

# Women as Saviours of Men's Faces in Four Selected Flora Nwapa's Novels : *Efuru, Idu, One is Enough, and Women are Different*

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## Abstract

In this article, the concern has been to investigate four selected novels by the Nigerian author Flora Nwapa namely *Efuru, Idu, One is Enough and Women are Different* to find out whether men shy away from their marital duties as well as the social ones and women comply with men's duties instead. The research has been carried out through reader-response approach. At the end of the research, it has been brought to light that eventually men do not comply with their duties be in marital and social fields such as paying bride price, providing their household with sufficient daily food, even providing for themselves and so on and women play men's roles.

**Keywords:** face ; household ; bride price ; duties.

## 1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the world, the man has always been known as the one who marries, the breadwinner of the family to name just a few. Accordingly he should provide for his wife and children when it comes to their daily needs as well as for himself. However, while reading Flora Nwapa's interview with Marie Umeh [1], Flora Nwapa argues that she does not agree with male writers' description of women in their works. In fact, women are neither prostitutes nor never-dos. Consequently, she would like to correct male writers by depicting the true image of the woman. According to Flora Nwapa, women are very, very positive in their thinking, independent and very, very industrious. Thus, what is the true image of women in the household and the society when it comes to their relationship with the men in Flora Nwapa's fiction? The main purpose of this article is to scrutinize the woman's image vis-à-vis the man in the household and in the society in Flora Nwapa's fiction through the four selected novels mentioned above. Before going further in this work, it is worthy providing a literature review to discover what works have dealt with the same issue in the past. This is to avoid redundancy and make the present work pertinent to contribute for the advancement of science.

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As a matter of fact, to carry out this research, Doucet[2], in her article entitled ‘Gender Equality and Gender Differences in Household work and Parenting’ has collected data from a sample of 23 British dual earner couples. She has based her work on the recent feminist standpoint which goes beyond equality and differences between men and women when it comes to their differences in duties and responsibility in the household. In her findings, she argues that although gender differences in household labour and life existed in all couples in her study, as for child caring, these responsibilities sometimes intersect and vary depending on children’s stages of life. In other words, these responsibilities are not static, they change as children grow old.

As for Henry Kah Jick and Temeching Patricia Nkweteyim [3], in their article entitled ‘Alternative Vision of Gender in the New Literatures of Africa in English : An Appraisal of Bole Butake’s Dramaturgy’, have been inspired from the Cameroonian author Bole Butake’s Dramaturgy. In this work, its authors’s main concern is the improvement of the woman’s portrayal in New Literatures of Africa in English. The authors posit that contrary to what was done before, they encourage nowadays’ authors to improve the depiction of women in their literary works. As a result, they ask authors to focus more on what Theodora A. Ezeigbo refers to as ‘positive experience. That is : far from being only portrayed as people who are successful in private business and so on, women should be portrayed as people who deal with important professions such as medicine, law, education, industry, politics to name just a few.

In this article entitled ‘Some Aspects of Gender Inequality in selected African Literary Texts’, its author L.L. Kwatsha[4] deals with gender inequality. He states that the oppression women undergo is underlain by traditional culture. As a result, the culture does not encourage gender equality. Many men do not want the change of the status quo for fear to be overpowered by women. As for women, although they do not dislike to be called women, they want to be treated fairly according to their contribution to their society.

Through this article whose title is ‘Comparative Study between Buchi Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* and Sefi Atta’s *Everything Good Will come*’, its author Olusola Uso[5] argues that in both novels under scrutiny, their authors display feminist approach because of the negative way male characters have been depicted in both works. As a matter of fact, men have been painted as irresponsible fathers, uncles, sons and so on. To prove how bad men are, both authors have featured the way female characters have been mistreated by the male ones in each novel. Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* focuses on the suffering Nnu Ego undergoes because of the patriarchal nature of her society. Sefi Atta, in her *Everything Good Will Come*, paints the hardship women such as Enitan, Sheri Bakare, Mama Enitan, Toro Franco, Busola, and Brigadier Hassan’s wives have gone through in men’s hands in her work.

In this dissertation whose title is ‘African Woman’s empowerment : a study in Amma Darko’s selected novels’, its author Koumagnon Alfred Djossou Agboadannon’s concern[6] is to find out if there is women’s empowerment in the three selected novels namely ‘*Beyond the Horizon, Not Without Flowers, The Housemaid*’ by the Ghanaian author Amma Darko. At the end of the analysis, the author of the dissertation has come to the conclusion that in the novels under scrutiny, there is indeed the women’s empowerment but to be empowered has been a question of choice. There are women who have chosen to be empowered and women who have remained unempowered because they have opted to keep their status quo.

In her article entitled 'The Effects literature has on Female Empowerment and movement', its author Olivia Young[7] argues that the image of women in the literary works, which was badly painted, has changed from negative to positive. As a matter of fact, female characters, are now depicted as courageous, powerful people, who play leading roles. This positive depiction of women in literary works has echoed in the society. As a result, women have acquired rights that they did not have in the past.

In her article entitled 'Feminism : Equality Gender in Literature'. Its author Mila Arizah[8] argues that the feminist movement was created because women could not stand the male domination any more. As a result, they wanted to get rid of men's domination. The movement always has to do with gender equality. Thus, because of feminism, women are no longer weak humans. Accordingly they are able to work in order to contribute to the well-being of the humans.

After the literature review related to the woman's image, no one of the authors mentioned above has dealt with the woman's image in Flora Nwapa's works under scrutiny. Having realised the originality and the pertinence of the present work as far as the woman's image Flora Nwapa's fiction is concerned, it worthy tackling this work.

To carry out the completion of this article, the analysis will be done through reader-response approach. The reader-response theory is by no means a monolithic critical position. Scholars, who use this theory in their analyses of literary works, stem from various backgrounds. They argue that formalist critics are narrow, dogmatic, elitist and certainly wrong in denying readers a say when it comes to interpreting literary works. Conversely, reader-response critics consider themselves as Jane Tompkins [9] posits : "Willing to share their critical authority with less tutored readers and at the same time to go into partnership with psychologists, linguists, philosophers, and other students of mental functioning."

Through his quotation above, Tompkins argues that unlike formalist critics who are narrow -minded, the reader-response approach is open-minded. Therefore they take into account anyone's analysis in the literary field regardless of their background. Whether the one interpreting is a psychologist, a linguist, a philosopher to name just a few, his or her analysis is welcome.

This work will be mainly centred on two main points : Women as saviours of men's faces in the household and women as saviours of men's faces in society.

## **2. Women as saviours of men's faces in the household**

When a man and a woman live in the same house as husband and wife, they have to work to provide for their daily needs mainly in food, clothes and others. Consequently, who provides for the household ? Is the man the only provider for the household ? Is the woman the only provider ? do both the man and the woman provide for the household ? These are the questions that underlie the scrutiny of this section.

Talking of providing for the household, In Flora Nwapa's first novel entitled *Efuru*, the eponymous character elopes after dating her prospective husband called Adizua for a short period. When the young boy's mother came back from the market, she was surprised to see Efuru's belongings. Before she could ask her son what

was going on, Adizua, her son, had what follows to say : ‘‘He told his mother that Efuru was his wife. ‘I have no money for the dowry yet. Efuru herself understands this. We have agreed to be husband and wife and that is all that matters [10].’’

As it is commonly known in Africa, when the husband and wife get married, the man has to pay for the dowry to his prospective wife’s parents. The fact that Adizua tells his mother that he does not have any money for the dowry yet and Efuru understands him portrays Efuru’s pity for Adizua. Efuru knew that if she obliged Adizua to pay for the bride price before she went to his place, Adizua would not afford it. As a result, before people could know that Adizua, was dating a woman, could not afford the dowry, Efuru took her belongings to Adizua’s place. Efuru’s will to save Adizua’s face as far as the payment for the bride price is concerned goes further.

In fact, as going to live at the man’s place before he can pay for the dowry puts shame on the woman’s family, Efuru’s father could not bear his daughter’s action. Consequently he sent young people to go to Aduzia’s place and bring Efuru back home. As Efuru knew her partner’s incapacity to fulfil this matrimonial duty, she reacted as follows to her father’s envoyees :

Efuru brought two big kola-nuts. They were fit only for kings. She put them before the men, with some alligator pepper. The spokesman took one kola nut and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave the men.

Meanwhile, Efuru brought out a bottle of home-made gin-a very good one that had been in a kerosene tin for nearly six months.

‘I am sure you will like this gin. Nwabuzo had it buried in the ground last year when there was rumour that policemen were sent to search her house. When the policemen left, finding nothing, Nwabuzo was still afraid and left it in the ground. A week later, she fell ill and was rushed to the hospital where she remained for six months. She came back only a week ago. So the gin is a good one [10].’

Through this passage, one can tell Efuru’s courtesy toward her father’s envoyees. In fact, Efuru’s reaction is a way to save her husband’s face because he could not pay the bride price. To fulfil her plan which was to face Adizua’s face, Efuru has first offered the young people two big kola-nuts. According to the Nigerian tradition offering kola-nuts, to anybody who comes to visit, depicts respect for the guest as well as the host class. As a result, by providing the guests with kola-nuts, Efuru wanted her father’s envoyees to believe that her husband is not anybody but a well-mannered man. Thus, her father would not worry about her living conditions and know that Efuru is in good hands. Besides the kola-nuts, to save her husband’s face, Efuru has gone further. She has given home-made gin to the young people. The purpose of giving home-made gin is to make her guests know that Adizua is someone who has financial means. Therefore, by being married to Adizua, Efuru would not suffer.

Consequently as Efuru’s plan to save her husband’s face has worked out, her father’s envoyees could not take Efuru with them as her father ordered. They realised that Efuru was in good conditions at Adizua’s place and they reacted as follows :

‘We shall go, our daughter,’ the spokesman said, ‘you seem to be happy here and we wonder why your father wants us to bring you back. We shall tell him what we have seen. But your husband must fulfil the customs of our people...’ [10]

The guests’ reaction shows that Efurú has succeeded in saving Adizua’s face vis-a-vis her father. Thus, when he hears his envoyees’ version of the fact, Efurú’s father will change any wrong ideas he had about Adizua. Efurú’s father would also argue that he does not have to worry because his daughter is in good hands. Her husband would come at anytime to fulfil his marital duties. Efurú’s determination to hide her husband’s incapacities to fulfil his marital duties does not limit at providing her guests with a warm welcome.

As a matter of fact, she has traded harder in order to get money and offer to her husband so that he could pay for the bride price. Given the fact that Efurú’s deed was unusual, members of her society started gossiping in the following way :

‘Poor child, she had suffered,’ one went on. ‘I heard that her husband could not even afford the dowry,’ ‘Yes, so it happened the others said. ‘He could not afford the dowry. Efurú had to work hard trading in so many things and when they got the money they went and paid the dowry... [10]

This conversation between members of Efurú’s society depicts the fact that Efurú saved her husband’s face as far as the payment of the dowry is concerned. Efurú knew that Aduzia did not have financial means to comply with the bride price. Consequently, she has provided Adizua with the dowry money so that he could pay the bride price. Since Efurú has given him money, Adizua and his parents went to Efurú’s father to pay the dowry. Thus, Efurú’s father expressed his joy as follows :

‘Our people, welcome ; ‘ he began, I thank you for coming this night. I was angry when my daughter ran away from my house. Any father has a right to be angry, I am no exception. I sent my people, but they did nothing. Efurú is my dear daughter. The only child of my favourite wife, as you know I inherited all the wives of my father. But Efurú’s mother was my choice. I love her very much. After a long time she had Efurú. Then six years ago, she died. I was heart –broken. Efurú was my only source of happiness. To cut a long story short, I am glad you have come. Welcome [10]

Through this extract, one can argue that Efurú’s plan has met the expectations. Thus, Adizua who, would be considered as a worthless person, has been warmly welcomed at Afurú’s father’s place. Consequently, Efurú, being a woman, has saved Adizua from the shame related to his incapacity to pay the bride price. This is a fool proof of a woman saving a man’s face after realizing that her husband could not afford the bride price. The fact that the woman saves the man’s face in Flora Nwapa’s fiction does not limit at Efurú’s case. As a matter of fact, besides *Efurú*, the issue of women saving men’s faces is also featured in *One is Enough*.

In this novel mentioned above, its main character called Amaka had to provide for their household daily needs. Accordingly, instead of folding her arms to expect the man to be the only provider of the household, when Amaka realized that her husband, Obiora, did not have enough money for daily food, Amaka complemented as follows :

...But I complemented the food budget. That I did and you know it. Tell me how much did you give me for food ? Go and ask other wives and they will tell you how much your colleagues in the same Ministry give their wives. But I did not grumble, I never asked for. Perhaps that was my mistake, not asking for more. [11]

This Passage depicts women's endless will to save their husbands' faces in their households. In complementing for daily food of their household, Amaka did it to prevent neighbours from making fun of her husband because of his incapacity to give enough food money. Although she should not participate in giving money for their daily food, Amaka did it. Apart from *One is Enough*, women's will to save men's faces is also painted in another work by Flora Nwapa entitled *Women are Different*. Unlike in *One is Enough* where women save men's faces by giving food money, in *Women are Different* they save men's faces by playing their roles through children's education. As a matter of fact, in the novel one of its main characters called Dora, albeit she has been abandoned by Chris, her husband, she focuses on her children's education as follows :

At eighteen, Dora's first daughter, Chinew, was reluctant to go back to school. Dora put her foot down. 'You must go back to school. I don't want to hear that some of your school friends have gone to Lagos to look for jobs. You are not going to Lagos. You just have to go back to Union Secondary School, Ibiaku where you were when the war started...' [12]

Through this passage as Dora focuses on sending her children to school although she has been forsaken by her husband, she is playing the man's role. Accordingly, Dora is saving her husband's face because this duty should be carried out by her husband. This is because in Africa, whenever things do not work in a household, the one is held accountable is the husband. By the same token, in case Dora's children are successful at school, the one who will be praised for children's success will be her husband Chris. Besides Flora Nwapa's works, the woman's will to save the man's face has also been stated by Ngugi quoted in Sayed Sadek's article entitled '*The Struggle of African Women in selected works by Ngugi Wa Thiongo*' as follows :

My mother was the one who took care of us ; that is, we three brothers and three sisters. She virtually shouldered every responsibility of our struggle for food, shelter, clothing, and education. It was my mother who initially suggested that I go to school. I remember those nights when I would come back home from school, and not knowing that she could not read or write, I would tell her everything that I had learnt in school or read to her something, and she would listen very keenly and give me a word of advice here and there [13].

Through this passage, Ngugi tells the crucial role his mother played for his siblings and himself when it came to their daily needs namely : food, shelter, clothing and education. In praising his mother for the positive role she carried out in their lives, it is a proof of the woman saving the man's face. As a matter of fact, in caring for Ngugi's and siblings' well-being, Ngugi's mother used to do her husband's work. In playing those roles, Ngugi's mother saved Ngugi's father's face because in case of success the man is the one who will be given credit and vice versa. The saving of men's faces by women does not stop at Ngugi's praise for his mother. Accordingly, in a 1991 United Nations Publication quoted by Henry Kah Jick and Temeching Patricia Nkweteyim [3], the issue related to women saving men's faces is stated as follows :

Traditionally, male/female roles and male headed families are not longer the norm. as estimated one third of households around the world are now headed by women. In the Caribbean, women constitute up to 50 percent of all heads of households and in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, the figure is 45 percent.

This study by United Nations in 1991 has come to the conclusion that in the Carribean, 50 percent of women are all heads of households. By stating that up to 50 percent of women are heads of households, this study means that most of men do not carry out their roles as providers for their households. Thus, women have to play men's role in their households. By being heads of households, women have to supply their households with food, good clothes and health care and so on. In doing so, women save men's faces because in case the house is well-organized, the credit will be given to the man since he is the one who should provide for the family.

After the investigation of the novels under scrutiny to find out who shies away from their marital duties, it has been discovered that the man either avoids or does not play his role as the family's main provider. Thus, since the woman does not want him to lose face, she plays the man's role by being the main provider of the household when it comes to daily needs. As mentioned in the introduction, In the following section the aim is to scrutinize the novels above to know if besides the household, the woman saves the man's face in society as well.

### **3. Women as saviours of men's faces in society**

Since through the section above the woman has been painted as the one who complies with the man's marital roles as the main provider of the household's well-being such as supplying food, education for children and so on. Does the woman still save the man's face in society ? Does the man comply with his duties in society ? Is there a burden sharing between the man and the women in society ? these are the questions which constitute the cornerstone of the investigation in this section.

Talking of the man's image in the society, when Efuru got married with Adizua, people could not help talking about Adizua because of the positive change they realized in his life as follows : "Efuru was her name. She was a remarkable woman. It was not only that she came from a distinguished family. She was distinguished herself. Her husband as not known and people wondered why she married him" [10].

In this passage, it can be noticed that Adizua's marriage with Efuru has made Adizua worthy. This is due to Efuru's qualities. On the one hand, Efuru was well known for her physical appearance and manners. On the other hand, she came from wealthy family. Consequently in marrying such a woman, Adizua, who used to be unworthy, has become famous because almost everybody starts talking about him. Thus, people wondered how someone whose family was nothing such as Adizua could marry a famous woman who came from prestigious background. Thus, marrying Efuru has made Adizua an important man about whom the society gossiped. Efuru's personality has contributed to the improvement of Adizua's image in their society. Adizua and Efuru's marriage is not the only case in which the man's face is saved by the woman in the society. As a matter of fact, the same issue has also been featured in *Idu*. In this novel by Flora Nwapa, as soon as Adiewere got married with, Idu, eponymous character of the novel, people noticed a positive change in his life and started talking as follows : "You know Adiewere was not all that magnanimous before he married Idu. Now the two of them are

about the kindest couple I know in this town'' [14].

This passage is an undeniable proof of the woman's positive impact in the man's life. It paints what Adiewere used to be before he got married with Idu and what he has become after the marriage with Idu. In fact, Adiewere did not offer or help people in his society before marrying Idu but what surprised his society was that when he married Idu, he became altruist. Consequently, Idu's presence in Adiewere's life has made him an important person in his society. Apart from the fact that Adiewere has become altruist because of his marriage with Idu, in the same novel, there is another positive change in the man's life due to his marriage as follows :

'Adiewere, leave him, ' said Idu. That's not how you should behave. You know your brother too well. Has he at any time behaved differently ? Ishiodu sit down. You and he are brothers.'

'Idu, I know but let him go now, right now,' Commanded Adiewere. 'I don't want to see him anymore.'

'Adiewere, stop it, what is this ? Have you ever heard of a man who drove away his brother, his only brother ?

Leave him, do you hear ? I am begging you on his behalf, leave him [14].

In this extract, although the woman does not save the man's face by means of materials, she is wising up her husband who does not behave well. In fact, as Idu knows the importance of family and how siblings should behave between each other, she reminds her husband about his family duties. Idu forbids her husband to send his only brother away from his house. In driving his only brother, Ishiodu, away from his house, the act would tarnish Adiewere's reputation in his society. However, as Idu is wiser than Adiewere, she brought him back to reason. In acting in this way, Idu saves her husband's face in society. That is instead of sending his only brother away as he decided, Adiewere acted wisely thanks to his wife Idu. Besides *Idu*, the issue has also been depicted in Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough*. In the novel just mentioned above, when Amaka, the main character of the novel, was married to Obiora, her husband's car broke down. As soon as Obiora's car broke down as she knew that Obiora could not afford a car, she bought a brand new car for him with her own money in the following way : It was the second year of their marriage and Obiora's Volkswagen had 'knocked engine' and there was no money to send it in for repairs. So Amaka asked about the price of a Peugeot, went to the bank, withdrew all the money she had and gave it to her husband, and told him to go and buy a Peugeot 504. Her husband could not believe it [11]. In this extract, one can realize the way Amaka has saved Obiora's face in purchasing a new car for him. In fact, as Amaka knew that her husband did not have money, she bought a car for her husband with her own money. Amaka bought a car to prevent her husband from losing his standard of living. This was mainly because Amaka did not want people to make fun of her husband for walking from that time on. Amaka's will to save her husband's face did not stop at buying a car. After purchasing the car, when Obiora told his colleagues that it was her who bought the car for him, Amaka reacted as follows : Amaka intervened and told their friends that Obiora was just being modest, and that in fact his rich mother had bought the car for them. When guests left, Obiora asked her the meaning of the lie. All she said was that she did not want anybody to know that she bought the car. She felt people might look down on him [11]. This passage is a cristal clear proof of the woman's quality of saving the man's face vis-a-vis the society. In acting in this way, Amaka wanted her

husband to keep his social status. She did not want him to tell anybody that it was her who purchased the car for him. She did not want anybody to minimize her husband because he could not afford the car and his wife purchased it for him. Besides buying the car, Amaka also had to intervene at Obiora's workplace so that he could not lose his job because his job was at stake as follows : But for her, Obiora would have been fired from the ministry because of his carelessness and over-trusting nature. She it was who went to his Permanent Secretary in Enugu and told him all she knew about her husband's involvement in the whole matter. So her husband, rather than losing a year's seniority, was merely reprimanded. Others who were involved lost their jobs, benefits and gratuities [11]. This passage depicts how the woman is almost the backbone for the man's life. In other words, she is ready to save the man's face in whatever he does or encounters with in his life. Thus, when Obiora had problems at his workplace, having noticed that Obiora's job was at the brink of being lost, Amaka had to intervene at Obiora's workplace. Thanks to Amaka's intervention, instead of losing his job, Obiora was only reprimanded. This woman's will to save the man's face in society does not limit in Amaka saving Obiora's job. In the same way, in Flora Nwapa's *Women are Different*, Chris who was Dora's husband behaved in the wrong way at work. As a result, he was called at his boss's office and his boss rebuked him as follows : 'I have been hearing reports against you. You have been so overhearing. You have to do something about it before you become too unpopular'' [12]. This passage shows that because of Chris's bad behaviour at workplace, his job was in jeopardy. As Chris was about to lose his job, since the woman is always willing to save man's face, Dora had to help her husband out. This time unlike Amaka went to workplace to intervene, she had to hire her husband at her company as follows : 'Why not resign and join me properly in this business ? I have more and more orders and as things are, I have to get a manager. Why hire a manager when you can do the work better ? What you earn in a month I earn in a day, working hard of course. But as our teachers told us in school, hard work never kills anybody. Please give it a serious thought, Chris. Our children are growing. We have to educate them, and we need all the resources both of us can pull together to do so.' [12]. Once more, through this extract, the woman saves the man's face in hiring her husband. In fact, when Dora notices that her husband was about to be fired from his job because of his misbehaviour, the former asks her husband to work with her. In hiring Chris, Dora saves the Chris's face in society. That is she does not want her husband either to be unemployed or lose his social status. Apart from hiring her husband because his job was at stake, she also hired her husband for the sake of their children's education. In fact Dora needed money so that their children could go to school. Dora knew that if Chris could work for her company, Chris and her could well finance their children's education in making joint savings. Apart from Flora Nwapa's works mentioned above, this issue of women saving men's faces has been tackled by another Nigerian author called Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her novel entitled *Half of a Yello Sun*. In this novel, when one of its main female characters Olanna gets married with Odenigbo, Odenigbo's mother brings a girl called Amala with her from the village. Odenigbo's mother forces him to sleep with that village girl who is later made pregnant by Odenigbo. When Amala gives birth to a baby girl, nobody cares for the new born baby. That is neither Amala who is the baby's mother nor Odenigbo's mother who is the baby's grandmother takes care of the baby. Since the baby was abandoned after her birth, to Odenigbo's surprise, Olanna decides to take care of the baby in the following terms : We'll keep the baby here, Olanna said. She startled herself by how clearly she articulated the desire to keep the baby and how right it felt. It was if it was what she has always wanted to do. Odenigbo turned to her with eyes widened behind his glasses. He was driving so slowly over a speed bump that she feared the car would stall. Our relationship is the most

important thing to me, nkem, » he said quietly [15]. In this extract, the way Olanna decides to take care of her husband's child that he had begotten by another woman is not for mere pleasure. In fact, Olanna acts in this way to save her husband's face in society. As Odenigbo's daughter has been abandoned by the family, Olanna's concern is to prevent her husband from being called irresponsible by the society. Thus, She takes care of the baby her husband had by another woman to save Odenigbo's face in society. After the investigation related to know whether the woman saves the man's in society, it has been found out that the woman saves the man's face in the society as well. In fact, in the society, the woman saves the man's face in several ways namely she provides for the man ; she intervenes at the man's workplace to save his job ; she takes care of her husband's children that he had with other women.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this work, the purpose has been to investigate Flora Nwapa's four novels namely *Efuru*, *Idu*, *One is Enough*, and *Women are Different* to find out whether men shy away from their duties and women save their faces in acting instead of them in the household as well as the society. To carry out the research, it has been done through reader-response approach. As a result, it has been discovered that in the household, men fail to comply with their duties. That is men cannot afford paying for the bride price when they get married, the case of *Efuru* who provides Adizua with bride price money. Men lack financial means to provide their household with daily food, the case of *Amaka* who contributes for the daily food to mention just a few. As women cannot bear seeing men minimised for their incapacities to play their roles, women save men's faces in doing what men should do mentioned above. As for the society, women have acted likewise in men's lives. That is women have played men's roles as well. In fact, women provide for men when they notice men cannot afford, the case of *Amaka* who buys a car for *Obiora*. Women intervene at men's workplace to save their husbands' professional lives when men's jobs are at stake, the case of *Amaka* who intervenes at *Chris's* workplace. Women hire their husbands at their businesses so that they would not lose the social status, the case of *Dora* who employs *Chris* at her bakery. As for themes that can still be scrutinized through these four novels by Flora Nwapa, there are : The impact of the woman of the lake in Igbo society ; Fertility in Flora Nwapa's fiction ; The contrast between the traditional woman and the modern one.

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