

Community's Expectations Challenged by Anomie in Anglophone African Literature



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ABSTRACT: This article investigates African societal values with a particular accent on Ibo regarding marriage. There are several criteria of marriage from *The Slave Girl*, *Things Fall Apart*, *The Bride Price* and *No Longer at Ease* and the sociological, sociolinguistic and anthropological approaches will be applied. This paper undermines three rules governing marriage amongst Ibo notably no marriage between a free person with a slave, the bride price observation and the childbearing necessity. Any attempt to violate the three aforementioned marriage principles is viewed as anomie.

KEY WORDS: Marriage, community's expectations, "anomie" and challenge.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to investigate the African societal values with a particular accent on Ibo regarding marriage.

This research paper intends to scrutinise the societal requirements regarding marriage from the *Slave Girl*, *Things Fall Apart*, *The Bride Price* and *No Longer at Ease*.

This article brings out the expectations or requirements regarding marriage that a member of African or Ibo society, has to comply with in order to be really considered as married.

The following questions may be considered as the central questions of this article : what are marriage criteria one should respect to be married?

What are the consequences resulting from the violation of these marriage conditions?

This article shows how members of African society may comply or not with the standards of their social environments. It will shed light on the sacred value of African standards and laws within the society.

Abiola in "*The tradigic conflict in the novels of Chinua Achebe*" from *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*':

Things Fall Apart, as the title suggests, portrays the dislocation of the African society caused by the impact with another way of life. The reconstruction of Ibo village life is directed at revealing the forces at work both inside and outside the traditional society that prepared the way for its eventual disintegration. (1979:10)

This passage shows how the encounter of Ibos with western world has been a destructive force for the Ibo society.

Riddy argues that, the English language has destroyed the Ibos' values. in "Language as theme in *No Longer at Ease*" from *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*: "Languages are closely related to values: English and Ibo are not merely different ways of saying the same things, but vehicles for expressing completely different attitudes to life." (1979:150)

The author shows how languages are critical tools for conveying different perceptions and attitudes to life. Language being a social mean of communication; it may express attitudes to life which are specific to its social environment or community. While, another language may convey the attitudes to life belonging to its own social environment too.

Chukwuma indicates the importance of the bride price which is not paid accordingly:

Akunna, the female protagonist of *The Bride Price*, carries this economic misnomer in her name, which means 'father's wealth', because the 'only consolation he could count on from her would be her bride price. The great Irony of the bride price in Emecheta's novels that expected benefits are never realised. Akunna's bride price five hundred pounds is never paid either, to the chagrin of her family. (1989:3-4)

Here, Chukwuma makes a crystal-clear point that the legitimate expectations of parents are not met. This is noticed by Akunna whose name means 'father's wealth'. Chukwuma uses irony to suggest that the bride price is not meaning.

Ernest N. Emenyonu writes this about Emecheta's technique and language in her novels:

The paper is a shift from a thematic emphasis to a stylistic study of Emecheta's narrative art, with particular reference to her use of language in three of novels - *The Bride Price* which launched her career as a writer, *The Slave Girl*, and *The Joys of Motherhood* which many critics agree is, so far, her best novel. In these works, Emecheta's narrative technique is evident in her profuse of the

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figurative language, omniscient comments, and irony, which she employs to set the mood and tone of the story as well as to define the theme and characters of the novels. (1996: 252)

Here, Emenyonu shows that Emecheta's writing is full of figurative language. This is well perceived by her use very often of irony and omniscient comments.

It has been highlighted in the above lines, some themes written by the critics such as Riddy, Chukwuma and Emenyonu. However, they do not analyse to the extent to which the community's expectations or interests are challenged by anomie. In order to conduct this study related to anomie. In doing so, what do the concepts of 'social me' and 'anomie' stand for? How the above mentioned concepts can be understood as far as marriage is concerned?

In this article, it will be discussed three aspects which enable to understand the specific purpose of this paper.

I-1- The concept of social me and anomie.

Love is a concept which exists in any human community and it may have a word with the same connotation in all languages in the world. Taking into account that love is a social phenomenon, William James' theory of social me' from *The Principles of Psychology* is illustrious:

A man's social me is the recognition which he gets from his mates. We are not only gregarious animals, liking to be in sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed favourably, by our kind. (1890:184)

Any human being always like being accepted and viewed favourably by his or her community members. This is how the concept of social me is noticed in the world in general and Africa in particular.

This permanent quest of recognition from our fellow human beings is the full expression of love, without which this kind of enterprise cannot be achievable. In this respect, NGASSAKI (2009:134) states that '*Any human being, in one way or another, pays attention to what other people say, think and react about his attitudes and behaviour*'. Accordingly, human being's attitudes change according to circumstances and interlocutors.

In every human community there are sets of values for its members. It means everyone is supposed to behave in accordance with these societal values. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, defining anomie as: "From the Greek a-nomos, meaning without laws, mores, and traditions, in sociology, the concept refers to the absence of norms and of the constraints these provide."

when someone living in a given community is no longer in harmony with its standards and values; he is living as if, there is absence of norms, laws, mores and traditions in his or her community. This person displays anomie in his or her behaviour. In other words, in the society a given member, who breaches laws and values of this one, does not meet the societal expectations. However, acting in contradiction of collective laws is a case of anomie. In order to better understand it, the following quotation from Marshall B "The theoretical implication of Anomie and deviant behaviour" in *Anomie and Deviant behaviour* will be helpful in understanding the situation:

This emphasis has emerged strongly in the sociological approach to deviant behaviour, setting it off from explanations of such behaviour as products of biological or individual psychological factors, and psychiatric complexes. In particular, the sociological formulations of anomie advanced by Durkheim and Robert K Merton have earned an important place in contemporary sociology, mainly because they have sought to explain various forms of deviant behaviour within the context of the larger society, especially its social culture. (1964:2)

It is obvious that the concept of anomie is studied by both Durkheim and Robert K Merton. Nowadays, their explanation of various forms of deviant behaviours which can contribute to a kind of instability, are understood as anomie. This study enables Durkheim and Robert K Merton to earn a critical place in contemporary sociology. The analysis of the above subheading enables the reader to understand the concept of social me and anomie.

I-2- marriage and social me

In Africa in general and Ibo community in particular there are values and norms to be respected by any young woman who wants to get married. First of all, her future husband has to be chosen either by her father or her relatives; if she is a free woman or man she or he has not to be linked to a slave descent through marriage. In fact, the notion of slavery in Africa was a bit complex. A slave in general, was someone who was used in the system of labor by someone else. Most of time, he was exploited by his employer. He could work very hard for his master. However, the African slavery was a bit smooth because, it was based on negotiation between the master and the family of the slave to be. The family or its member who is selling a slave, expects the slave to be, may be treated like the children of any family. As a case in point, Emecheta writes:

Okolie studied her interest. (.....). An Ibuza girl of her age would have to help her mother plant cassava, help her father peel corn from the cobs when they were ripe, and on her way back from the farm she would carry heads of ripe palm kernels ready to be pressed in oil which could be sold here in the Otu market, apart from that oil kept for family's cooking and oil lamps. But, these girls in Otu did not have to lead such itinerant lives. Although some of them were in fact slaves- Ma Palagada would have paid a

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sum on their heads, just as he was expecting her to pay something for his sister Ojebeta. - Yet they appeared to be treated just like the children in any family. (1977:47)

An Ibuza girl who is free has to lead an itinerant life. In fact, she must go with her mother for farming activities. When she is back home, she helps her father peeling corns from cobs. This is not the case with slaves' girls in Otu market, they lead a sedentary life. It is obvious that the African slavery was a bit smooth because based on negotiation between the master and the family of the slave to be. These girls are treated by their master Ma Palagada like member of her family, except the fact that she pays a sum on their heads.

Taiwan Adetunji Osinubi in her article entitled 'the Uptakes of African Slavery' from *Research African Literatures* writes: "Slavery in Africa was a complex system of labor use, of the exercise of rights in persons, and of exploitation and coercion, tempered by negotiation and accommodation" (2009:25-46).

African perception of slavery was to some extent smooth, a kind of quest of labor which was mutually agreed by the family of the slave to be and the future master. The slaves were so called only because, they were sold; otherwise, they were part of the master's family and they have the duty to contribute to his wealth as well as his own offspring.

It is worth examining societal rules ruling marriage, for example the four criteria related to marriage which meets the societal requirements will be considered, in the lines below. The first one is the payment of the bride price by the suitor's family. The second one is the acceptance of the bride price by the bride's family. The third one, is wife's good behaviour and the fourth one is childbearing. The above mentioned marriage criteria are part of community's expectations. It is only, when these conditions are fulfilled that marriage is possible. In order to better understand the African communities' expectations regarding the bride price during marriage, Chinua Achebe's words are illustrious:

Very soon, after, the in-laws began to arrive. Young men and boys in a single file, each carrying a pot of wine, came first. Obierika's relatives counted the pots as they came in. Twenty-five. There was a long break, and the hosts looked at each other as if to say, I told you. Then more pots came. Thirty, thirty-five; Forty, Forty-five. The hosts nodded in approval and seemed to say, now they are behaving like men. Altogether there were fifty pots of wine. After the pot-bearers came Ibe, the suitor, and the elders of his family. They sat in a half moon, thus completing a circle with their hosts. (1958:100)

The bride price is a very critical issue in marriage in Africa. Marriage is possible in this part of the world only when the bride price is paid according to the community's standards and perception. This is paid in terms of pots of wine. The more pots of wine the suitor's family brings the more chance they have to marry the bride and be respected by their in-laws. So, the bride price is not only accepted because pots of wine have been brought by the suitor's family but the quantity matters too.

In the African society, the bride price must be paid but its acceptance by the bride's family, legitimates the suitor's and bride's marital union. In this regard, Chinua Achebe writes:

The pots of wine stood in the midst (...). The bride's mother led the way, followed by the bride and other women (...). When the women retired, Obierika presented kola-nuts to his in-laws. His elder brother broke the first one. Life to all of us, he said as he broke it. And there will be friendship between your family and ours. (1958:100)

When the Obierika's elder brother makes a statement in which, he declares from now on there is a friendship between his family and the suitor's one. This figurative language means that the bride price is accepted. The community expects the bride's family to provide a sign that shows the suitor's family is friendly welcome. This sign is clearly seen by the gift of kola-nuts by the bride's family to the suitor's family. The presentation of kola-nuts in African community is a symbol of joy and friendly welcome to the distinguished guests. This gives also a signal of formal introduction of the essence of the event for which people are gathered together. In this case, it is the Bride Price ceremony. The following statement of the article entitled 'Kolanut and Symbolistic Universe: Towards the Creation and Constitution of Igbo Science and Arts' from online magazine *Canadian Social Science*, is illustrious: "Furthermore, the breaking of the kola nut is also used to express socio-cultural cooperation and solidarity and to introduce the essence of the gathering or social event in the Igbo land" (2019:1-6).

This symbolism related to the presentation of kola-nut and breaking it during marriage; shows from this specific date both families are united. They become one family through marriage ties. So, they are committed to live in peace, harmony and to display solidarity attitude between them.

A wife to be must have a good behaviour. Behaviour is closely linked to the conditions to be fulfilled for marriage. To this effect, Chinua Achebe's words are meaningful: "The crowd answered: Ee-e-e! We are giving you our daughter today. She will be a good wife to you" (1958:100).

The third feature of community's expectation is related to wife's good behaviour and childbearing. In Africa, wife's good behaviour and childbearing are very critical issues that can contribute to happiness of married couple and family. A wife may be beautiful but, if she is not good enough as far as household duties are concerned, this will endanger her marriage. She has to know how to clean her house, how to cook for her family, how to manage the part of the husband's income which is given to her to feed the family.

In African society, childbearing is a very critical issue both for the community and the wife's family. A woman may be beautiful and hardworking but she is not a full woman without an offspring for her husband. This is the reason why, the bride's family often

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says a word of blessing regarding childbearing. In doing so, Chinua Achebe writes: "She will bear nine sons like the mother of our town" (1958:100).

Childbearing is a very critical issue too. In Africa in general and Ibo community in particular, someone can be married, hard-working and beautiful woman; but, if she lacks fertility, this is a stumbling block for happiness of the family. Once, a woman gets married; the community expects in the following months to see her with a pregnancy. This is the reason why, during African marriage the bride's family most of time, bless their daughter in public regarding childbearing.

These rules are governing the collective interests and welfare. This is a case where there is marriage which takes into account the social me because spouses take seriously what other members of the community think about their marital union. After the analysis of marriage and social me, an emphasis will be laid on aspects of behaviour which challenge the community's expectations regarding marriage.

I-3- Marriage and Anomie

Buchi Emecheta in her novel entitled *The Bride Price*, underpins the case of Chike's freedom quest through his behaviour. This enables the reader to understand how the community's expectations are challenged. Chike is a slave in Ibo community. According to the norms and laws of this community, it is strongly forbidden for a slave to get married with a free man or woman. However, Chike motivated by his thirst of freedom escape with Aku-nna in order to live as husband and wife in a distant place from Ibuza where there is no room for slave as far as his marital choice is concerned. The following passage from Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* is helpful for our analysis. In this respect, the narrator says:

"shh... Don't talk so boldly- they may be listening." She snatched the letter from him and read it eagerly. Chike's message was short: he still loved her; should listen for his whistle after dark when she went to the owele in the bush. She should tear up the letter and give pieces to Nna-nndo, or put them on a fire, if there was one nearby. There was no fire around so she gave her brother the torn pieces, and just in time, too, for the next second Okoboshi marched in in all his arrogance. He swept a disdainful look over Aku-nna and condescended to enquire of Nna-nndo if all was well at home. He went on to remark on his loyalty to his sister, after the shameful way she had treated them all. (...).

A few stars were peeping shyly from behind the thick dark clouds. There was a movement by the bush very near the owele, and before she knew what was happening, she was being held tightly by Chike. For a moment he seemed to breathe life into her, giving her exhausted body the energy it lacked, then as suddenly as he embraced her, he moved away, and all she could hear was his low voice, urgent and insistent. "Come on, my own – run!" (1976: 143,145)

In the quest of freedom regarding marital partner, Chike decides to escape with his lover Aku-nna whose bride price has already been paid by Okoboshi's family. He does so because of his thirst of freedom. The quest of freedom motivates Chike who is from a slave descent to escape with his lover Aku-nna despite the fact that, she is a married woman. He knows the community laws and standards. There is no room for a lover to escape with a married woman. Such a behaviour is punishable by the community.

Chike is from a slave descent which adds the gravity of his action. This becomes a critical breach of the community laws and standards regarding marriage. A slave descent is not allowed to be neither a lover of a free woman nor to escape with this one. But his quest of freedom is so high that, Chike is able to challenge the well-known laws and expectations of his community. This choice of freedom is governed by Chike's love for Aku-nna. This is a case of anomie. This is the way of challenging customs of the community. This is well presented by Lloyd W. Brown in "Emecheta" from *Women Writers in Black Africa* in the following terms: Chike dramatically rescues Aku-nna from her abductor before the marriage is formalized and they elope to another village where they both find jobs and a comfortable home. Their union not only defies the taboo against intermarriages of "free" and "slave" families, but it also challenges an ancient curse - that any woman who marries against the wishes of her family and whose bride price remains unpaid will die in childbirth. (1981:49)

This Aku-nna tries to challenge both her family and the community customs by escaping in order to get married with an outcast. However, this situation is not without punishment. The following lines will highlight the punishment given to Chike for breaching the African traditional laws in general and Ibo ones in particular:

So it was that Chike and Aku-nna substantiated the traditional superstition they had unknowingly set out to eradicate. Every girl born in Ibuza after Aku-nna's death was told her story, to reinforce the old taboos of the land. If a girl wished to live long and see her children's children, she must accept the husband chosen for her by her people, and the bride price must be paid. If the bride price was not paid, she would never survive the birth of her first child. It was a psychological hold over every young girl that would continue to exist, even in the face of every modernization, until the present day. Why this is so is, as the saying goes, anybody's guess. (1976: 168)

It is obvious that Chike has been punished by the community. Indeed, as he breaches the community law which forbids a slave to get married with a free woman, his lover Aku-nna died while giving birth. This is how a punishment is perceived through the death of Aku-nna due to the non-respect of Ibo traditional laws by her lover, Chike. In fact, this situation of Aku-nna's death enables the reader to understand that in Africa in general and the Ibo society in particular, there are some bans that no one has to ignore even on behalf of love. For doing otherwise, you can lose your life. There is a case of anomie in ancient time displayed by King David

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and followed by a punishment. This account is contained in the *Bible (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures)*. The lines below from 2 Samuel 12: 10,14 and 18 (a part) are informative:

10- Now a sword will never depart from your own house, because you despised me by taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite as your wife.

14- Nevertheless, because you have treated Jehovah with utter disrespect in this matter, the son just born to you will certainly die.

18- On the seventh day the child died but David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead.

David's child from illegal union with Bath-sheba, was born and dead the seventh day as a punishment of his deviant behaviour. David as a king, he was supposed to set a good example to his people instead, he took a wife of Uriah, one of his faithful soldiers.

In fact, Chike's punishment is due to the spell that the Okonkwo family cast on Aku-nna, because she refuses to comply with the community's expectations. This is clearly perceived by the attitude of Akunna's father towards the Ofulue family. The following line from *The Bride Price* is illustrative:

You are lucky. She is worth the fight you had to go through for her. She's very beautiful, even more so in pregnancy. I like her, so please take good care of her and see that she does all she is told to do. This was the advice of the senior son of the Ofulue family to his brother.

At home in Ibiza, Okonkwo was again approached with the bride price, but he still refused to consent to give his daughter to a slave. When somebody- no one knew who- took away the doll that looked like Aku-nna from in front of his chi, he thundered and raged like an animal and was determined to make another one. The new one he made was at a very expensive cost, for its aim was to call Aku-nna back from Ughelli through the wind. (1976:162)

It is crystal-clear the punishment of both Chike and Aku-nna who do not comply with the Ibo community laws regarding marriage is due not only to Aku-nna's family but to the gods. In the above mentioned community, a woman who wants to have a family with a man, her bride price has to be paid and accepted by her people. Otherwise, she will not be blessed to see her children, her grandsons and granddaughters. In the case of Aku-nna, Okonkwo refuses the bride price proposal by Chike's family. So, without any bride price paid by the Ofulue family, Chike and Aku-nna are exposed to any spell by the custodians of the community traditions and expectations. Indeed, the heads of family and elders in Ibo society are the custodians of the community traditions and expectations. They make sure that Ibo traditions and expectations are followed and respected.

Also, in Ibo community everyone has his personal god called chi, who protects him, his family and all his belongings. In front of this chi, the head of the family often puts the doll representing each child. When Okonkwo goes before his chi or personal god, he notices that the doll representing Aku-nna is no longer there. This may be a message from the gods displaying their anger against Aku-nna who disobeys both the community and the gods, by being linked to Chike who is from a slave descent. The above analysis enlightened the fact that, Aku-nna's death is a perfect illustration of anomie punishment.

Aku-nna accepts to get married with an outcast. In doing so, she challenges the community's expectations. In fact, their society does not allow such union. Her 'individual me' challenged the collective interests and laws. She comprises her own existence because she dies while giving birth to her first child. This a crystal clear example of how the notion of 'individual me' can push a member of the community to breach the taboos and laws of the community. This is the way of crossing red lines of African societal values in general and Ibo community ones in particular. This is a case of anomie. The only way out to keep members of the Ibo community to continue respecting its laws and norms is to programme Aku-nna's death.

The case of the challenging of the community's expectations is perceived also through Obi Okonkwo's behaviour. According to the norms and laws of the Ibo community, it is strongly forbidden for a slave to get married with a free man or woman. However, Obi Okonkwo in name of his western education he challenges the community's expectations. This is noticed through this attitude towards 'Osu' or slave girl. He meets Clara who is a slave descent more than once, kissing her and decides with without taking into account traditional laws and values to be engaged to her. This is a case of anomie. Let us consider the following assertion from Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*:

All night Obi rolled from one edge of the bed to the other in sympathy with the fitful progress of the little ship groaning and creaking in the darkness. He could neither sleep nor keep awake. But somehow he was able to think about Clara most of the night, a few seconds at a time. He had taken a firm decision not to show any interest in her. And yet when he had opened the door and seen her, his joy and confusion must have been very plain. (1960: 193-4).

It is obvious Obi Okonkwo is playing with the fire because he starts developing love for the 'Osu' girl Clara. This love is even so strong that it prevents him from sleep. It is well perceived in the above lines when he thinks about her most of the night. He could do so about another girl who is not from the slave descent; but not the slave one. This attitude which tends to challenge the Ibo community's expectations push him to other errors. Other errors are noticed in the following statement from *No Longer at Ease*:

There's no hurry, he said, 'you can't post Nigerian letters until you get to Freetown. That's what they said'. They heard Macmillan bang his cabin door. They eyes met for a second, and without another word Obi took her in his arms. She was trembling as he kissed her over and over again.

'leave me', she whispered.

'I love you'

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'She was silent for a while, seeming to melt in his arms.

'You don't, she said suddenly'. 'We're only being silly. You'll forget it in the morning. She looked at him and then kissed him violently. 'I know I'll hate myself in the morning. You don't-

Leave me, there's someone coming. (1960:197)

The meeting of a slave girl by Obi may be perceived by the community as a serious offence. He goes beyond a mere visit by starting to kiss Clara, a slave girl. This is how he shows his love affair with her to the community. In fact, a slave is like a pariah which every member of the community has to avoid; in order to preserve one's family against that mark of shame. By kissing a slave girl, Obi is crossing the community's red lines. Ibo community's expectations do not allow even a love affair between a free man or woman with a slave one. This means Obi is beyond what is normal according to his community when he starts kissing a slave descent, Clara. There is another breach of his community laws which is noticed in the following passage from *No Longer at Ease*: 'We came away. We couldn't possibly stay after that. By the way, we are now engaged. I gave her a ring this afternoon'. 'Very good,' said Joseph bitterly. He thought for a while and then asked: 'are you going to marry the English way or are you going to ask your people to approach her people according to custom?' 'I don't know yet. It depends on what my father says.'

'Did you tell him about it during your visit?'

'No, because I hadn't decided then.' (1960:234)

Obi Okonkwo reaches the level of challenging the customs and values of Ibo traditional society as far as marriage is concerned. In fact, in Ibo community it is forbidden for a free man and woman to get married with an "osu" that is a slave or slave's descent; even to have a love affair with an "osu". This law is strict; and every member of the community has to respect it. However, Obi Okonkwo challenges this law. He decided to be engaged with a slave girl, Clara. Why does Obi behave so? It is simply because he leaves the way to his individual me to prevail instead of the social me. He does not take into account the community expectations and views in name of his western education. This is the great insult towards both his community and ancestors. For Obi the community's interests are less important than his own ones. Anomie is more expressed than the social me. His own person and needs and desires are on the top of everything which is linked to community's hold.

Obi is the expression of the modern capitalism where the individual interest defeats the collective needs and burden. For Obi his person is highly praised than any other thing. This is how the individual challenges the community's expectations. However, the challenge of the community always has some consequences. Obi Okonkwo is not an exception to the rule. So, the only way out for the Ibo community is to act on Clara's mind in order to break the engagement with Obi. The following line from *No Longer at Ease* is informative:

All we need do is lie quiet for a little while, he said. Clara had listened in silence, rubbing her engagement ring with her right fingers. When he stopped talking, she looked up at him and asked if he had finished. He did not answer.

Have you finished? She asked again.

Finished what?

Your story.

Obi drew a deep breath by way of answer.

Don't you think... Anyway, it doesn't matter. There is only one thing I regret. I should have known better anyway. It doesn't really matter.

What are you talking about Clara? Oh, don't be silly, he said as she pulled off her ring and held it out to him.

If you don't take it, I shall throw it out of the window.

Please do.

She didn't throw it away, but went outside to his car and dropped it in the glove-box. (1960:289)

In Africa in general and Ibo community in particular, the societal scale of values and expectations must be followed and respected. When a member of the community challenged these ones, there are always consequences. The one related to Obi Okonkwo is to programme the break of his engagement with Clara. This is done by using Clara's mind influenced by ancestors' power. Indeed, the marriage values and standards are transmitted from generation to generation in Ibo community. Elders in African community are the representatives of ancestors. They are the ones who are supposed to communicate with ancestors either in favour of or against someone in the community; in order to maintain peace and harmony in their society. The elders are most of the time, men with titles like Okonkwo, head of family and local wrestling champion in the fictional Nigerian clan of Umuofia in *Things Fall Apart*.

The heads of the family play the role of elders in their households whether they have community's titles or not. So, when a father who is a head of the family does not bless his son's decision regarding marriage; it may be viewed like the ancestors do not agree such a union. The following quotation from *No Longer at Ease*, is a case of father's refusal:

You cannot marry the girl, he said quite simply. Eh? I said you cannot marry the girls. But why father? Why? I shall tell you why. But first tell me this. Did you find out or try to find out anything about this girl? Yes. What did you find out? That they are osu. You mean to tell me that you knew, and you ask me why? I don't think it matters. We are Christians. This had some effect, nothing startling though. Only a little pause and slightly softer tone. We are Christians, he said. But that is no reason to marry an osu. (...). Obi's father turned down the wick a little and then resumed his silence. After what seemed ages he said: I know Okeke very well.

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He was looking steadily in front of him. His voice sounded tired. I know his wife. He is a good man and great Christian. But he is osu. (1960:284)

Issak Okonkwo who is the head of the family does not bless his son's love affair with a slave descent girl. The refusal of blessing by Issak Okonkwo highlights the cultural conflict between old and young generations, African values and christianity. Issak Okonkwo's attitude proves that African societies are not governed by christianity but ancestors. He does so because, he is a representative of the elders who are in their turn the ancestors' voice. The elders are the custodians of the community's values and expectations. It may be possible that Obi's father meets the elders in order to pray the ancestors to influence Clara's mind so that, she refuses to be linked to Obi by marital union. This is the only way of punishing by force Obi Okonkwo who does not obey the community laws and expectations.

CONCLUSION

Community's expectations have been analysed in this article first through the consideration of the notions of social me and anomie. Then, the above-mentioned notions have been respectively considered in the context of marriage. There are four marriage criteria which are, the bride price, the bride price acceptance, wife's good behaviour and childbearing. Marriage is possible in African society only when first the bride price is paid. Second, the community expects the bride's family to provide a sign that shows the suitor's family is friendly welcome. In other words, the bride price is accepted. Third, a wife may be beautiful but if she is not good enough regarding household duties and family income management, this can endanger her marriage. Fourth, in Africa in general and Ibo community in particular, someone can be married with, a hardworking and beautiful woman, but if she lacks fertility, this is a stumbling block for the family happiness. This analysis enlightens the fact that, the marriage is accepted by the community only when it meets the societal expectations. Anomie sometimes brings members of the community to challenge the community's expectations. However, it has been noticed most the time when this happens, a punishment is given to the one who breaches the ancestor's laws regarding marriage. This is a strong commandment young have to abide to get married.

In this article, it has been analysed how community expectations are challenged by some of its members, because of their deviant behaviour. As a case in point, Chike being an Osu, he persists to have Akunna as wife, knowing that such an act is against the traditions of their society. Aku-nna on her side, knowing that being a free woman, she cannot get married with Chike. However, Chike and Aku-nna willingly decide to be together as husband and wife. This leads Akunna to get pregnant. This is an anomie, a violation of Ibo community traditions and standards. Another case of anomie is noticed by Obi Okonkwo's behaviour. He knows that Clara is an 'Osu'. However, he decides to be engaged to Clara.

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