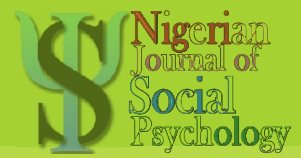


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A PSYCHOSOCIAL READING OF SUICIDE IN OKEY NDIBE'S *ARROWS OF RAIN*

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Death is the one great certainty. The subject of powerful social and religious rituals and moving literature, it is contemplated by philosophers, probed by biologists, and combatted by physicians (President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioural Research, 1981).

ABSTRACT

*Death is a fate from which no living entity can escape, be it a fauna or a flora constituent. The different kinds of death can be broadly classified into two: natural and unnatural. All deaths that occur due to age or illness in humans and animals can be said to be natural. To this, one can also add deaths due to natural occurrences like earthquake, volcanic eruptions, flooding as well as accidents. This presupposes that all other causes of death such as murders, assassinations, wars and suicides are not natural. Our focus in this article is on deaths as a result of suicides. Our interest in this topic is anchored on the rising cases of suicide the world over and particularly in our own Nigerian society. Although the mass and social media outlets are agog with multiple occurrences of suicide in our society, the literary community does not seem to have accorded it adequate attention as can be gleaned from past and recent thematic considerations. Our aim is to engender further critical analyses geared at stemming the sad phenomenon which is eating cancerously into the fabric of our already fragile society. To achieve our aim, we have chosen to analyse Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* from a psychosocial perspective.*

Keywords: *Erik Erikson, Death, Okey Ndibe, Psychosocial, Suicide*

INTRODUCTION

Death is the complete termination of life processes that every living thing experiences at some point. The exact meaning of human death is still up for debate and varies depending on culture and legal systems. It has always been muddled by mystery and superstition.

In the second half of the 20th century, death developed into an oddly fashionable topic. It may come as a surprise to learn that, before to that period, serious scientific and, to a lesser extent, philosophical conjectures mostly avoided discussing this issue. It was disregarded in biological study and, as it was outside the purview of medical treatment, was regarded as essentially irrelevant. Nonetheless, the study of death has emerged as a major area of study in many other fields in addition to these today.

Thanatology, the study of death, explores a wide range of topics, including the cultural anthropology of the idea of the soul, early civilizations' burial customs and rituals, the locations

of cemeteries during the Middle Ages, and the conceptual challenges associated with defining death in a person whose brain is irreversibly dead but whose breathing and heartbeat are maintained artificially. It includes comprehending the care of the dying, studying the biology of programmed cell death, and forming an informed public opinion about how the government should address the myriad issues raised by intensive-care technologies. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1926–2004), an American psychiatrist and author of Swiss descent who was a pioneer in the study of death and dying, is particularly well-known for having discovered the five stages of grief that the terminally ill go through. She was recognized for having helped the hospice care movement and the emerging field of thanatology gain respect and acceptance (Pallis, “Death”, www.britannica.com/science/death). The kind of death we are concerned with in this paper is suicide. It is therefore very important to define it and consider world statistics in general and that of Nigeria in particular.

Centre for Disease Control and Prevention defines suicide and suicide attempt as “death caused by injuring oneself with the intent to die. A suicide attempt is when someone harms themselves with any intent to end their life, but they do not die as a result of their actions” (www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/index.html).

Suicide in the World and in Nigeria

According to WHO (www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide) an estimated 703 000 individuals commit suicide each year, and many more make attempts at it. Every suicide is a tragedy that has a lasting impact on the people left behind and ripples across communities, families, and sometimes entire nations. Suicide is a lifelong illness that ranked as the fourth most common cause of death worldwide in 2019 for individuals aged 15 to 29. It is a worldwide phenomenon that happens everywhere in the world, not only in wealthy nations. In actuality, low- and middle-income nations accounted for more than 77% of all suicides worldwide in 2019. The suicide rate rose by almost 36% between 2000 and 2021. In the year 2021, suicide claimed 48,183 lives, or one life every 11 minutes. There are even more persons who consider or make an attempt at suicide. An estimated 12.3 million adult Americans considered suicide seriously in 2021; 3.5 million made plans to try suicide, and 1.7 million actually did (www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/index.html). Levi-Belz, Givion & Apter state that

Recent reports inform that around a million people die by suicide annually, representing an annual global age-standardized suicide rate of 11.4 per 100,000 populations (15.0 for males and 8.0 for females). Considering a time perspective from 2000 through 2016, the age-adjusted suicide rate has grown by 30%. These rates are only the tip of an iceberg. For every suicide, there are many more who attempt suicide every year. A cautious estimate suggests that more than 20 million people engage in suicidal behavior annually. Moreover, it is estimated that in the future, the suicide rates are expected to rise, given the WHO’s declaration that suicide rates will pass the 1 million mark in the next 15 years (www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychiatry/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2019.00214/full).

The phenomenon of suicide is intricate and multidimensional, involving numerous contributing and enabling factors. Numerous factors, including neurobiology, family history, stressful events, and the sociocultural environment, may interact to determine it (Turecki & Brent, 2016). Severe mental agony is a major contributing cause to suicide (Shneidman, 1993). The

role of psychopath as the main inducer of suicidal ideation and conduct has been highlighted in a number of research (Levi-Belz, Gvion, Horesh, Fischel, Treves, Or et al, 2014). The desire to escape from excruciating psychological suffering may be the driving force behind suicidal behaviour (Verrocchio, Carrozzino, Marchetti, Andreasson, Fulcheri M & Bech, 2016). A growing body of research indicates that psychological variables such as affective features, personality traits, and dysregulation also contribute to the decision-making impairment seen in suicidal people (Gvion, Levi-Belz, Hadlaczky & Apter, 2015).

In recent years the rate of suicide has drastically increased in Nigeria. Its prevalence definitely prompted a national daily, *Punch Newspaper* to document suicides from late 2023 with the caption “Punch Suicide Archives”. A glance at the headings that make up the archives, gives us a sad picture of the preponderance of suicide in Nigeria:

- 12th March 2024: 30-year-old Imo Poly graduate allegedly commits suicide.
- 8th March 2024: 80-year-old man kills self in Lagos.
- 7th March 2024: Woman kills self after dropping kids in Enugu Police Station.
- 11th February 2024: Kwara Varsity student commits suicide.
- 6th February 2024: Ogun Varsity undergraduate kills self.
- 30th January 2024: Kano school security guard kills self inside classroom.
- 17th January 2024: Soldier kills self in Ogun Barracks.
- 12th January 2024: Netizens mourn as female banker kills self, pens suicide note.
- 31st December 2023: Father who loses daughter in UK bares it all.
- 28th December 2023: 33-year-old man commits suicide in Ogun.
- 19th December 2023: Rivers policeman mistakenly kills colleague, commits suicide.
- 13th December 2023: Adamawa health worker allegedly commits suicide after boyfriend’s death.
- 6th December 2023: Man attempts suicide as wife flees with two children.
- 29th November 2023: More men die of suicide in Africa, says CDC.
- 20th November: Too many Nigerians are opting for suicide.

Due to the preponderance of death through various means as well as suicide in the world, art and literature over the years have attempted to highlight them.

Death in Art and Literature

Many angles can be taken while addressing this topic. It can be examined historically, for instance, by looking at how popular conceptions of death have been portrayed in literature, poetry, folklore, and visual arts. Ancient Egyptian art places a special emphasis on depictions of warriors who have been killed in combat and their severed parts. The graphic combat reliefs found in temples belonging to the 19th and 20th dynasties in Upper Egypt document the campaign of Egyptian king Ramses II against the Hittites in the 13th century BC, namely the combat of Kadesh. Assyrian art also excelled at depicting cadavers. Vultures are depicted removing the eyeballs of those killed by King Ashurbanipal (who died in the 7th century BC) during his campaign against the Arabian King Uate. These extremely realistic portrayals of what death meant appear to have served primarily as propaganda, bolstering the confidence of the victorious and instilling fear in the fallen. Numerous prehistoric societies included deceased deities, but outside of ancient Egypt, no meaningful artistic depiction of these deities or the people they ruled over existed. Egypt was to witness the apex of sepulchral iconography, especially with the democratization of the Osirian cult and its promise of universal afterlife. Prominent sculptors created some remarkable individual tombstones in ancient Greece and Rome, but the primary push for this practice—which might be understood as an attempt to preserve a vivid memory of the deceased among the living—came from medieval Christianity.

It appears that only in medieval Christian art did the theme of death—typically personified as a skeleton—become widely prevalent (Pallis, “Death”, www.britannica.com/science/death).

Death is a prevalent theme in literature, explored in various forms and contexts. Great authors have woven their plots with the thread of death: Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, etc.; Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1902); Dylan’s *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night* (1957), Sebald’s *The Lovely Bones* (2002); Albom’s *Tuesdays with Morrie*; Zusak’s *The Book Thief* (2006), Camus’ *L’Etranger* (1942), etc.

Death is also a significant theme in African literature, often intertwined with cultural beliefs, traditions, and the complexities of life on the continent. Achebe’s seminal novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) depicts the clash between traditional Igbo culture and colonialism. Death is a recurring theme, particularly in the context of the protagonist Okonkwo’s struggle to maintain his identity and dignity in the face of change and tragedy. Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*, set in colonial Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), delves into the struggles of a young girl named Tambudzai as she navigates issues of identity, gender, and family dynamics. Death is a theme that underscores the harsh realities of life in a society marked by social and political upheaval. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), set during the Nigerian Civil War, Adichie explores the lives of characters affected by conflict and violence. Death is a pervasive presence, reflecting the devastation wrought by war and the profound impact it has on individuals and communities. In *Petals of Blood* (1977), by the Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, the theme of death is intertwined with broader social and political issues. Set in post-colonial Kenya, the narrative follows the lives of four characters whose paths converge in the aftermath of a brutal murder, shedding light on the injustices and inequalities that persist in society.

Death as a theme in African literature is also preponderant in the works of francophone African writers. In *Une si longue lettre* (1979) the Senegalese author, Mariama Bâ, explores the experiences of women in a changing society. Death plays a significant role in the narrative, highlighting the challenges faced by the protagonist Ramatoulaye as she copes with the loss of her husband and reflects on her life. According to Moupoumbou (2004) « A travers les titres des romans, nous pouvons conjecturer la mort du héros » (From the titles of novels one can even deduce the death of the protagonist). In novels such as *Les Soleils des indépendances* (1968), *L’Etrange destin de Wangrin* (1973) and *Le Roi miraculé* (1958) the deaths of Fama, Wangrin and the King are predicted. We notice that in many novels, the hero dies. In *Une vie de boy* (1956), Toundi dies as he tries to escape from the extremely harsh treatment from the colonisers. In *Les Soleils des indépendances* (1968), Fama is the victim of an attack by the “sacred caiman”, the very one promised to preserve the last of the Doumbouya to the ends of the earth. Samba Diallo dies after an unsuccessful spiritual quest in *Aventure ambiguë* (1961). In *L’Etrange destin de Wangrin*, Wangrin dies during a stormy night, swept into a ditch by muddy waters.

According to Moupoumbou (2004) different types of death are given thematic preoccupations in francophone African literature. Natural death also known as “mort douce” happens at the end of a long life. That is the case of the spiritual guide, Thierno, in *L’Aventure ambiguë*. The same fate befalls “le maître des Diallobe” in the same novel. Moupoumbou (2004) also elaborates on natural destructive death as seen in the case of Wangrin in *L’Etrange destin de Wangrin* (1973). A torrential downpour leads to his death. Already drunk, he could not withstand the ravaging force of the muddy water that kills him in a gutter. A similar fate befalls Samba, the wine seller in *C’est le soleil qui m’a brûlé* (1999). In the same vein, three hundred people die after the devastating effect of an earthquake in *La Vie et demie* (1979).

Accidental death is another form of death prevalent in francophone African literature. In *Une Vie de boy*, Father Guilbert's death is caused by an accident although the villagers think it is orchestrated by the spirits as a vengeance for his atrocities. In *La Vie et demie* (1956), Jean Claire also dies after an accident.

Suicide in Literature

Suicide is a profound and often controversial theme in literature, explored by authors to delve into the complexities of human suffering, mental health, and existential despair. Here are some examples of literary works that feature suicide: In *The Bell Jar* (1963), Sylvia Plath's semi-autobiographical novel, the protagonist Esther Greenwood descends into mental illness and her struggles with depression. The novel culminates in Esther's suicide attempt, reflecting Plath's own battles with mental health. In Camus' *L'Etranger* (1942) the protagonist, Meursault, embodies a sense of existential detachment and apathy towards life. The novel concludes with Meursault's seemingly inexplicable act of murder followed by his resignation to face the death penalty, reflecting themes of absurdity and the futility of existence. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* Septimus Warren Smith, a war veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, is haunted by memories of his friend's death in World War I. Unable to cope with the horrors of war and the pressures of society, Septimus ultimately takes his own life. *Norwegian Wood* by Haruki Murakami explores themes of love, loss, and mental illness. The character Naoko, struggling with depression and unresolved trauma, commits suicide, leaving a profound impact on the protagonist Toru Watanabe. In *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1779), an epistolary novel by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe the protagonist Werther's unrequited love for Charlotte leads to despair. Unable to bear the pain of unfulfilled love, Werther ultimately takes his own life. In *Anna Karenina* (1887) by Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina, is trapped in a loveless marriage and ostracized by society. She succumbs to despair and ends her own life by throwing herself under a train. Her suicide is a tragic culmination of the societal pressures and personal conflicts depicted in the novel. There are also instances of suicide in African literature. Let us consider some of them.

Suicide is a theme that appears in some African literary works, often explored within the context of cultural beliefs, social pressures, and individual struggles. Here are a few examples: Although *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) is not written by an African author (Tayeb Salih), the novel is set in Sudan and offers a powerful exploration of colonialism, identity, and mental anguish. The character Mustafa Sa'eed, haunted by his past and conflicted by his identity, ultimately takes his own life. While suicide itself is not a central theme in *The River Between* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, there is a poignant moment where the character Muthoni, a young girl who becomes pregnant out of wedlock, chooses to drown herself in the river rather than face the shame and ostracization of her community. Suicide is a significant theme in *Purple Hibiscus* (2006) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Aunt Ifeoma's brother, Papa Nnukwu, chooses to end his life rather than face the indignity of dying in a hospital, which goes against his traditional beliefs. The novel also addresses themes of abuse, oppression, and the impact of religious fanaticism on mental health.

This kind of death has also formed a basis for thematic exploration in francophone African novels. In Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy* (1956), Toundi, a young African houseboy working for a French colonial administrator, experiences oppression and disillusionment. Although the story does not explicitly depict suicide, Toundi's tragic fate can be interpreted as a form of self-destruction resulting from his circumstances.

The dictator, Jean-Coeur-de-Père in *La Vie et demie* (1979), commits suicide after an assassination that robs him of sleep and peace. Due to excessive hallucinations, he takes a

strange decision to take his own life in a public ceremony organised for it. Deaths caused by sacred totems like the case of *Le Chant du lac* (1965) and *Les Soleils des independances* (1968) can be considered as suicide since the protagonists confidently approach such wild animals thinking that they are safe. Quini-Quini suffers the same fate in Alioum Fantoure's *Le Voile ténébreux* (1992). It can still be argued that the victims do not intentionally kill themselves in the cases of the totems mentioned above since their belief systems have tuned their psyche to depend on the protective abilities of such animals.

These examples highlight how suicide is portrayed in African literature, often intertwined with broader social, cultural, and political contexts. While not as prevalent as in some other literary traditions, African authors have addressed the theme of suicide with sensitivity and depth, shedding light on the complexities of human experience on the continent.

However, a cursory look at the works cited above shows that suicide has not been given its desired attention especially when one considers its spate in our contemporary problem-ridden society. This paper therefore seeks to contribute to further awareness of this psychosocial malaise that is eating deep into the fabrics of our society. But before we delve into it the views of other critics of *Arrows of Rain* (2000) are worth considering.

Arrows of Rain: Critics' Critique

In this section we intend to explore current literary criticism so far as *Arrows of Rain* is concerned. This will create the necessary gap which our research seeks to fill. Ugwanyi & Ani (2020) examine the psychological and social breakdown which the people have suffered on account of the actions and inactions of political leadership. In their comprehensive analysis of Okey Ndibe's novel, *Arrows of Rain* they portray the total psycho-social breakdown and disorder citizens suffer as a result of bad governance and corrupt leadership.

Akingbe (2013) frontally engages the evils of the latest incarnation of military rule and its civilian collaborators. According to him this marks a shift in theme and concern from the previous emphasis on the impact of colonization and the focus on the historical past to an examination of current socio-political problems of abuse of power by the ruling elite, as well as widespread brazen corruption and social inequality in contemporary Nigeria.

Awelewa (2019) avers that since Africa has had more leadership issues than any other continent, it is not unexpected that writers from this area have focused their artistic energies on depicting the bleak circumstances. He uses Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* and Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* to assert that suicide is a direct reaction to African leadership's shortcomings. Through a Marxist Existentialist theory, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Okey Ndibe demonstrate that life is an ongoing struggle. The study examines their work from the standpoint of a bildungsroman, extending it to a hagiography in the instance of Ngugi's *Wariinga*. It poses questions about the purpose of life and comes to the conclusion that fewer and fewer people would find meaning in it if the leaders truly led and put aside their greed; they would want to live and not commit suicide because there would be no personal, social, political, or economic incentive to do so.

Onwuka's study explores the psychological characteristics of soldiers in politics by examining military characters in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2015). He concludes that "the depiction of the military in both novels reveals the bestiality of soldiers against civil society" (2015).

Kachua sets out to critique Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* with the intension of exploring how the two novelists proffer solutions to the issues identified in

their society, “to achieve sustainable development, comparative advantage, and national identity in their beleaguered nation, Nigeria” (2022).

While we do not claim to have exhausted all the critiques on *Arrows of Rain* since some are definitely not on-line, we are not only appalled by the paucity of critical academic attention paid to the work under review, we are equally surprised that despite two suicides in the novel most of the critics have dwelled more on the themes of corruption and military dictatorship. Suicide as one of the consequences of such misrule has not been given its pride of place despite its growing preponderance. To accord it its necessary attention we shall base our analysis on the psychosocial theory.

Suicide and Psychosocial Theory

The expression “psychosocial” is a compound adjective. According to Hayward (2012), despite the fact that it was used for the first time by “academic psychologists in the 1890s, it was only in the interwar period that psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers began to develop detailed models of the psychosocial domain”. It is worth noting that earlier philosophers like Plato and, much later, Hegel, had presented “an organic vision of society that emphasised the close involvement of self and community” (Hayward, 2012). It is this “self” struggling to find harmony in his “community” that is the crux of the psychosocial.

Erik Erikson is unarguably the most prominent proponent of the psychosocial theory. Although he was greatly influenced by Freud's psychoanalytic theory of development, he made two significant additions to it. First, Freud only considered childhood. Erikson, on the other hand, created a lifetime theory, which postulated the characteristics of personality development as it occurs from birth to old age. Second, Freud's theory emphasizes the significance of genitalia and sexual impulses in children's development and is regarded as a psychosexual theory of development. Erikson's theory, which emphasizes the significance of social and cultural elements across the lifespan, is regarded as psychosocial (Syed & McLean, 2017).

Erikson's theory is most known for describing the eight basic psychosocial tensions that people must manage throughout their lives. Many times, people refer to them as "stages." However, a crucial component of Erikson's theory has been widely misunderstood as a result of using the stage notion to describe the conflicts. When tensions are viewed as stages, it might be easy to believe that they arise in a specific order, have significance only at a certain point in time, and then become irrelevant when they have been “resolved.” That is not at all the case.

Instead, Erikson contended that while each of the eight tensions exists in people at every stage of life, certain tensions are more prominent than others. As a result, a particular tension will appear before and remain significant after its primary developmental period.

He presents the eight stages or tensions as dichotomies. They are trust vs. mistrust (infancy), anatomy vs. shame and doubt (toddlerhood), initiative vs. guilt (early childhood), industry vs. inferiority (middle childhood), identity vs. role confusion (adolescence and emerging adulthood), intimacy vs. isolation (emerging adulthood and adulthood), generativity vs. stagnation (adulthood), and integrity vs. despair (old age). Our concern so far as Erikson's psychosocial theory is concerned has to do with the seventh tension. At this stage people start to transition into middle adulthood in their 40s, and this phase lasts until they are in their mid-60s. The social challenge of middle age is to balance stagnation with generativity. Discovering one's purpose and assisting others in their development via endeavours like parenting, mentorship, and volunteer work are examples of being generous. In addition, middle-aged folks start making a beneficial impact on the next generation at this phase. They also start engaging in meaningful and productive employment that benefits society as a whole. If they are unable

to do this duty, they could become stagnant, feel as though they are not making a significant impact on the world, have little desire in productivity, and self-development and consequently slump into despair with far-reaching tendencies like suicide.

Arrows of Rain Suicide Storyline and Analysis

Bukuru the major character is accused of raping a lady and later killing her by drowning. When he gives his own story, he is not believed because he is labelled a madman. He is accused not only of contributing, by acts of omission or commission to the death by drowning of a lady at B. Beach but also of assault and sexual abuse prior to her death. He refuses the services of a lawyer and says “my case is beyond a lawyer’s understanding” (Ndibe, 2000). A psychiatrist examines him, and declares him sane. His verdict: “After several sessions with the accused I found him to be quite discerning, lucid and possessed of rational faculty” (Ndibe, 2000). The detective claims that Bukuru raped and drowned the lady. Bukuru in turn accuses the military government and the present military head of state of raping a prostitute and stabbing her in the vagina with a dagger many years ago. Although Justice Kayode asks that the issue about General Isa Palat Bello should not be in the news, a journalist named Femi who is the narrator of the story, publishes it. Mr. Mandi, a psychiatrist invites Femi to accompany him to Bukuru’s prison cell because Bukuru wants someone to publish his story which he has kept to himself for twenty- three years due to fear.

Bukuru and Femi are different in the sense that Femi tells his story and waits for the worst while Bukuru lacks courage. According to his story, Bukuru like Femi, was once a journalist. He dated a prostitute who was regularly frequented by the military men including Isa Palat Bello, the current head of state. When he found out that Iyese (the prostitute) was seeing another man, Bukuru, he threatened and beat her. When he found out that she was pregnant, he and four other military men beat her and used a dagger to cut her vagina with the intention of killing the baby. The dagger wounded the baby’s right leg. Bukuru refused to help her and the baby because he was afraid that he might be killed. He preferred silence for twenty-three years. To further reinforce his muteness, he claimed anonymity through feigned mental disorder after resigning from his job. He then took refuge at B. Beach so that he would not be recognized and killed the way Iyese was killed by Isa Palat Bello and the other soldiers. Nnodim (2008) captures his choice of sealed lips thus:

for the onlooker, Bukuru, the choice of silence becomes a form of exile from society. When Major Isa Palat Bello ascends to the political forefront, Bukuru transcends the available repertoires of socially acceptable identities by assuming the identity of a madman wandering the shores of B. Beach.

His struggles with silence is succinctly captured when he wonders: “what was my life but a succession of silences, evasions and abdications” (Ndibe, 2000). It is worth considering the phenomenon of silence from the psychosocial standpoint. In Bao’s “The multiple meanings of silence in social psychology”, he defines silence with interpersonal meaning from the following perspectives: silence as human nature, silence as a personal decision, silence as culture, silence as empowerment and silence as powerlessness. From the intrapersonal point of view, he considers the phenomenon of silence as follows: silence as self-dialogue, silence as solitary enjoyment and silence as social withdrawal (2023). It is this last classification of intrapersonal silence that affects Bukuru as Bao (2023) explains:

Silence becomes an act of resistance. Someone quiet for an extended period may become invisible. If silence has been forced upon them, that person may seek invisibility as an act of self-protection...

Self-silencing among the poor and powerless can harm mental health and well-being. It can contribute to feelings of frustration and a lack of autonomy. Research suggests that self-silencing increases depression and anxiety and decreases overall psychological well-being. In a word, silence can result from oppression, ignorance, or as a demonstration of power.

In the case of Bukuru, his silence is as a result of oppression. It is a form of resistance reinforced by the anonymity of invisibility on the blood-soaked shores of B. Beach.

After Femi hears his story, he is shocked to find out that Bukuru is indeed his father, the chicken-hearted man who rejected him twenty-three years ago to die from bleeding because of fear and cowardice. When he probes further to ascertain his paternity, Bukuru slumps to another bout of silence, thus rejecting his son the second time. Unable to bear the shame, guilt, inadequacy and failure Bukuru commits suicide. In his suicide note he tells Femi that even if he is released, he will not gain freedom from the guilt of turning away from a sleeping and bleeding child. To him suicide is the prize he has to pay for his silence.

It is equally obvious that the lady, the object of Bukuru's accusation, is suffering from psychological disorder. She screams with terror and runs into the sea to her death, an action which seems to be her only redemptive exit from a society ridden with crime and rape. To her, the waves will wash the mud of abuse heaped on her by supposed leaders of her country. Her already debased condition could no longer be sustained by the tainted existence in Langa to which she had been drawn because she had heard that it "was a vast, strange human bazaar where shame had no odour because people lived anonymously" (Ndibe, 2000).

In most suicide cases as evidenced in our society and elsewhere, especially those committed by adults, there is a sense of inadequacy in the realisation of their dreams. In these two instances of suicide in *Arrows of Rain*, one cannot help but notice Erikson's seventh tension of psychosocial development at play. It is obvious that both characters are adults who in their psyche are contending between the two dichotomies of generativity vs. stagnation. Bukuru, a once thriving journalist who was obviously contributing to the growth and development of his society found his mission in life truncated due to his amorous and flirtatious entanglement with a lady in whom a brutal soldier had vested sexual interest. He failed to act his role as an honourable and courageous man when, twenty-three years ago he abandoned a bleeding and dying woman with his child in her womb. The lady who decides to commit suicide rather than persist in a life of degenerative self-worth and poignant stagnation devoid of any sense of purpose, mission and procreation is also a victim of a society that has severed the sustaining cord between "self" and "community".

Conclusion

The spate of suicide in the world in general and Nigeria in particular informed the desire to lend our voice as a way of curbing the menace. Existing literature, be it prose, drama or poetry in Nigeria has not given the theme sufficient attention. Even critics, as we have explained in this paper, have not done enough justice to this psychosocial gangrene that has become so preponderant in our society. As seen in our literature review, the few identified critics who

have critiqued Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*, have dwelled more on military brutality and corruption in Nigeria.

We decided to rely on interdisciplinarity in the choice of our theoretical framework in order to give our work a wider and more impactful audience. The psychosocial theory as propounded by Erik Erikson is therefore very apt for our analysis. The two characters examined in line with the theme of suicide, definitely slide into stagnation without the slightest effort towards generativity because they believe that all hope is lost.

It is also important to stress the choice of our publication outlet, *Nigerian Journal of Social Psychology*. It is hoped that Departments of Psychology in our various universities would step in to stem the tide of suicides that is also becoming very rampant on our campuses.

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