

**POLITICS OF BLAME: EXAMINING PATRIARCHAL SCAPEGOATING IN UKAMAKA
OLISAKWE'S *OGADIMMA* AND ABI DARE'S *AND SO I ROAR***

Ogechukwu Martha Ezeani
Department of English Language and Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Mo.ezeani@unizik.edu.ng
&
Doris Paschal-Mbakwe
Department of English Language and Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
dn.paschal@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

Patriarchy remains one of the most pervasive systems of social organization in Africa, where gender relations are largely defined by cultural norms that privilege men while subordinating women. One of the strategies through which patriarchy sustains this inequality is the politics of blame, whereby women are unjustly held responsible for personal, familial, and societal failures irrespective of the actual causes. This culture of blame often culminates in scapegoating, where women become symbolic victims who bear the consequences of actions committed by others. This study examines the manifestations of patriarchal blame and scapegoating in Ukamaka Olisakwe's *Ogadimma* and Abi Dare's *And So I Roar*. The study adopts Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's African Womanism as its theoretical framework because of its emphasis on gender justice, cultural consciousness, and the dignity of African women. Through qualitative textual analysis, the study reveals that both novels portray women and girls as victims of rape, infertility stigma, domestic violence, ritual sacrifice, and communal condemnation, all arising from patriarchal systems that shift responsibility from male perpetrators to female victims. The study argues that blame functions as an ideological weapon through which patriarchy perpetuates female oppression and shields men from accountability. It concludes that both Olisakwe and Daré challenge patriarchal ideologies by advocating justice, truth, accountability, and the recognition of women's agency. The study contributes to contemporary African literary criticism by foregrounding patriarchal blame and scapegoating as important thematic concerns in Nigerian fiction.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Politics of Blame, Scapegoating, African Womanism, Gender, Contemporary Nigerian Fiction.

Introduction

The politics of blame has become a recurring social phenomenon through which responsibility for failure, conflict, and misfortune is transferred from those who are genuinely accountable to vulnerable individuals who possess little power to resist or defend themselves. Across societies, blame is often employed to preserve existing power structures, maintain social hierarchies, and divert attention from the actual causes of crises. Women, particularly within patriarchal societies, have historically become the primary victims of this practice because of deeply entrenched cultural beliefs that associate them with failure, shame, and misfortune. Closely related to blame is the practice of scapegoating. Originally derived from the biblical tradition in Leviticus 16:21–22, the scapegoat symbolically carried the sins of the Israelites into the wilderness, thereby cleansing the community. In modern social discourse, however, scapegoating refers to the unfair transfer of guilt and responsibility onto innocent individuals or groups who become victims of circumstances beyond their control. René Girard (1986) argues that societies preserve social cohesion by transferring collective tensions and guilt to an innocent victim whose punishment creates an illusion of justice and stability. René Girard also argues that societies often resolve social tensions by selecting a scapegoat upon whom collective fears, anxieties, and failures are projected. According to Girard, the scapegoat becomes a sacrificial victim whose suffering creates a false sense of justice while concealing the real causes of conflict. Similarly, Allport (1954) observes that prejudice and discrimination frequently arise from scapegoating, whereby dominant groups blame weaker groups for economic, political, or social crises. Within patriarchal societies, women become the most frequent scapegoats because cultural traditions position them as symbols of honour, morality, and fertility. Consequently, whenever marriages fail, children become wayward, businesses collapse, or communities experience hardship, women are often accused of causing these misfortunes. Such accusations rarely emerge from evidence but rather from patriarchal ideologies that seek to preserve male authority by transferring responsibility to women.

Within patriarchal societies, women frequently become the preferred scapegoats. They are blamed for infertility, childlessness, marital instability, children's misconduct, economic hardship, and communal disasters even when evidence points elsewhere. Sylvia Walby (1990, p. 20) defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women." Such domination creates unequal gender relations where women become convenient recipients of blame while men escape accountability. Roy F. Baumeister, Arlene Stillwell, and Sara Wotman (1990) observe that blame involves holding another person responsible for a negative outcome, often influenced by personal perceptions rather than objective evidence. Contemporary Nigerian literature increasingly interrogates these injustices. Writers expose the various ways patriarchal institutions transform women into scapegoats for crimes, failures, and misfortunes committed by men or produced by structural inequalities. Ukamaka Olisakwe's *Ogadinma* and Abi Daré's *And So I Roar* are significant contributions to this discourse. Through the experiences of Ogadinma, Adunni, Tia, and other female characters, the novels reveal that patriarchal blame extends beyond the domestic sphere into religion, culture, politics, and communal life.

According to Gerda Lerner (1986), patriarchy is a historical system that institutionalizes male dominance through legal, cultural, religious, and economic structures. Similarly, Bell hooks (2000) argues that patriarchy is sustained through institutionalized sexism, which normalizes the domination of women and reinforces unequal gender relations. Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1985) further observes that African women negotiate patriarchal cultures that often privilege men while marginalizing women through oppressive traditions and discriminatory practices. These realities are evident in many African communities where women are blamed for infertility, despite medical evidence that infertility affects both men and women. This phenomenon is vividly portrayed in Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds*. In the novel, Ije suffers humiliation and social rejection because she is believed to be responsible for the couple's childlessness. Eventually, medical examination reveals that her husband, Dozie, is infertile, thereby exposing the injustice of patriarchal assumptions. Likewise, Ayòbámi Adébáyò's *Stay with Me* portrays Yejide as the target of relentless accusations and pressure from her husband's family because of childlessness. Unknown to them, Akin also has reproductive challenges, demonstrating how patriarchal societies instinctively blame women while protecting male pride. These literary representations reflect the realities of many African societies where blame has become gendered. Rather than investigating the true causes of family and societal crises, patriarchal cultures often transfer responsibility to women, making them scapegoats for problems they neither create nor control. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the manifestations of patriarchal blame and scapegoating in *Ogadinma* and *And So I Roar*.

In the African context, patriarchal blame manifests itself in several ways. Women are commonly accused of causing infertility, childlessness, marital instability, poverty, domestic conflicts, and children's delinquent behaviour. Even when scientific evidence demonstrates that infertility affects both men and women, wives are usually presumed to be responsible for childlessness while husbands are protected from social embarrassment. Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1985) observes that African women continually negotiate patriarchal traditions that privilege men while denying women justice and equal recognition. Likewise, Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) contends that African women's oppression is sustained not only by patriarchy but also by harmful cultural and religious practices that reinforce gender inequality.

This culture of blame extends beyond infertility to other aspects of women's lives. Mothers are frequently blamed for children's poor behaviour even though parenting is a shared responsibility. Wives are accused of bringing bad luck whenever businesses fail or financial hardship occurs, despite the fact that such failures may result from poor planning, corruption, or economic instability. Victims of rape and sexual violence are often stigmatized and condemned instead of receiving protection and justice. In these instances, blame functions as a mechanism through which patriarchy shifts responsibility away from male perpetrators and places it upon female victims.

The selected novels, *Ogadinma* and *And So I Roar*, vividly portray this reality. In *Ogadinma*, the protagonist is blamed after surviving rape, accused of causing her husband's business failures, and falsely identified as the source of spiritual misfortune. Likewise, in *And So I Roar*, Adunni is accused of murder and selected for ritual sacrifice, while Tia suffers humiliation because she is presumed infertile despite her husband's reproductive condition. Through these narratives, Ukamaka Olisakwe and Abi Daré expose the destructive consequences of patriarchal blame and advocate a society founded on truth, accountability, and justice rather than prejudice and gender discrimination.

Although several studies have examined *Ogadinma* and *And So I Roar* from the perspectives of feminism, trauma, child marriage, gender inequality, and female resilience, little scholarly attention has been devoted to the politics of blame and scapegoating as central mechanisms through which patriarchy perpetuates women's oppression.

Existing studies have largely focused on violence against women without sufficiently examining how blame is deliberately shifted from perpetrators to victims, thereby legitimizing continued discrimination and abuse.

This gap necessitates a critical investigation of the selected novels to determine how patriarchal societies construct women as scapegoats for individual and collective failures. By examining the manifestations of blame and scapegoating through the lens of Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's African Womanism, this study seeks to demonstrate that the oppression of women is sustained not only through physical violence but also through ideological practices that normalize victim-blaming and protect male privilege.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the manifestations of patriarchal blame and scapegoating in Ukamaka Olisakwe's *Ogadimma* and Abi Daré's *And So I Roar*. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate how women and girls become victims of unjust blame for circumstances beyond their control and how patriarchal institutions perpetuate such practices through cultural, religious, and social ideologies. The study further aims to demonstrate how the selected authors expose and challenge these oppressive structures by advocating justice, accountability, and the restoration of women's dignity. Using Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's African Womanism as its theoretical framework, the study also examines how contemporary Nigerian fiction contributes to the discourse on gender justice and social transformation.

This study is significant because it expands scholarly discourse on contemporary Nigerian literature by foregrounding the politics of blame and scapegoating as important mechanisms of patriarchal oppression. While previous studies have concentrated on themes such as gender inequality, trauma, domestic violence, and child marriage, this research demonstrates that victim-blaming and scapegoating constitute fundamental strategies through which patriarchy maintains female subordination. The study also contributes to feminist literary criticism by applying Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's African Womanism to the analysis of *Ogadimma* and *And So I Roar*. In doing so, it highlights the relevance of an indigenous African feminist framework in explaining the cultural realities of African women and challenging oppressive patriarchal practices.

Manifestations of Patriarchal Blame and Scapegoating in *Ogadimma*

Ukamaka Olisakwe's *Ogadimma* presents a compelling critique of the patriarchal politics of blame and scapegoating in contemporary Nigerian society. Through the experiences of the protagonist, the novel demonstrates how patriarchal institutions systematically transfer responsibility for male misconduct and societal failures to women, regardless of their innocence. *Ogadimma*'s life is characterized by repeated episodes of victim-blaming, physical abuse, emotional trauma, and social rejection, all of which reveal the extent to which patriarchal ideology protects male perpetrators while criminalizing female victims.

The first manifestation of patriarchal blame occurs after *Ogadimma* is sexually assaulted by Barrister Chima. As a seventeen-year-old girl seeking admission into the university, *Ogadimma* is referred by her father to Barrister Chima for assistance. Instead of helping her, the barrister exploits her vulnerability by raping and impregnating her. Out of fear, shame, and confusion, *Ogadimma* terminates the pregnancy. Rather than investigating the circumstances that led to his daughter's pregnancy or identifying the man responsible, her father immediately condemns and punishes her. He orders, "Lie flat on the bed... I will give you twenty-four strokes" (31), subjecting her to severe physical punishment and afterwards sends her to Lagos to live with her uncle. His response exemplifies patriarchal victim-blaming, where the victim of sexual violence is treated as the offender while the actual perpetrator escapes accountability.

The injustice is further reinforced when *Ogadimma* attempts to explain her situation. She tells her father that "she didn't know the man who got her pregnant" (33), yet he shows no interest in uncovering the truth or seeking justice against the paedophile who violated his teenage daughter. Instead, he views the pregnancy as a stain on the family's honour and punishes *Ogadimma* without considering her age, vulnerability, or emotional state. By prioritizing family reputation over his daughter's welfare, he embodies a patriarchal culture that values social appearance above justice and protection for women. Consequently, *Ogadimma* becomes the scapegoat for a crime committed against her.

The politics of blame continues after *Ogadimma* relocates to Lagos, where she marries Tobe, a government contractor who is nearly twice her age. Shortly after their marriage, Tobe is arrested for "diverting government money and building substandard roads" (110). The legal proceedings exhaust his financial resources and plunge the family into economic hardship. Rather than accepting responsibility for his corrupt practices, Tobe begins to attribute every setback to *Ogadimma*. His subsequent business ventures fail largely because of poor planning and inadequate feasibility studies, yet he refuses to acknowledge his own poor judgment. Instead, he accuses his wife,

asking, "Why have things been going wrong since we married?" (173). This accusation illustrates the patriarchal tendency to transform women into convenient explanations for men's failures.

Tobe's unfounded accusations soon develop into persistent domestic violence. Convinced that Ogadimma is responsible for his declining fortunes, he subjects her to repeated physical assaults and emotional abuse. The violence reflects a patriarchal belief that wives should bear the consequences of their husbands' frustrations irrespective of the actual causes of those frustrations. Rather than protecting his daughter, Ogadimma's father remains indifferent to her suffering. The narrator observes that "he cared more about her staying married than her safety" (149). This statement exposes another dimension of patriarchal blame: the expectation that women should endure abuse in order to preserve marriage, while men's violent behaviour is tolerated or ignored.

The novel also examines how patriarchal blame is reinforced through religious and cultural manipulation. In search of solutions to his problems, Tobe, accompanied by his sister, Aunt Ngozi, takes Ogadimma to Onye Ekpere, a self-acclaimed spiritualist. Without any evidence, Onye Ekpere declares that Ogadimma is spiritually responsible for Tobe's misfortunes because she allegedly possesses a "marine husband." When Ogadimma attempts to defend herself, Onye Ekpere silences her, saying, "There is everything wrong with you, shut up... I see the forces manipulating you" (189). The accusation shifts attention away from Tobe's corruption and poor decisions by constructing Ogadimma as the supernatural cause of his failures. This episode demonstrates how patriarchal societies frequently employ religious and traditional beliefs to legitimize the scapegoating of women. Ironically, the supposed spiritual cleansing becomes another avenue for Ogadimma's victimization. Tobe and Aunt Ngozi abandon her in Onye Ekpere's custody, believing that she must undergo deliverance to restore the family's fortunes. Instead of receiving spiritual help, Ogadimma is repeatedly sexually abused by the fraudulent spiritualist. The episode reveals the devastating consequences of patriarchal blame, as the woman who is falsely accused of causing misfortune becomes vulnerable to further exploitation. Through this narrative, Olisakwe condemns both religious hypocrisy and cultural practices that disguise gender-based violence as spiritual intervention.

A significant turning point in the novel occurs when Ogadimma finally questions the injustice she has endured. She asks her uncle, "What I don't understand is why everyone must hold me responsible for Tobe's decisions" (200). This question captures the central concern of the novel and the focus of this study. It reflects Ogadimma's realization that she has consistently been blamed for actions and decisions made by men. Her statement exposes the irrationality of a patriarchal system that transfers responsibility from male perpetrators to innocent women. Rather than remaining silent, Ogadimma challenges the ideology that has defined her existence and refuses to internalize the blame imposed upon her.

Viewed through Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's African Womanism, Ogadimma's experiences represent a critique of patriarchal structures that deny women justice and dignity. Ogunyemi advocates an African society founded on mutual respect, complementarity, and accountability rather than domination and oppression. Throughout the novel, Olisakwe demonstrates that the politics of blame functions as an instrument of patriarchal control, allowing men to evade responsibility while women bear the physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of male misconduct.

Ultimately, Olisakwe establishes that blame and scapegoating are not isolated incidents but systemic practices embedded within patriarchal institutions. Whether through sexual violence, domestic abuse, family honour, or religious manipulation, women become the convenient victims upon whom society projects guilt and failure. By exposing these injustices, Olisakwe calls for a transformation of cultural attitudes that normalize victim-blaming and instead advocates truth, accountability, justice, and the restoration of women's dignity.

Manifestations of Patriarchal Blame and Scapegoating in *And So I Roar*

Abi Daré's *And So I Roar* offers a profound critique of the politics of blame and scapegoating within patriarchal African societies. Through the experiences of Adunni, Tia, and other vulnerable girls in Ikati village, the novel demonstrates how women and girls are unjustly burdened with responsibility for communal crises, family problems, and environmental disasters. Rather than confronting the actual causes of these challenges, the society depicted in the novel resorts to blaming innocent female victims, thereby reinforcing patriarchal authority and preserving harmful cultural traditions.

The first major manifestation of patriarchal blame is evident in the false accusation against Adunni, the protagonist. Having escaped from Ikati village to Lagos, Adunni later discovers that the villagers believe she murdered Khadija. Following the discovery of Khadija's body, the elders conclude that the land has become

spiritually polluted and that Adunni must return to cleanse the community through ritual sacrifice. Recounting the villagers' accusations, Adunni states:

"How they want me to return for killing Khadija, because the blood of Khadija is weeping from the earth after they found her body swelling up by the river... and that the blood is staining all our rivers and causing all our water in Ikati to dry up... they want me to make a sacrifice" (32).

This accusation reveals the irrationality of patriarchal scapegoating. Instead of conducting a proper investigation into Khadija's death or identifying the real culprit, the community transfers its collective fears and frustrations to Adunni, a powerless teenage girl. She becomes the symbolic bearer of communal guilt despite her innocence. Through this episode, Daré exposes how patriarchal societies frequently sacrifice women to preserve social order while protecting those who wield power.

The politics of blame is equally manifested through Tia's experience of childlessness. Since the beginning of her marriage to Ken, Tia bears the full responsibility for the couple's inability to conceive. Like many women in patriarchal African societies, she is presumed to be infertile without any medical examination of her husband. Consequently, her mother-in-law subjects her to humiliating traditional rituals intended to remove the supposed curse of barrenness. Reflecting on the experience, Tia recalls: "After his mother invited me for a ritual bath she believed would wash away the stain of our childlessness, a harrowing event that resulted in the scars I now carry" (27).

The ritual leaves Tia with permanent physical and emotional scars, illustrating how patriarchal beliefs often punish women for reproductive challenges while exempting men from scrutiny. Ironically, Tia later discovers that Ken is infertile, thereby exposing the false assumptions that informed the accusations against her. Daré uses this reversal to criticize a culture that instinctively blames women for infertility while preserving male honour at the expense of female dignity.

Another important dimension of patriarchal blame is revealed through Tia's silence concerning her past relationship with Boma, her deceased lover, with whom she had a child. Although her silence is motivated by personal circumstances and her desire to uncover the truth about the child's whereabouts, it also reflects the fear of social condemnation. Patriarchal societies often judge women more harshly than men for their sexual histories, compelling women to conceal aspects of their lives to avoid public shame and discrimination.

The novel further dismantles the cultural myths surrounding Ikati's environmental crisis. As Tia accompanies Adunni back to the village to rescue her from ritual sacrifice, she discovers that extensive deforestation has devastated the surrounding ecosystem. The destruction of the forest has resulted in climate change, prolonged drought, and disrupted rainfall patterns (138–139). This scientific explanation directly contradicts the villagers' belief that Adunni's alleged crime has angered the gods and caused the land's infertility. Daré therefore exposes how superstition and patriarchal ideology combine to shift attention away from environmental degradation and place the burden of responsibility upon an innocent girl.

The politics of blame is ultimately overturned when Adunni reveals that she did not kill Khadija. Instead, she identifies Bamidele as the actual perpetrator responsible for Khadija's death. This revelation completely invalidates the community's accusations and demonstrates that Adunni had been transformed into a scapegoat without any evidence. By condemning an innocent girl while the real murderer remained unpunished, the elders reveal their preference for preserving harmful traditions rather than pursuing justice and truth.

Daré extends the critique of patriarchal scapegoating beyond Adunni and Tia to other vulnerable girls within Ikati village. The novel reveals that Adunni is not the only intended victim of the sacrificial ritual. Five other innocent girls are conscripted alongside her to participate in the ceremony designed to appease the gods and restore the village's prosperity. As they are led into the sacred forest, the girls are informed that "our land is no more the land of plenty... we [are] joining as one to beg for the problem to stop" (153). This explanation demonstrates the elders' belief that the suffering of innocent girls will restore the community's fortunes.

However, one of the girls courageously questions the rationale behind the ritual, asking:

"But how is that the fault of us girls?... We do sacrifice" (153).

This question exposes the injustice and irrationality of patriarchal blame. The girls recognize that they have committed no offence deserving of sacrifice, yet they are expected to suffer for problems they neither created nor controlled. Their questioning symbolizes resistance against oppressive cultural practices and exposes the moral bankruptcy of a society that preserves tradition by sacrificing innocent female lives.

Through these episodes, Daré demonstrates that patriarchal blame operates as an ideological weapon that protects male authority while victimizing women and girls. Rather than confronting corruption, environmental degradation, violence, and criminality, the community projects collective guilt onto powerless females who lack the social status to defend themselves. The politics of blame therefore becomes a means of preserving patriarchal power while concealing the actual causes of communal crises.

Viewed through Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's African Womanism, Dare advocates justice, accountability, and the rejection of oppressive cultural practices that undermine women's dignity. Ogunyemi's theory emphasizes that African societies should preserve valuable cultural traditions while rejecting customs that perpetuate injustice and female oppression. Daré's novel reflects this vision by exposing the destructive consequences of scapegoating and by affirming the importance of truth, compassion, and collective responsibility.

Ultimately, *And So I Roar* demonstrates that blame and scapegoating are deeply embedded within patriarchal social structures. Women and girls become symbolic victims who bear responsibility for crimes, infertility, environmental disasters, and communal misfortunes despite their innocence. By exposing these injustices, Abi Daré challenges patriarchal ideologies that normalize victim-blaming and calls for a society in which responsibility is assigned based on truth, evidence, and justice rather than gender prejudice and superstition.

Comparative Analysis of *Ogadimma* and *And So I Roar*

Ukamaka Olisakwe's *Ogadimma* and Abi Daré's *And So I Roar* offer compelling portrayals of patriarchal blame and scapegoating in contemporary Nigerian society. Although the novels differ in setting, characterization, and narrative technique, they converge in exposing how patriarchal structures systematically transfer responsibility for personal, familial, and communal failures to women and girls. Through their female protagonists, both authors reveal that blame is not merely an emotional reaction to misfortune but an institutionalized mechanism of patriarchal control that protects male privilege while victimizing women.

One of the major similarities between the two novels is their portrayal of women as victims of unjust accusations. In *Ogadimma*, the protagonist is blamed for becoming pregnant after she is raped by Barrister Chima. Rather than investigating the crime or seeking justice against the perpetrator, her father punishes her for bringing shame to the family. Similarly, in *And So I Roar*, Adunni is falsely accused of murdering Khadija and is selected as a sacrificial victim to cleanse the land. In both cases, the female protagonists are condemned without evidence, while the actual perpetrators either remain unidentified or are deliberately ignored. The authors therefore demonstrate how patriarchal societies prioritize preserving social order over protecting innocent women.

Another striking similarity is the tendency to blame women for male failures. In *Ogadimma*, Tobe attributes his arrest, financial difficulties, and failed business ventures to his wife instead of accepting responsibility for his own corruption and poor decisions. Likewise, in *And So I Roar*, Tia bears years of humiliation and abuse because she is presumed responsible for childlessness, only for the narrative to reveal that her husband, Ken, is infertile. These episodes illustrate a shared patriarchal ideology that shields men from accountability by shifting blame onto women.

Religion and traditional beliefs also function as instruments of patriarchal scapegoating in both novels. In *Ogadimma*, Onye Ekpere falsely declares that *Ogadimma* is spiritually responsible for Tobe's misfortunes and uses this accusation to justify her exploitation. In *And So I Roar*, the elders of Ikati village insist that Adunni and five other innocent girls must be sacrificed to appease the gods and restore the land's prosperity. In both narratives, spiritual beliefs are manipulated to legitimize the victimization of women rather than to uncover the truth. The novels therefore criticize the misuse of religion and culture as tools for reinforcing gender oppression.

Furthermore, both authors expose the silence and complicity of patriarchal institutions. Fathers, husbands, elders, and religious leaders, who ought to protect vulnerable women, instead become agents of their oppression. *Ogadimma*'s father prioritizes family honour over his daughter's safety, while Tobe subjects his wife to repeated violence. Likewise, the elders of Ikati village abandon justice by condemning Adunni without investigation, and Tia's mother-in-law subjects her to painful rituals based on the assumption that she alone is responsible for infertility. These actions reveal that patriarchal blame is sustained collectively through family, community, and religious institutions rather than by isolated individuals.

Despite these similarities, the novels differ in the scope of their representation of scapegoating. *Ogadimma* focuses primarily on domestic and marital experiences, highlighting victim-blaming following rape, domestic violence, and religious exploitation within the family. By contrast, *And So I Roar* expands the discussion to include

communal and environmental dimensions. Adunni is blamed not only for Khadija's death but also for the drought and ecological crisis affecting Ikati village. Daré demonstrates that environmental degradation caused by deforestation is falsely attributed to spiritual pollution, thereby exposing how superstition and ignorance intensify patriarchal scapegoating. Consequently, *And So I Roar* broadens the discourse by illustrating that women are blamed not only for family problems but also for wider societal and environmental crises.

Another point of divergence lies in the protagonists' responses to oppression. Ogadimma gradually develops the courage to question the injustice she experiences, asking, "What I don't understand is why everyone must hold me responsible for Tobe's decisions" (200). Her question symbolizes personal resistance against patriarchal victim-blaming. Similarly, Adunni refuses to accept the false accusation against her and eventually reveals that Bamidele is the actual murderer of Khadija. Through these acts of resistance, both protagonists reject the identities imposed upon them and challenge the structures that seek to silence them.

Viewed through Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's African Womanism, both novels advocate justice, accountability, and the restoration of women's dignity. Ogunyemi argues that African societies should reject oppressive cultural practices while preserving values that promote harmony, mutual respect, and communal well-being. Olisakwe and Daré reflect this vision by exposing the destructive consequences of patriarchal blame and demonstrating that genuine social harmony cannot be achieved through the victimization of innocent women. Instead, they call for a society in which responsibility is assigned based on truth, evidence, and accountability rather than gender prejudice.

Ultimately, *Ogadimma* and *And So I Roar* establish that patriarchal blame and scapegoating are deeply embedded within African social structures. The novels reveal that women are repeatedly transformed into symbolic bearers of guilt for crimes, failures, infertility, domestic crises, and communal misfortunes. By challenging these oppressive practices, both authors contribute to contemporary African feminist discourse and reaffirm the need for social transformation founded on justice, equality, and respect for women's humanity. Collectively, the novels demonstrate that dismantling the politics of blame is essential to achieving genuine gender justice in African societies.

Conclusion

This study examined the manifestations of patriarchal blame and scapegoating in Ukamaka Olisakwe's *Ogadimma* and Abi Daré's *And So I Roar* using Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's African Womanism as its theoretical framework. The study established that both novels portray women and girls as victims of unjust blame for circumstances beyond their control. In *Ogadimma*, the protagonist is blamed for rape, her husband's business failures, and other family misfortunes, while in *And So I Roar*, Adunni, Tia, and other young girls are scapegoated for murder, infertility, environmental degradation, and communal crises. The analysis revealed that patriarchal blame functions as a strategy for shifting responsibility from male perpetrators and societal failures to vulnerable women. Both authors challenge these oppressive practices by advocating justice, accountability, and respect for women's dignity. The study concludes that patriarchal blame and scapegoating are deeply rooted mechanisms of gender oppression in contemporary Nigerian society. Through *Ogadimma* and *And So I Roar*, Olisakwe and Daré demonstrate that women are often unfairly blamed for problems arising from male actions, cultural beliefs, and structural failures. By exposing these injustices, the novels reject harmful patriarchal traditions and call for a society founded on truth, accountability, and gender justice. Viewed through Ogunyemi's African Womanism, the study affirms that meaningful social transformation requires the elimination of practices that victimize women and the promotion of equality, dignity, and mutual respect between men and women.

References

- Adébáyò, A. (2017). *Stay with me*. Canongate Books.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Addison-Wesley.
- Bailey, C. (2024). Revisiting the womanist-feminist continuum in Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*.
- Baumeister, R. F., Stillwell, A. M., & Wotman, S. R. (1990). Victim and perpetrator accounts of interpersonal conflict: Autobiographical narratives about anger. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(5), 994–1005.
- Daré, A. (2024). *And so I Roar*. Sceptre.
- Girard, R. (1986). *The scapegoat* (Y. Freccero, Trans.). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hooks, b. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. South End Press.
- Lerner, G. (1986). *The creation of patriarchy*. Oxford University Press.

- Nkealah, N. (2016). (West) African feminisms and their challenges. *Journal of Literary Studies*, 32(2), 61–74.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, M. (1994). *Re-creating ourselves: African women and critical transformations*. Africa World Press.
- Ogunyemi, C. O. (1985). Womanism: The dynamics of the contemporary Black female novel in English. *Signs*, 11(1), 63–80.
- Okoye, I. (1982). *Behind the clouds*. Longman Nigeria.
- Olisakwe, U. (2021). *Ogadinma*. Cassava Republic Press.
- Ordu, S. (2021). Womanism and patriarchy in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*.
- Umeh, D. N. (2024). Patriarchy and oppression: A study of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. *Nigerian Journal of Arts and Humanities*.
- Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing patriarchy*. Basil Blackwell.