theory to analyze their 93 in-depth interviews data.

Collins' Matrix of Domination and Controlling Images theories are also deployed in the scholarly research study conducted by Hadiya Layla Jones (2015) entitled "Resisting the Matrix: Black Female Agency in Issa Rae's *Awkward Black Girl*." This second study focuses on examining black women representation in media specifically in Issa Rae's *The Misadventures of the Awkward Black Girl* web series (2011). This study found that the web series works outside of the limitation through its representation of Black woman who is allowed to agency and humanity and also found that by reclaiming the power to challenge the lack of agency usually portrayed by Black characters, the creator Issa Rae attempts to resist matrix of domination.

Conducted by Odi (2018), the last previous study is "Women Empowerment in Nigerian Drama: A Contextual Study of Irene Salami-Agunloye's Heroines." This study discovered how the author Salami-Agunloye raises the issues in a society that is dominated by the convictions, doctrines, and ideologies of male domination. Through her heroines, she celebrates the strength, valor, and capacity of women to excel in their given space, respect, and recognition for women to act.

Differing from the previous studies above, this study discussed how women's empowerment and oppression experienced by the female characters are reflected in *The Girl with the Louding Voice* by applying Collins' theories of Matrix of Domination and Self-Definition.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is qualitative research and uses a descriptive-analytical method in exploring and understanding the value of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human issue (Creswell, 2007, p. 4). Matrix of Domination theory by Patricia Hill Collins is used to analyze how women are oppressed in their patriarchal society. Meanwhile, Collins' theory of Self-Definition is used to discover how women are empowering themselves and others against the oppression and discrimination that occurred in the story.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main character Adunni is a smart young girl and passionate learner. She must stop school as her father cannot afford to support her education since he is an idle alcoholic man. Instead, find a job to support his family, he exchanged Adunni for money by forced her became the third wife an old man. Since she became the youngest wife, Adunni must overcome more than what she has been through which made her eager to struggle and fight again for her and other women to have a better living. In her journey, she met many female characters who are oppressed too.

The oppressions of the female characters in the novel are constituted by age, gender, and class. This intersecting oppression is organized through the matrix of domination's four domains of power i.e. structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. Working on a large scale through social institutional policy to maintain subordination over time are characteristics of the structural domain (Collins, 2000, p. 277). Oppression in this domain reflected in how many young girls like Adunni were deceived by the institutions of slavery. This institution was a market created by the demand of wealthy people who seek cheap labor and the supply of domestic agents who want big profit by selling girls from the village. The structural domain maintains the unequal and unjust distribution of social resources (Collins, 2000, p. 301) that represented how these girls were not given their rights such as a chance to school, to have protection, and be treated as human. Adunni must work hard as a housemaid to avoid being tortured by Big Madam Florence. The employers forbid domestics to be in the same space with them especially when there are visitors. For example, the segregation is depicted when Adunni was in the house, "*Your job is to keep the house clean and tidy and to do what I ask you to do. When you are not working, you stay in the boys' quarters, in your room*" (Daré, 2020, p. 121)." When she followed Big Madam to the church, Adunni was stopped and ordered to follow the guide to another church far behind the fancy one. There is no chair, no door nor windows on its walls, small, not colorful, and stink. Inside, she met other girls like her, but they look even miserable and terrified.

"I step inside, see about five girls sitting on the floor, their head down. They all look the same age of me: fourteen, fifteen. All are wearing dirty dress of ankara or plain material with shoes like wet toilet paper, tearing everywhere. Hair is rough, or low-cut to the scalp. They smell of stinking sweat, of a body that needs serious washing, and they all look sad, lost, afraid. Like me (Daré, 2020, p. 210).

These girls must suffer being the oppressed because of their young age and their lowest class in society. If the employer was a bad person, they are probably got beaten

like Big Madam did to Adunni to keep them obedient. Moreover, the practice keep going because the disciplinary domain manages it.

In the disciplinary domain, rules, surveillance, and punishment are working to keep the oppressed stay oppressed (Collins, 2000, p. 276). For instance, in the domestic sphere of Adunni's family. Adunni became the most oppressed one because of her gender and age. Her father was an idle man who held a strongly patriarchal culture. "*When my papa is in the house, everybody must be doing as a dead person. No talking. No laughing. No moving.* (Daré, 2020, p. 23)." He intimidated his family member through his behaviors and restricted them. Under the domineering father and intersecting oppressions, Adunni was powerless to resist his force to stop school and marry Morufu. In the domestic sphere of Morufu's family, he set rules and punishment for his household. He addressed himself as a king who must always be the first and be respected.

"Adunni, this is your new house," Morufu say. "And in this house, I am having rule. There is respect of me. I am the king in this house. Nobody must talk back to me. Not you, not the childrens, not anybody. When I am speaking, you keep your mouth quiet (Daré, 2020, p. 36)."

As a woman is considered as the property of man (Essien & Ukpung, 2012, p. 287), the husband has a right to beat their wife as a penalty for their disobedience and or perceived wrongdoing (Makama, 2013, p. 125). Adunni, other senior wives namely Labake and Khadija, and the children are not allowed to have a voice when he was talking or deciding. He said it was disrespectful of women to talk back to their husbands and he undoubtedly will flog them. Once, Adunni's father slapped her mother because she was talking back to him. Adunni was also told to be quiet when she keeps asking and replying to Morufu. A study conducted by Adisa et al., (2019) justified that in patriarchal society, men always have the power to make decision than women (p. 7). However, oppression is not only occurred between men and women, but also among women. Adunni's young age as a third wife makes her a hatred target of the first wife Labake. "*She is always looking for my trouble, that Labake, always finding a way to fight me* (Daré, 2020, p. 50)." She hates to share a husband with a woman whose age is the same with her daughter Kike. She tried to oppress Adunni, Khadija, and Khadija's children through surveillance, verbal abuse, and even physical abuse. Oppression within women's relationships occurred between mother and daughter too.

"My mother had a manual for how my life would go and I rebelled—got stubborn—at every decision she made for me. She made me so unhappy that I couldn't imagine having a child and doing what she did to me to my own child (Daré, 2020, p. 163)."

Tia, a rich woman who helps Adunni to be free, was oppressed by her mother and her mother-in-law. Tia's mother was a strict disciplinarian who controlled her to be perfect and limited her freedom. Tia does not want to be like her mother. Therefore, her unhappy childhood traumatized her to have a child which became the case for her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law demanded her to have a child, a male child especially. This led to her mother-in-law's frequent visits, disturbing questions, and the horrible one was a flogging bath that assumed will make her pregnant

immediately.

In the working sphere, the technique of controls represented in many ways. Big Madam labeled Adunni and other domestics as hers through the obligation of wearing uniforms. Collins (2000) said that uniforms as physical markers of the employer's possession over the domestics (p. 57). Adunni must be kneeling whenever Big Madam calls her. She keeps them under her surveillance or through Kofi, the chef mutually supervised Adunni when she was out. *"I have told Kofi to look after you. He will keep an eye on you. Whatever Kofi asks you to do, you do it"* (Daré, 2020, p. 152). Moreover, verbal, and physical abuse mostly used to Adunni. She was devalued and beaten every day, even she makes no mistake. This is justified in the study of Ogbechie & Oyetunde (2019) that employers keep oppressed the domestics because of their lower-class (p. 112). Therefore, violence against domestic workers in Nigeria becomes prevalent.

The connector of the previous two with the interpersonal domain of power which deals with ideologies, culture, and values is the hegemonic domain. In Adunni's society, the male child is most precious and preferred as the people still stick with the ideas of man is the breadwinner and successor of the family tree. "Son preference syndrome" is prevalent in Nigeria (Emakhu, 2013, p. 777). It is the embedded culture which perceive and treat women as inferior to men. Both Morufu and Adunni's father discriminated their daughters and perceived what best of daughters are only they do domestic chores and give money from the marriage. Discrimination against women in education related to patriarchal culture about gender roles (Makama, 2013, p. 121). Morufu did not allow his daughters to learn in school. He will only let his son go to school. He has planned that his son will inherit his taxi business. *"I want two boys," he say. "If I have my boys, I will send them to school. They will become English-speaking taxi driver and make plenty money. Girls are only good for marriage, cooking food, and bedroom work"* (Daré, 2020, p. 37). In the same way, it is manifested through Adunni's father respond to his daughter's argument about education. Adunni insisted to continue her education instead of marrying an old man, but his father perceived that education will only make women stubborn and sharp-mouthed which means being a critical thinker. An independent woman is nothing without a husband. It such a shame for a woman if she has many achievements but has no husband. Kofi justified this when he was talking about Big Madam and her husband, *"Is it not sad that, in this part of our world, a woman's achievements can be reduced to nothing if she is not married?"* (Daré, 2020, p. 254)

Customary laws that are influenced by patriarchal culture are deep-rooted in an especially poor community of Nigeria. Leeson & Suarez (2017) highlighted the widespread poverty as one crucial factor caused customary practices such as child marriage is common in poor community (p. 4). Nnadi (2014) stated that the practice of child marriage is one of many harmful tradition occurred to women and girls in Nigeria (p. 37). For their economic gains, parents married off their daughters to men who old enough to be fathers. For instance, child marriage is experienced by most of the female characters in rural areas. Adunni, Khadija, and Kike were forced to get married at a young age. Their father exchanged them to the amount of money or food like Khadija told Adunni, *"Your own is even good. Me, my father give me to Morufu because of bag of rice"* (Daré, 2020, p. 38). Different with having son whose presence is cherished, daughters are seen as the burden of family that need to be disposed

especially in a poor family. After forced to get married, the husband will push them to give them a son like Morufu did. Morufu's desire for having two sons while his first wife unable to fulfilled led to polygyny. Polygyny or the practice of having several wives is taken as a way to have a son (Nnadi, *Son Preference - A Violation of Women's Human Rights: A Case Study of Igbo Custom in Nigeria*, 2013, p. 4). Morufu married to Khadija, but she gave birth to 3 unwanted daughters. Therefore, he took Adunni with her young age to becomes his wife as he thought that the younger will gives more possibility to give him a son. "*Adunni is a new wife with young blood. She must born a boy-child for me* (Daré, 2020, p. 37)." Adunni must suffer when her turn to sleep with Morufu comes. Collins (2000) stated that the hegemonic ideas are seen as normal and inevitable (p. 284). Therefore, many practices are justified by the people to fulfill society's expectation of having a son in their family.

In the interpersonal domain of power, oppressions are normalized in daily social interactions. Following the oppressor, a member of subordinate groups can practice power over others or distributes the dominant groups' ideas as they were exposed to the manipulated ideas and practices of dominant groups (Collins, 2000, p. 287). For example, Adunni asked Enitan's help to stop her marriage. Enitan is a girl which makes her a member of subordinate, but her way of thinking follows the patriarchal culture. Therefore, she refused to help Adunni. She dictated her that marriage is a good thing for them because they will have a husband who will take care of her and her family. She thought that marriage will change their life. Enitan tried to change the way Adunni thinking about marriage and school. For her, school is meaningless for girls in a village like them and the importance was getting married and give birth to a son.

"Morufu is a rich man," Enitan say with a sigh, as if she is just tired of me and all my troubles. "He will be taking care of you and your family. What more are you finding in this life when you have a good husband?"

"You know he have two wives," I manage to say. "And four childrens."

"And so? Look you," Enitan say with laugh. "You are having luck to be marrying! Be thanking God for this good thing and stop all this nonsense crying."

"School is not having any meaning in this village. We are not in Lagos. Forget about schooling this and that, marry Morufu and born fine, fine boys for him (Daré, 2020, p. 27)

The oppressed member who follows the ideas of dominant groups failed to notice their action and thought as a form of justification for others' subordination. In the same way of how Labake oppressed Adunni and Khadija. Instead of supporting each other, she fights them even though she knew that because her husband forced them. Morufu's reason to marry other women hurts her. She hates to share her husband especially with Adunni whose age was same with her daughter, but she did not stop her husband to married off their daughter to an old man. Labake failed to identify herself justified oppression towards women. The act of justifying son preference which makes women suffer was reflected in how Tia's mother-in-law pushed her to do the bath. She assumed the bath will chase away the spirit that follows Tia from abroad and makes her pregnant immediately. When the brutality of

the bath revealed, her mother-in-law did not stop the bath to save Tia. The worst was she still thought it equals to the pregnancy. She even asked to keep it between them instead of apologizing to Tia. In the story, Tia discovered that her husband is infertile. However, Tia represents many women who were blamed when the pregnancy is not coming. They must through the criticism accused on them for something that actually uncontrollable. *“If it takes two people to make a baby, why only one person, the woman, is suffering when the baby is not coming? Is it because she is the one with breast and the stomach for being pregnant? Or because of what?”* (Daré, 2020, p. 225)”

Furthermore, Big Madam who is the oppressor of powerless girls like Adunni was oppressed as well by her husband. But Big Madam failed to realize herself as a victim and justifying women’s oppression through her acts and thoughts instead. She let her husband beats her, cheating on her, and she even covered his mistakes. She covered her husband's affair with her former young housemaid–Rebecca. Her husband forced Rebecca to sleep with him that made her pregnant and he caused her miscarriage. Big Madam never report the case and ordered for new housemaid again instead. She is a great businesswoman, but she devalued herself by thinking that she will become nothing without her husband when he never on her side.

“You know what I went through with this man. How I suffered to support our family with my business. I never told you this, Kemi, but for years, I would bring home the money I made and give it to Chief, and he would pocket my money and still beat me and carry his girlfriends. Still, I gave him clothes to wear, took care of him. I covered his shame. I turned a blind eye to his nonsense, (Daré, 2020, p. 248)”

However, Adunni realized mostly the oppressed ones are women because men do not have to worry about marriage and education like the women did. The force of to be married at a young age raised her worries because she must undergo thing she never want and lose her chance to school or become a teacher. Through her momentarily thought of her brother, discrimination against girls in her society is clearly represented.

“Sometimes, I want to be just like Kayus, to have no fear of marrying a man, to not have any worry in this life. All Kayus ever worry about is what food to eat and where he can kick his football. He don’t ever worry about no marriage or bride-price money. He don’t ever worry about schooling because I been the one teaching him school since all this time (Daré, 2020, p. 29).”

Through her acts and thoughts, Adunni represented resistances against women's oppression. Collins (2000) said that empowerment is initiated in an individual’s mind who realizes how her life changes. Adunni realized how women are oppressed and that she must struggle to change others’ by starting with her life first. The empowerment process is defined by Collins as the journey to a free mind. The main character knew that in many ways, people around her tried to shape her thoughts and acts with their patriarchal values. Therefore, her definition regarding herself is important to resist oppression. Self-valuation and respect as the actual content of self-

definition in an aim to refuse internalized patriarchal values (Collins, 2000, p. 115) is represented by Adunni when she refused to marry. She told her father that there is a chance for her because of her intelligence that also has been recognized by many people in Ikati like her teacher, her mother, Kike, and even himself. *“If I marry Morufu, that means you are throwing all my futures inside the dustbin. I have a good brain, Papa* (Daré, 2020, p. 24).” She knows that she deserves to pursue her education and dreams instead of being a third wife at fourteen-year-old.

“I am only fourteen years going fifteent and I am not marrying any foolish stupid old man because I am wanting to go back to school and learn teacher work and become a adult woman and have moneys to be driving car and living in fine house with cushion sofa and be helping my papa and my two brothers. I don’t want to marry any mens or any boys or any other person forever, (Daré, 2020, p. 9)”

Her resistance against her father’s decision about marriage also showed her demands to be valued and respected. Her valuation upon herself also reflected when confidently she fights back when anyone degrading herself. Once at school, her classmate mocked her for being the oldest in class. The boy was calling her ‘Aunty’ to make her feel alienated. However, she used her voice to slap him back. *“In the years I was in school, I was always having a answer for the peoples laughing me. I always fight for myself, always keeping my head up because I know I am in school to be learning. Learning is not having age* (Daré, 2020, p. 18).” Adunni knows her worth and that is important in Self-Definition.

Moreover, Adunni’s valuation and respect are nurtured in her relationships with Khadija and Kike when she was still living in Morufu’s house. Women’s relationship is a safe spaces where women affirm one another’s humanity, specialness, and right to exist (Collins, 2000, p. 102). Adunni and Khadija were close. They have shared and through things together. *“With Khadija, the days in this house are short and sometimes sweet* (Daré, 2020, p. 50).” Both were taking care of each other and consoling if one of them was sad. Khadija inspired her and helped her to avoid her pregnancy coming. She did not want to be like Khadija who was suffering from unwanted pregnancy every year. Khadija was exhausted of being pregnant and her body was getting weak, but Morufu insisted to have sons. Therefore, she died in her fourth pregnancy. Contrast to Khadija, Adunni assumed that it is supposed to be her mind that full of knowledge. She was looking at her condition as well. She wants to help children like her to have better future and their own voice. She did not want to have a child who will through the miserable life like her. *“How a girl like me born childrens? Why will I fill up the world with sad childrens that are not having a chance to go to school? Why make the world to be one big, sad, silent place because all the childrens are not having a voice?* (Daré, 2020, p. 48)” By this point, her decision upon herself not only showed her valuation and respect, but the act also indicated her empowered mind.

Empowered mind and self-valuation also shown by Kike. She wanted to be a tailor, but Morufu did let her to school or training by saying that he did not have money. Instead of allocating his money to have his daughters in school, he preferred to use it for his taxi and marry Adunni. Kike knew that she could be a good tailor because she has a good drawing skill. She has imagined her works were used by many

people in her village, but unfortunately she did not have a chance to learn and improve it. Kike even wished herself was a man because she recognized that there was discrimination practiced in her society. She realized how all men in her village were allowed to work and learn, but not for women. However, Kike showed to not give up although she did not able to learn or freely pursue her dreams. She inspired Adunni that they still have a free mind although physically they were not. *“Adunni, even if you marry my father and you think all your hope is finish, your mind is not finishing. Inside of your mind, you can be the teacher you want (Daré, 2020, p. 60).”*

Not only in their friendship that they were taught and learn to empower themselves and others with three ideas of Self-Definition. Motherhood is a site where the three ideas can be found, one of them is self-reliance and independence which refer to depend on self to achieve freedom (Collins, 2000, p. 176). For instance, self-reliance and independence are reflected in Adunni's descriptions of her mother. Idowu was also forced to marry her husband because she was an uneducated girl from a poor family. Since her husband was a jobless man, Idowu relied on herself to support her family and especially support her daughter's education. She was only a food seller in a poor village which sometimes nobody buys her food. Her decision to teach and support her was a great encouragement for Adunni to struggle. *“Adunni, God knows I will use my last sweat to be sending you to school because I am wanting you to have chance in life (Daré, 2020, p. 22).”* Idowu taught her daughter many things like to take care of herself, kindness to help the powerless, and the importance of education. The thing that most remembered and motivated Adunni is when her mom was dying, she asked her husband to guarantee their daughter's education and to not married her off to a man. For Idowu, education might be the way for her daughter to have a chance of a better life than living oppressed in their patriarchal society. Therefore, her daughter became empowered. *“That day, I tell myself that even if I am not getting anything in this life, I will go to school...I want a louding voice (Daré, 2020, p. 23).”*

Before she successfully left Big Madam's house, Adunni was struggling very hard to get the scholarship. Luckily, she has Kofi and Tia who always support her. Kofi was the figure who informed her about the scholarship, a way for her to be free. He also was her savior from Big Madam or Big Daddy wickedness. Moreover, Kofi represents the importance of man's support in women's empowerment. Meanwhile, Tia was Adunni's savior in the process to get her scholarship. Different to Big Madam, Tia did not care about the social class. Instead of using her power to oppressed others, she did many campaigns to help like she did with Adunni. Both of them always mutually empowering one another. Adunni helped her to overcome her issues through her stories and thoughts. Then, Tia encouraged and helped her to pursue her freedom. However, her personality, passion, and seriousness were the reasons that actually moved Tia. Tia convinced her to believe in her mind and heart that she can be a teacher, she will have a better future, and she is important. Tia remind her of the power to define her own self. *“I want you to remind yourself that tomorrow will be better than today. That you are a person of value. That you are important (Daré, 2020, p. 192).”* Although it was hard for her to face her reality, Adunni chose to follow Tia that she must believe on herself.

I wish I can just believe for a good life and it will magic and happen for me, just like that. But maybe, to believe it in my mind is the start, so I nod my head, drag it real slop up and down as I am saying: “Tomorrow

will be better than today. I am a somebody of value (Daré, 2020, pp. 191-192).”

Kabeer (2010) stated that powerful force for change started by all women comes together to reflect, to question, and to act on their oppressed status (pp. 107-108). Khadija, Kike, Adunni, and Tia showed that by sharing their stories or thoughts, women not merely comforting, supporting, listening to each other, but also empowering one another. When their society excluded and degraded them, they learn to value and respect their own and others' worth within their relationships.

Furthermore, personal empowerment is crucial regardless of others' supports. Personal empowerment referred to a changed consciousness in an individual's mind. Collins (2000) said that empowerment begins in an individual's mind which is the private space of a woman's consciousness (pp. 117-118). It begins with her realization of how she and other women were oppressed then followed by actions that indicate her desire to change the conditions. This has been shown by some of the female characters. After her talks with Adunni, Tia changed her perceptions. She was formerly defined herself will not be a good mother. Sharing with Adunni has opened her mind that she has a choice to be what she truly wants. *“You made me realized that I could be a good mother. That I could choose not to be like my mother (Daré, 2020, p. 164).”*

Changed consciousness is also shown by Big Madam Florence as well. Adunni helped her to realize herself as more valuable. She was always let herself being degraded and abused by her husband. She thought that she will be nothing without him and everyone in her society will see her in the same way. Adunni was the one who told her the truth. She told her that her husband is wicked man that fills her up with anger and sadness every time. Therefore, slowly Big Madam changed. She treated Adunni better by allowed her to have breakfast. She even expelled her husband and called police officer to make him arrested. All the facilities he had those were given by Big Madam and she took them all in the end.

Different to Tia and Big Madam who represent change for themselves, the main character represents the spirit to change both herself and others. Adunni loves to share her knowledge and spirit to others. She taught the lessons she learned from school to the children in her village and her brother. She told them that learning will help them to have a bright future. Her mother told her that education will give her a voice that others will hear. *“I want a more than just a voice, Ms. Tia. I want a louding voice (Daré, 2020, p. 191).”* Become a teacher who has a louding voice so others will hear is her dream. She believed it will help other girls to have their own voices too. Therefore, she resisted to be oppressed or dominated. Her success to be free might because of others' support too, but the most matter comes from herself.

CONCLUSION

In this novel, empowerment in an individual's mind is shown by the female characters. Within their relationships with other women who through the same experiences, they found encouragement to resist the oppression. Adunni and other female characters are oppressed by their patriarchal society. Their society perceived males as the most precious while females are not. Adunni represented how girls and women from the lower class have no chance in education or career because they were

forced to be married at a young age. She also represented how in another way girls were deceived by domestic agents and abused by the employers. However, Adunni showed that she wants to change her life and help other girls to have equal rights and opportunities.

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