



**Subjugation of Women in African Society: A Critical Discourse  
Analysis of Human Right Abuses in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple  
Hibiscus**

**Mohamed J. Oloko, Sunday J. Okunnuwa and Olufunso S. Sonde**

Department of English Studies, College of Humanities, Tai Solarin Federal University,  
Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria

**Article Info**

Article History:

Received 15 Oct 2024

Accepted 30 Sep 2025

Issue Published Online

01 January 2026

**Key Words:**

domestic violence  
human rights abuses,  
verbal authoritarianism,  
power dynamics  
linguistic analysis

\*Corresponding author

E-mail address:

sundayjokunnuwa@gmail.com



<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8187-4799>

Journal homepage:

<http://journals.sjp.ac.lk/index.php/vjhss>

<http://doi.org/10.31357/fhss/vjhss.v11i01.09>

VJHSS (2026), Vol. 11 (02),  
pp. 119-129

ISSN 1391-1937/ISSN  
2651-0367 (Online)



Faculty of Humanities and  
Social Sciences 2026

**ABSTRACT**

*This study explores the depiction of human rights abuses in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus, with special focus on the subjugation of women within a patriarchal African society. From a linguistic point of view, it examines how expository language, symbolism, and narrative techniques help develop the themes of oppression and resistance. The novel portrays various forms of abuse, including domestic violence, psychological oppression, and economic dependence, highlighting the ways in which they are afflicted by the perpetrators and resisted by the victims within the Achike family. Further, the relevant sections of the novel are extracted and subjected to a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how language helps reflect gender-based power structures. The findings reveal that Eugene Achike's verbal authoritarianism and religious extremism serve as tools of control and subjugation in his dealings with women, reinforcing the patriarchal power structures in his society. Moreover, the symbolic use of the purple hibiscus flower, and the metaphorical use of silence and speech underscore the novel's message of liberation. The study concludes that in Purple Hibiscus, Adichie offers a profound critique of the patriarchal norms of Nigeria and a celebration of the feminist resilience against male dominance, highlighting the significance of the application of discourse analysis approaches and techniques in understanding and addressing human rights abuses.*

## 1. Introduction

The subjugation of women in African society is a multifaceted issue with deep historical, cultural, and social roots. Traditionally, patriarchal norms have dominated many African communities, where men are viewed as the primary authority figures and women are often relegated to subordinate roles. According to Akintunde (2021), gender hierarchy has perpetuated various forms of discrimination and violence against women, severely limiting their access to education, economic opportunities, and political power. Despite significant progress in some areas, gender-based disparities continue to pose substantial challenges, impacting the overall development and well-being of women across the continent. In the context of gender relations, the intersectionality based on various cultural, economic, and social factors plays a critical role in perpetrating women's subjugation. Cultural practices such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, and implementation of inheritance laws that favour men further entrench gender inequalities. Additionally, economic dependency on males within the family often leaves their female counterparts vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Socially, stigmatisation of women who defy traditional gender roles continues to undermine their efforts to achieve equality and autonomy (UN Women, 2022).

Further, human rights abuses related to gender are a pressing concern, with women and girls facing a violence and discrimination in varying proportions. These abuses include domestic violence, sexual harassment, and human trafficking, all of which have severe physical, psychological, and social impacts. The struggle for gender equality is further aggravated by inadequate provision of legal protection for women within the legislation and the lethargic implementation of the existing laws designed to safeguard women's rights (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Therefore,

various international and local organizations continue to advocate for stronger policies and practices to combat the abuses and promote gender equality.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a prominent Nigerian author and feminist, addresses these issues through her literary works. Her novel *Purple Hibiscus* offers a poignant examination of the dynamics of power and control exercised by men within a Nigerian family, set against the backdrop of a society grappling with its post-colonial identity. The story centers on Kambili, a young girl who navigates life under the oppressive rule of her authoritarian father. Through her vivid storytelling, Adichie illuminates the broader issues of patriarchy and human rights abuses, highlighting the often-overlooked experiences of women and girls in oppressive environments (Adichie, 2003).

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to conduct a discourse analysis exploration of the human rights abuses depicted in *Purple Hibiscus*. By analyzing Adichie's use of language and narrative techniques, this research aims to uncover how she articulates the experiences of gender-based violence and subjugation. This linguistic and discourse analysis approach will provide insights into the ways in which language can both reflect and challenge societal norms and injustices. Through this analysis, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of literature in addressing and raising awareness about human rights issues in light of gender-based discrimination.

This paper argues that, through her strategic use of language and narrative in *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie effectively highlights the pervasive nature of gender-based human rights abuses in Nigerian society, thereby advocating for greater awareness and change with regard to women's liberation.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The method adopted for the analysis of data was largely descriptive and interpretative. The primary focus of this study is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, which serves as the main source of data. Relevant sections of the novel related to the study were extracted and subjected to critical analysis using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how language reflects and perpetuates gender-based power structures within the text.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Results

#### Plot summary

*Purple Hibiscus*, written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, is a powerful narrative set in postcolonial Nigeria. The story is told from the perspective of Kambili Achike, a fifteen-year-old girl who navigates life under the oppressive rule of her father, Eugene Achike, a wealthy and devoutly Catholic businessman. The novel opens with Kambili and her brother, Jaja, living under the strict and abusive regime of their father, who demands absolute obedience and enforces his religious beliefs with violence. Eugene is revered in the community for his generosity and piety, but his household is governed by fear. The family's life changes when Kambili and Jaja spend time at the home of their liberal and spirited aunt, Ifeoma, and her children. This visit exposes them to a different way of living, marked by laughter, open discussion, and emotional warmth, in stark contrast to their rigid home environment.

As Kambili and Jaja become more accustomed to their aunt's freer lifestyle, they begin to see the limitations and injustices of their father's rule. This newfound awareness leads to increasing tension and rebellion within their family.

The story reaches its climax when Jaja takes the blame for a crime he did not commit to protect his mother, Beatrice, who has suffered severe abuse at Eugene's hands. The novel ends on a note of cautious optimism. Although Eugene's death and Jaja's imprisonment bring significant upheaval, Kambili and her mother find a sense of liberation and hope for the future.

#### Themes

##### Authoritarianism and Rebellion:

The novel explores the dynamics of authoritarian control and the struggle for personal autonomy. Eugene's authoritarian rule over his family mirrors the political oppression in Nigeria, highlighting the broader societal implications of tyranny. Kambili and Jaja's eventual rebellion against their father's control symbolizes the fight for freedom and self-determination.

##### Religion and Hypocrisy:

Religion plays a central role in the novel, particularly the ways it can be used to justify control and abuse. Eugene's devout Catholicism is depicted as both a source of moral guidance and a tool for oppression. His strict adherence to religious doctrine contrasts with his violent behavior, exposing the hypocrisy that can exist within religious fervor. Adichie critiques the ways in which religion can be manipulated to serve personal and political agendas.

##### Silence and Voice:

The themes of silence and voice are intricately woven throughout the novel. Kambili's initial silence reflects her repression and the fear imposed by her father. As she gains confidence and experiences life outside her father's control, she finds her voice and begins to express her thoughts and feelings. This journey from

silence to voice represents her path to self-empowerment and liberation.

**Gender and Power:** Gender dynamics are a critical aspect of the novel, with Adichie highlighting the ways in which patriarchal power structures impact women's lives. Beatrice's experiences of domestic violence and Kambili's restricted freedom reflect the broader societal limitations placed on women. However, the novel also presents strong female characters, such as Ifeoma, who challenge these norms and advocate for gender equality.

*Purple Hibiscus* is a richly layered novel that delves into themes of authoritarianism, religion, and gender dynamics within the context of postcolonial Nigeria. Through the journey of Kambili and her family, Adichie offers a poignant critique of oppression and a hopeful vision for personal and societal transformation. The novel's exploration of silence and voice, tradition and change, and the complexities of familial relationships provides a profound commentary on the human capacity for resilience and growth in the face of adversity.

### **Representation of Women's Experiences and Struggles in *Purple Hibiscus***

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie vividly portrays the experiences and struggles of women within a patriarchal society. Through the characters of Beatrice, Kambili, and Ifeoma, Adichie explores themes of domestic abuse, gender inequality, resilience, and empowerment. These characters' stories provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges women face and their efforts to navigate and resist oppressive structures.

**Beatrice Achike (Mama):** Beatrice, Kambili and Jaja's mother, embodies the silent suffering endured by many women in abusive relationships. Married to Eugene, a wealthy and influential man, Beatrice's life is

marked by severe physical and emotional abuse. Eugene's authoritarian control extends to every aspect of her life, dictating her behavior and instilling fear.

**Domestic Abuse:** Beatrice's experiences highlight the devastating impact of domestic violence. Eugene's brutality leaves her physically injured and emotionally scarred. The recurrent miscarriages she suffers due to his violence symbolize the destruction of potential and hope within her life.

**Silence and Endurance:** Beatrice's silence represents the constrained voices of many women who endure abuse. She rarely speaks out against Eugene's actions, reflecting the societal expectation for women to be submissive and endure hardship quietly. Her silence is both a survival mechanism and a reflection of her internalized oppression.

**Subtle Resistance:** Despite her apparent passivity, Beatrice exhibits subtle forms of resistance. Her ultimate act of rebellion—poisoning Eugene—demonstrates her breaking point and desire to protect her children from further harm. This drastic action underscores her complex position as both a victim and a protector.

**Kambili Achike:** Kambili, the protagonist, offers a perspective on the impact of patriarchal control on young women. Her journey from a repressed, obedient daughter to a more self-aware and assertive individual is central to the narrative.

**Repression and Control:** Kambili's life is tightly controlled by her father. Her movements, speech, and thoughts are dictated by Eugene's strict religious and moral codes. This control stifles her development and self-expression, leaving her shy and withdrawn.

**Awakening and Empowerment:** Kambili's time at her Aunt Ifeoma's home exposes her

to a different way of living. The open, supportive environment encourages her to speak up and express herself. She begins to question her father's authority and develops a sense of agency and confidence.

**Emotional Growth:** Kambili's relationship with her cousin Amaka and her growing affection for Father Amadi contribute to her emotional and psychological growth. These relationships help her understand love, compassion, and the importance of self-worth.

**Ifeoma Achike:** Aunt Ifeoma stands in stark contrast to Beatrice and Kambili. As an educated, independent woman, she represents a model of female empowerment and resistance to patriarchal norms.

**Independence and Strength:** Ifeoma is a university lecturer and a single mother who manages to raise her children with love and discipline despite financial difficulties. Her independence and assertiveness challenge traditional gender roles and offer an alternative vision of womanhood.

**Advocacy and Support:** Ifeoma's home is a haven for Kambili and Jaja, providing them with emotional support and a sense of freedom they lack at home. She encourages critical thinking and open communication, fostering an environment where her children can grow intellectually and emotionally.

**Challenging Norms:** Ifeoma's outspoken nature and willingness to challenge authority reflect her resistance to societal expectations. She is critical of both the university administration and the government, advocating for justice and equality.

**Textual Analysis: Human Rights Abuses in *Purple Hibiscus*: Identification of Specific Human Rights Abuses**

**Domestic Violence** is a pervasive human rights abuse depicted in *Purple Hibiscus*. Eugene Achike's physical abuse of his wife, Beatrice, is a central example. His violent outbursts are described in harrowing detail, such as when he beats Beatrice to the point of causing her multiple miscarriages. This physical abuse is a direct violation of her right to safety and bodily integrity. A striking example is when Beatrice narrates her ordeal to Kambili, her daughter and Ifeoma, her sister-in-law:

I got back from the hospital today. The doctor told me to rest You know that small table where we keep the family bible, *nne*?

Your father broke it on my belly. My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it.

To save it? Auntie Ifeoma whispered. What do you mean? I was six weeks gone. *Ekwuzina!* Don't say that again! Auntie Ifeoma eyes widened.

It is true, Eugene did not know about it, I had not yet told him, but it is true (p. 253).

Eugene's dominance over his family symbolises the broader societal oppression of women.

**Psychological Oppression** is another significant form of abuse in the novel. Eugene uses fear and intimidation to control his family, creating an atmosphere of constant tension and anxiety. Kambili and Jaja are subjected to his strict rules and harsh punishments, which stifle their emotional and intellectual growth. Eugene's manipulation of religious doctrine to justify his actions further compounds this psychological control. A typical example in

the novel is when Eugene employs physical punishment on his wife, Beatrice:

He unbuckled his belt slowly. It landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder.

Then Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by the puffy sequined sleeve of her blouse (p.110).

The use of fear and intimidation by Eugene in dealing with his family can be seen in the statement of Kambili:

I had just hobbled back to my bed when Papa opened the door and came in.

He knew I wanted to shift and rearrange myself on the bed, as if that would hide what I had just done. I wanted to search his eyes to know what he knew, how he had found out about the painting. But I did not, could not. Fear. I was familiar with fear...(p.203).

**Economic Dependence** is depicted through Beatrice's situation. Despite her awareness of Eugene's abusive behavior, she feels trapped in the marriage due to her financial dependence on him. Eugene's control over the family's finances reinforces the power imbalance and limits Beatrice's ability to leave or seek help, illustrating the intersection of economic dependence and domestic abuse. When her husband beat her to the state of coma and landed in the hospital, she could not afford transport fare to escape to Nsuka until she secretly takes money from her husband's pocket:

The doctor told me to rest, but I took Eugen's money and asked Kevin to take me to the park. I hired a taxi and came here (p. 253).

**Patriarchy and Gender Inequality:** The novel exposes the deep-seated patriarchal structures that limit women's roles and

freedoms. This is observable in the interaction between Beatrice and Ifeoma:

Six girls in my first -year seminar are married, their husbands visit in Mercedes and Lexus cars every weekend, their husbands buy them stereos and textbooks and refrigerators, and when they graduate, the husband own them and their degree (p.83).

**Resilience and Empowerment** is another recurring issue in the novel. Despite the oppression they face, the women in *Purple Hibiscus* exhibit resilience, and a capacity for empowerment. Their struggles highlight the strength required to resist and survive in a patriarchal society. Ifeoma represents this group in the novel. As a single mother she struggles to use her meager resources to train her children take and asserts her independence and offer an alternative vision of womanhood. Her outspoken nature and the confidence to challenge the University authority reflect her resistance to societal expectations. Ifeoma exhibits this resistance to patriarchal norms when she boldly rebukes Eugene, his elder brother when their father died:

Did you call the priest to give him extreme unction? He asked.

Is that all you can say, eh, Eugene? Have you nothing else to say, gbo?

Our father has died! Has your head turned upside down?

Will you not help me bury our father? (p.195).

Ifeoma is an epitome of truth, discipline and a role model. She stands against the University authority for bad administration and corruption. When students unrest erupts in the University and a group of

armed men invades her house, she boldly challenges them:

What is it? Who are you? Auntie Ifeoma asked.

We are here to search your house.

We are looking for documents designed to sabotage the peace of the University.

We have information that you have been in collaborating with the radical student groups that staged the riots...

Do you have any paper to show me.

You cannot just walk into my house (p.235)

Ifeoma shows her resilience and empowerment skills when she personally replaces the door of her office when the students broke into the office and stole exam questions. After complaining to the works department and nothing was done, she approaches a construction site where they gave her metal rods to make a new door. With the assistance of her children, she installs the door and put a sign on it with the inscription: EXAM QUESTIONS ARE IN THE BANK.

This exhibition of capacity for empowerment is a contributory factor in the survival of African women in a patriarchal society.

**The interplay between voice and silence** is a recurring theme in the novel. While Beatrice's silence signifies oppression, Kambili's journey towards finding her voice represents the path to empowerment. Ifeoma's assertive voice challenges the status quo and inspires others to do the same. Despite the fact that Kambili sustained injury when her father mercilessly beat hers with belt, she dear not say it when her father asked her if she feels the pain:

Did the belt hurt you? Did it break your skin? He asked, examining our faces. I felt a throbbing on my back, but I said no, that I was not hurt (p.112).

But Kambili eventually finds her voice and confidence to resist her father dominance and oppressive attitude. A typical scene in the novel is when Kambili hides the picture of Papa Nnuku (Eugene's father, whom he regarded as an idol worshiper) from his father, she refuses to surrender the picture to her father despite the beating and the physical assault meted on her:

Who brought that painting into this house? Me, I said. Me Jaja said

Papa snatched the painting from Jaja. His hands moved swiftly,

working together. The painting was gone.

No! I shrieked. I dashed to the pieces on the floor as if to save them, as if saving them will mean saving Papa Nnukwu. I sank on the floor, I lay on the pieces of paper. I lay on the floor, curled tight like the picture of a child in the uterus in my *Integrated Science for Junior Secondary Schools*.

Get up! Get away from the painting! I lay there, did nothing. Get up!

Papa said again. I still did not move. He started to kick me...

The kicking increased in tempo... I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of the painting (p.216).

**Religion and Hypocrisy** play a central role in the novel. Eugene's devout Catholicism is depicted as both a source of moral guidance as well as a tool for oppression, control and abuse. When his children visit his father,

Papa Nnukwu and decided to pass the night with him, Eugene considers this as a sin. For him, his father is a heathen who should not be associated with. He pours hot water on Kambali's feet to serve as punishment and atonement of his sin:

Kambili you should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk right into it. He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it towards my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly, as if he was performing an experiment and wanted to see what would happen (p.201).

Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus* offers a compelling exploration of women's experiences and struggles in a patriarchal society. Through the characters of Beatrice, Kambili, and Ifeoma, Adichie portrays the multifaceted nature of female oppression, resistance, and empowerment. The novel underscores the importance of finding one's voice and the transformative power of supportive relationships and environments. Adichie's nuanced depiction of these women's lives serves as both a critique of gender inequality and a celebration of women's resilience and strength.

### **Linguistic Portrayal of Subjugation in Purple Hibiscus**

#### **Use of Language to Depict Power Dynamics:**

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses language to vividly depict power dynamics, particularly within the Achike family. Eugene Achike's authoritarian rule is communicated through his use of commanding and authoritarian language. His speech is often laced with religious fervor, which he uses to justify his oppressive actions. For example, Eugene's strict and harsh commands to his family members underscore his control and dominance. He uses phrases like "Get up and

Get away!" to enforce obedience, creating an atmosphere of fear and submission.

Get up! Get away from the painting! I lay there, did nothing. Get up! Papa said again. I still did not move. He started to kick me...(p.216).

Eugene's interactions with his family members are marked by a lack of dialogue and a predominance of monologue. He dictates rather than converses, leaving little room for dissent or discussion. This linguistic dominance mirrors the broader patriarchal power structures in society, where male authority often goes unquestioned.

In contrast, the language used in Ifeoma's household is more democratic and inclusive. Conversations are characterized by open dialogue and mutual respect. Phrases like "What do you think?", "Let's discuss" "How do you feel" are common, fostering an environment of participation, good human relation and empathy. This stark difference in linguistic style highlights the contrasting power dynamics between the two households. This is evident on how Kambili is being treated by Ifeoma, her Aunty during her visit to the family:

When I finished my bath, Aunty Ifeoma had poured me a glass of milk. She had sliced my Okpa, too, and red chunks of pepper gaped from the yellow slices. How do you feel, *nne*? She asked. (p.238).

#### **Symbolism and Metaphor in Character Interactions:**

Adichie employs symbolism and metaphor to further explore themes of subjugation and resistance. The use of silence and voice in the novel is a powerful metaphor for oppression and liberation. Kambili's initial silence represents her subjugation under her

father's rule. Her inability to speak freely symbolizes her lack of agency and autonomy. This silence is not just literal but also figurative, indicating her internalized fear and repression.

The purple hibiscus flower itself is a significant symbol in the novel. It represents the possibility of freedom and the beauty of a life lived without oppression. The flower's rarity and fragility mirror the delicate nature of the characters' hopes for liberation and change. When Kambili and Jaja encounter the purple hibiscus in Ifeoma's garden, it symbolizes their first taste of freedom and the potential for a different, more liberated life.

Interactions between characters also carry metaphorical weight. For instance, Eugene's physical abuse of Beatrice is a stark and violent manifestation of his need to exert control. It serves as a metaphor for the broader societal violence against women. In contrast, the nurturing and supportive interactions in Ifeoma's household symbolise an alternative model of familial relationships, based on respect and equality rather than domination and fear. When Ifeoma and her children were about to leave to America, Kambili imagines how life would be without the family:

...I could no longer imagine life without Aunty Ifeoma's family, without Nsuka (p.229).

### **Narrative Voice and Perspective:**

The narrative voice and perspective in *Purple Hibiscus* are crucial to its exploration of subjugation. The story is told from Kambili's first-person perspective, allowing readers to intimately experience her thoughts, feelings, and gradual awakening. This perspective is particularly effective in conveying the psychological impact of subjugation.

Kambili's narrative voice is initially characterized by timidity and caution, reflecting her oppressed state. Her internal monologue is filled with uncertainty and self-doubt, mirroring the control exerted by her father. As the novel progresses, Kambili's voice begins to change. She becomes more reflective and assertive, indicating her growing sense of self and resistance to oppression.

Adichie's use of detailed and evocative language in Kambili's narrative helps to convey the emotional weight of her experiences. Descriptions of the oppressive atmosphere in her home, contrasted with the vibrant and lively environment of Ifeoma's house, highlight the impact of subjugation on her psyche.

Furthermore, the shifts in Kambili's perspective as she interacts with other characters provide insights into her evolving understanding of power and resistance. Her changing view of her father—from reverence to critical awareness—demonstrates her journey towards empowerment. The narrative voice thus becomes a tool for exploring the internal and external dimensions of subjugation and liberation.

Through the use of language to depict power dynamics, the employment of symbolism and metaphor in character interactions, and the careful crafting of narrative voice and perspective, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie effectively portrays the subjugation of women in *Purple Hibiscus*.

The linguistic techniques used in the novel highlight the oppressive structures within the Achike family and broader society while also illuminating the paths to resistance and empowerment. Adichie's nuanced portrayal of subjugation underscores the complexity of power relations and the transformative potential of finding one's voice and agency.

## Linguistic Expressions of Abuse and Resistance

**Silence and Speech:** Silence and speech are powerful linguistic expressions used to depict both abuse and resistance. Kambili's initial silence reflects her subjugation and fear under her father's authoritarian rule. Her lack of speech symbolizes her repression and inability to express herself freely. Conversely, as she spends time with her Aunt Ifeoma and gains confidence, Kambili begins to speak more openly. This transition from silence to speech marks her journey towards empowerment and resistance against her father's control.

**Acts of Defiance:** Acts of defiance are key expressions of resistance against abuse. Jaja's refusal to take communion is a significant act of rebellion against Eugene's strict religious control. This defiance is a symbolic rejection of his father's authority and an assertion of his own agency. Beatrice's ultimate act of poisoning Eugene, though extreme, is another form of defiance, driven by the need to protect herself and her children from further harm.

**Role of Education and Knowledge:** Education and knowledge play crucial roles in the characters' resistance to oppression. Aunt Ifeoma, a university professor, represents the liberating power of education. Her encouragement of critical thinking and open discussion contrasts sharply with Eugene's oppressive control. Kambili and Jaja's exposure to different ideas and perspectives at Ifeoma's home broadens their understanding of the world and empowers them to question and resist their father's authority. Education, in this context, is a tool for intellectual and emotional liberation.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses vivid narrative techniques to highlight various forms of human rights abuses, including domestic violence,

psychological oppression, and economic dependence. Through the linguistic expressions of silence and speech, acts of defiance, and the transformative role of education, Adichie explores the complexities of abuse and the pathways to resistance and empowerment. The novel not only critiques the entrenched patriarchal structures that perpetuate these abuses but also celebrates the resilience and courage of those who fight against them.

## 3.2 Discussion

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie masterfully employs linguistic and narrative techniques to illuminate the nuanced dynamics of subjugation and resistance within a patriarchal framework. The findings from the analysis reveal how Adichie's use of language, symbolism, and character interactions deepens our understanding of human rights abuses, offering both a critique of oppressive systems in African society and a celebration of resilience.

Scholars have long noted the intricate portrayal of power dynamics in *Purple Hibiscus*, particularly through its use of language. Eugene Achike's authoritative speech, often laced with religious justifications, establishes his dominance and control over his family. This commanding language creates an environment where dissent is stifled and obedience is enforced, reflecting what scholars like Akintunde (2021) and Oyěwùmí (2022) have described as the broader societal structures of patriarchal control. Eugene's rhetoric, characterized by imperatives and divine mandates, underscores the significant role of verbal communication in perpetuating power imbalances, aligning with Fairclough's (2015) and van Dijk's (1993) frameworks for analyzing discourse to uncover hidden power dynamics and ideological constructions.

Symbolism and metaphor play crucial roles in the novel, offering deeper insights into the themes of subjugation and resistance. The purple hibiscus itself stands as a powerful symbol of hope and freedom, representing the possibility of a life beyond the constraints of oppressive control. This symbolism aligns with Oduyoye's (2020) discussion on how cultural symbols and rituals can both restrict and liberate individuals within a society. The rarity and beauty of the flower mirror the potential for liberation and the courage required to pursue it, contrasting sharply with the oppressive atmosphere of Eugene's home. This symbolic representation highlights the disparity between a life of subjugation and one of personal autonomy.

The novel also employs silence as a metaphor for repression and speech as a symbol of resistance. Kambili's initial silence reflects her internalized fear and subjugation under her father's rule. Her eventual move towards self-expression and assertiveness marks a critical shift towards empowerment. This transition underscores the novel's exploration of how breaking silence and finding one's voice are essential steps in overcoming oppression, echoing Amnesty International's (2023) and UN Women's (2022) accounts of the importance of voice and agency in resisting gender-based violence and oppression.

The acts of defiance portrayed in *Purple Hibiscus* are significant expressions of resistance against subjugation. Jaja's refusal to take communion symbolizes his rejection of Eugene's authoritarian control and his assertion of personal agency, resonating with Akintunde's (2021) and Oyèwùmí's (2022) observations on the importance of individual acts of resistance in challenging patriarchal norms. Beatrice's extreme act of poisoning Eugene represents a desperate, yet powerful, bid for freedom and protection for her children. These acts, while varied in their nature and consequences, collectively

highlight the characters' struggles and their resistance against oppressive forces. They illustrate the diverse ways in which individuals may challenge and confront abusive authority.

Education emerges as a pivotal theme in the novel, symbolizing the path to liberation and resistance. Ifeoma's role as an educator and her emphasis on critical thinking offer a stark contrast to Eugene's oppressive control. The educational environment in Ifeoma's home fosters intellectual and emotional growth, empowering Kambili and Jaja to question and resist their father's authority. This emphasis on education underscores its transformative potential, not only for personal empowerment but also for challenging broader societal structures, reflecting Oduyoye's (2020) and Amnesty International's (2023) views on the crucial role of education in fostering empowerment and resistance.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* serves as a poignant examination of human rights abuses through its rich portrayal of familial and societal oppression. The novel delves into the pervasive issues of domestic violence, psychological control, and economic dependence, depicting how these abuses are both manifested and resisted within a patriarchal framework. Adichie's nuanced linguistic portrayal—through the use of silence, acts of defiance, and the role of education—illuminates the mechanisms of subjugation and the pathways to empowerment.

Linguistic analysis proves invaluable in uncovering the layers of power dynamics depicted in the novel. By examining how language reinforces and challenges authority, we gain deeper insights into the nature of oppression and the potential for resistance. The contrast between Eugene's authoritarian control and Ifeoma's nurturing

environment highlights the transformative power of communication and education in countering subjugation. Literature plays a critical role in addressing human rights abuses by offering a lens through which to understand the lived experiences of those affected. *Purple Hibiscus* not only critiques the societal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence in African society but also provides a powerful narrative for empathy and reflection. Through the characters' struggles and growth, Adichie invites readers to confront the realities of oppression and consider their own roles in fostering change.

**Acknowledgement:** The authors are thankful to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie for her inspiring work which grant us the opportunity to engage with it in this way. Your writing continues to have a profound impact on readers, scholars, and researchers worldwide.

## 5. References

- Adenigba, O. A. (2024). *My right, your right*. Tajala Publishers.
- Adichie, C. N. (2003). *Purple Hibiscus*. Algonquin Books.
- Akintunde, D. (2021). Gender inequality in African societies. *African Journal of Gender Studies*, 15(2), 45–62.
- Amnesty International. (2023). *Ending gender-based violence in Africa*. Amnesty International.
- Fairclough, N. (2015). *Language and power* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Human Rights Watch. (2023). *World report 2023: Events of 2022*. Human Rights Watch.
- Oduyoye, M. A. (2020). African cultural practices and gender. *African Journal of Culture*, 18(4), 22–37.
- Oyèwùmí, O. (2022). The dynamics of power and gender in Nigerian novels. *Gender Studies Quarterly*, 9(2), 134–150.
- UN Women. (2022). *Gender equality: Women's rights in Africa*. UN Women.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 249–283.