

Child Raising in the African Culture, a Blight on Human Dignity? Reflection on Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*

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Abstract

The trauma of migration has been seen to affect not only African immigrants in the West but also Africans returning to their roots. It has been found that upon return, they also experience other dimensions of trauma, meted out and shielded by the custodians of culture in the name of 'Communal Child Raising'. These effects manifest in culture shock, stereotyping, abuse, and general disillusionment. Using the theory of adultism, this paper examines how Sade Adeniran highlights the popular Yoruba adage "it takes a village to raise a child" in *Imagine This*. This paper unravels the datum that this adage has been adversely wielded by African parents and guardians to mentally, financially, physically, and emotionally abuse children under their care. *Imagine This* explores the injustice and harmful effects of abuse on the self-image, identity, and dignity of young people in certain African cultures. The theory of adultism foregrounds the undiscussed issue of oppression meted out to children by adults who take advantage of the positions of authority that they occupy in the lives of these young people. The findings show that when custodians of societal values neglect their responsibility of building human dignity in their wards via a humane culture of child-raising, it engenders a dysfunctional society with problems that eventually lead to social change. This paper therefore submits that education and respect for the human self, regardless of the age involved, remain panaceas for the sustainability of human dignity grounded in Africanness.

Keywords: *Human Dignity, Culture, Child, Youth, Adultism, Imagine This*

Introduction

The African culture has been unique and enduring in its diverse facets. The family unit plays an important role in societal growth and development. As much as a couple is expected to be solely responsible for birthing a child, the African culture believes that it takes the support and input of the community to raise the child. This informs the Yoruba adage, "It takes a village to raise a child." However, it

has been seen, especially as textually depicted in Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*, that the village which constitutes the relatives and neighbours of the family and child in question, negatively applies the interpretation of this popular adage to their selfish advantage. When a parent wilfully gives or hands over their child to his relatives because he trusts them to take care of the child just like he can, it happens that most times he unreservedly makes a mistake. Adultism is exerted when a child is treated like a lesser being, with cases of oppression, physical abuse, verbal assault,

denial of privileges, community incidents, and so on meted out to him. This agrees with Shier, who sees adultism as "a belief system based on the idea that the adult human being is in some sense superior to the child (or young person) or of greater worth, and thus the child, by default, inferior or of lesser worth" (25). The term also describes social structures, practices, and behaviours based on these beliefs. These beliefs find support in a persistent view of the child as an object and not a human rights holder.

It is so entrenched in the system that when these children summon up the courage to speak up against the system by reporting the abuses they endure at the hands of these adult relatives, they are abused further and silenced. Even when their parents are informed, they join the adult relatives to silence the children, explaining that it makes them better humans. It is not surprising because these parents passed through these same experiences and because they survived them, they assume that their children would survive them too. They seem to be unaware of the damage it causes to the children. This is what this paper aims to foreground.

According to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), *General Comment No. 12* (2009), young people are defined as those who are under the age of enfranchisement or majority relative to the legislative requirements of the state or jurisdiction in which they reside. However, even though youths are a substantial portion of the population everywhere, they are relegated to the sidelines of social and political existence (Camino & Zeldin 213-220; McBride 2008).

Perspectives from Literature

Corney et al. pinpoint the right of young people to participate in decisions being made about them. This, they argue, forms the basis of professional youth work

practice. In their study, they introduce the concept of adultism and discuss the challenges of youth workers combating 'adultist' beliefs and practices in participation. Their study employs the UNCRC framework to structure its discussion. While their study considers the benefits and limitations of youth participation models and addresses the relationship between rights-based participation practice and critical pedagogy (dialogical) in youth, it differs from this current work. This is because it does not address the negative impact of adultism on communal child raising in society as depicted in a novel, and this is the gap this paper aims to fill.

Jegede discusses the effect of place and displacement in the use of proverbs in *Imagine This*. She brings to the fore the dialectics of place and displacement and further shows how location and dislocation form a crucible for Adeniran's identity formation in the proverbs used in the novel (278). Jegede achieves this using postcolonial theory. However, her article is different, as this paper does not interrogate the proverbial space, its relation to postcolonial writing, or the linguistic displacement outcome. Rather, it employs the tool of adultism to question communal child raising in African culture and how it affects children.

Dziri (19) writes about the role of contemporary realist Young Adult Literature (YAL) in reprovoking treatments of abuse in youths. He opines that age inequality plays a major role in youth maltreatment and so requires critical attention. He proposes solutions to abuse as experienced by the protagonists in A.S. King's *Still Life*. He concludes by positing that viewing life from the standpoint of young people yields better results in understanding youth subordination and parental power. He also states that adult judgement on these issues

must be tested. While the two studies are similar in their use of first-hand experiences of protagonists to analyse adultism and youth maltreatment, they differ in their references to the use of primary texts. While Dziri analyses sexism in A.S. King's *Still Life with Tornado*, this paper does not address parental sexism.

Ayodabo (550) examines how Adichie and Adeniran manipulate and problematise past and personal traumatic histories using fiction in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Imagine This*, respectively. He achieves this by employing the tools of postcolonial, psychoanalytic, and trauma theories. He, however, focuses on the child protagonists in the novels. He goes further to relate the abilities of the two writers to recreate their post-memory and traumatic experiences with the challenges of creative writing that writers face and that most writers employ to actualise selfhood, healing, and residues of history and memory. This paper relates to this research only in one of the primary texts, *Imagine This*. In addition, the focus on the child protagonist is also the same. However, while this paper employs adultism as a lens through which the data will be examined, Ayodabo employs postcolonial, psychoanalytic, and trauma theories. The focus of this research is on communal child raising in African culture and the role of adultism in furthering child abuse, while Ayodabo's paper highlights the autobiographical elements of the author's past and personal experiences traceable to the characters in the texts.

Amber Moore examines the roles of adult characters in young adult (YA) literature using *All the Rage* (2015), *Exit, Pursued by a Bear* (2016), *Speak* (1999), and "Wolf" from *The Rose and the Beast* (2000). The focus of the study is to ascertain if the adult characters in the texts engage in childism. The analysis of the four texts

finds that parents and school-based professional characters who engage in either "positive" or "negative" childism would have more or less impact on survivor protagonists. This study differs from this paper basically in the location of the communities the research is focused on, Yoruba and Western communities, respectively. Both papers are related in that they focus on the roles of adult characters and survivor protagonists. Also, the term used is childism, while this paper uses adultism as a tool to gauge the impact of caretaker characters in the primary text.

Ceaser's article reveals the undisclosed experience of the hierarchal power dynamic that differently treats the youth and afterward leaves them with the feeling of being disrespected. In combining ethnographic and reflexive statements, Ceaser does a critical study of 'adultism' and the role it plays in youths, as well as himself being a volunteer at Green Shoots schools. The article finds that even in conversations and at work, adultism in the form of expectations from youths is evenly distributed. He further intersects adultism with other communal sites like race, gender, and class. Donovan Ceaser's (2014) article is illuminating and relates to the current paper on the employment of adultism as a tool of analysis. However, while the article analyses the lived experiences in the field, the current paper does a textual analysis of a literary text.

Ogunfolabi's (23-39) article throws light on the efforts of the protagonist in Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This* to reclaim the peaceful life she once had before she was thrown into chaos upon returning home. Ogunfolabi employs the tool of trauma theory to analyse the diary entries of the protagonist narrator, which he opines will eventually lead to healing. However, the article reveals how continuous misery

interrupts and eventually postpones the healing that the protagonist seeks. Ogunfolabi's article relates to this paper in the sense that they use the same primary text, *Imagine This*, and they both focus on the pain and trauma that the protagonist undergoes. However, the point of divergence is in the area of the paper attributing this pain and suffering to adultism, unlike Ogunfolabi's, which focuses on the healing journey of the protagonist.

Theoretical Framework

Adultism as a term in the way that it is now used was first defined in 1978 by psychologist Jack Flasher in his work *Adultism and Adolescence* (517). Following this, researchers, academics, and advocates of the children's rights movement began to use the concept. Consequently, Roderic Watts and Constance Flanagan (2007) opine that critical psychologists, developmental psychologists, and liberation psychologists, especially in childhood studies, use the term adultism to describe the circumstances of children's disadvantaged position within their social lives (779). Furthermore, Brenda LeFrancois (2013) refers to adultism as overly adult-centric research and the placement of children by adults (2). For Erica Burman (2008), adultism is the practice of parents and guardians as generated by conventional psychology (3). She adds that the knowledge exchange occasioned by the field of psychology has shaped the way adults understand and interact with children (2).

LeFrancoise explains, "Adultism is understood as the oppression experienced by children and young people at the hands of adults and adult-produced/adult-tailored systems" (1). She goes further to mention experiences that cover the tenets of adultism, including experiences of individual prejudice, discrimination,

violence, and abuse, as well as social control and systemic oppression (1). Adultism in these contexts is a socially unacceptable phenomenon. In 1993, official reports of child abuse reached 2.7 million. Physical and sexual abuse are forms of oppression. These are the senses in which adultism, as reflected in *Imagine This* will be interrogated in this paper.

Adultism is further characterised by adult authoritarianism towards children. This love for the position of an adult so that it can be used comfortably against young people in terms of control calls for attention. This is at the level of the individual. Additionally, there is systemic adultism, which is characterised by adult-favoured legislation, rules, and practices embedded within social structures and institutions that impact negatively on children's daily lives and result in disadvantages and oppressive social relations. These adult-centric rules and practices include communal adages such as "It takes a village to raise a child" (Sade 95).

Adeniran, alongside other contemporary African writers such as Amma Darko (*Faceless* 2003), Chika Unigwe (*The Middle Daughter* 2023), Ukamaka Olisakwe (*Ogadinma* 2020), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (*Purple Hibiscus* 2005), Uzodinma Iweala (*Beast of No Nation* 2005), and others, employ the medium of the bildungsroman's prose work to write against the oppression of young people in African society.

Qvortrup et al. argue that studies within developmental psychology, traditional psychology, and social policy have rarely generated information that has originated from children themselves, both at the individual and structural levels. Society, through its systems neither privileges children nor their views. They are sometimes seen as mere beings who

should not have a say in how they should be treated. Adults are rather the supreme beings and children are merely expected to be used as tools to achieve the dreams and aspirations of adults pending when they become adults. On reaching adulthood, they often forget their previous yearnings to be carried along in the social scheme of things and mete out the same treatment to their children, thus continuing the circle by truncating the wishes of the children in their care.

Children have either been treated as the by-products of their parents, families, or households (Alanen and Mayall 12). This conforms to the opinions of Allison James and Alan Prout, who write that children have been studied from the perspective of being primitive forms of adults or future adults (9). Consequently, it has overlooked children as complex humans in the present whose lives are worthy of study from their perspective.

Critical psychologists argue that children's standpoints *vis-à-vis* their voiced opinions should form the basis of research with children to gain more relevant knowledge about children and their experiences. John Bell believes that "the word adultism refers to behaviours and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement. This mistreatment is reinforced by social institutions, laws, customs, and attitudes" (1).

There is no denying that young people need the guidance, care, love, and discipline of adults in their lives. The child or young adult is not expected to be left to themselves. Also, it is understandable that communal laws are promulgated to oversee the attitudes of young people in their communities. However, according to Bell, the roles of adults in the lives of young people can be

termed adultism when they exert the following feelings on the young:

- an undermining of self-confidence and self-esteem;
- an increasing sense of worthlessness;
- an increasing feeling of powerlessness;
- a consistent experience of not being taken seriously;
- a diminishing ability to function well in the world;
- a growing negative self-concept;
- increasing destructive acting out;
- increasing destructive acting "in" (getting sick frequently,
- developing health conditions, attempting suicide, depression, etc.);
- feeling unloved or unwanted (2).

Having examined the meaning of adultism and the system of child-raising in some parts of Africa, this paper aims to contribute to existing literature that interrogates the mistreatment and disrespect of young people by adults who unjustly take advantage of communal laws and customs. To this end, the following specific objectives are targeted by the paper:

- i. To examine the extent to which the young population experiences adultism at the hands of adults, as represented in Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*.
- ii. To highlight the effects of adultism on the young population as seen in Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*.
- iii. To determine how adultism impacts the overall societal cohesion in Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*.

Adultism in Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*

As expounded above, adultism comes in various facets, as will be analysed in the text. First are verbal interactions. This happens when young people are denied a fair hearing when an argument occurs between them and adults. Most times, they are given rules to obey without explanation. Scholars such as Sapin (2013), Wood & Hine (2009), Davies (2010), Corney (2014), Jeff & Smith (1987), and Harison & Wise (2005) have conceded the need to include young people in decisions that affect them. For instance, when Lola and her brother, Adebola, move back to Nigeria with their father, they do not understand why because no explanation is given to them by their father. They suffer culture shock and dislocation because they were born in London. The seven-year-old Lola pleads with her father to take them back to London, especially as their mother does not move back to Nigeria with them. When Lola realises that they will not be living with their father in Nigeria, she records in her diary, Jupiter "Daddy didn't take notice of my tears. I told him I didn't want to leave Lagos that I wanted us to live with him" (3).

Denied control is another facet of adultism that adults wield against the young population in their care. This is when young people are denied control or influence over most of the decisions that affect their space and their possessions. Lola and Adebola are intentionally shut out of the conversation between their father and his sister, Iya Rotimi. "There were whispers behind closed doors." (4). At the end of the conversation, Lola's father emerges and instructs her to pack her things. He further commands, "You're going to live with your Auntie in the village and no amount of sobbing and begging is going to change my mind" (4).

Lola regrets being a child whose opinion is trivialized. She says, "I can't wait to grow up and make my own decisions." (4). Just like Lola and Adebola, some young people are sidelined from conventional society by the social, political, cultural, and economic contexts in which they live (Brown, 2010; Cooper & Brooker, 2020; Joseph et al., 2002).

As shown above, Lola and Adebola are denied opinions on matters that affect them. Their father exerts much control over their lives: "He never asked Adebola and me what we wanted. He just came home one day and said we were going back to Nigeria to live. We didn't want to come to Nigeria, but we came, and now he's breaking our family up again.". Lola's father succeeds in separating Lola from her brother Adebola. Uncle Joseph, his brother, takes Adebola to live with him, while Iya Rotimi, his sister, takes Lola to live with her. Lola laments at the implication of the separation: "I'll be eighteen, an old woman before I ever see Adebola again. He probably won't recognize me. How could Daddy do this? Doesn't he love me anymore?"(4).

In the same manner, when Lola's father mysteriously dies, after having acquired much wealth, his brothers invade his mansion and begin to cart away his properties. They go as far as trying to use their authority as uncles to intimidate Lola into moving out of the flat that her father allotted to her after he made money and brings her to live in the same compound with his newly married wife, Cook Woman, and her children. In sharing the deceased property among themselves, Uncle Joseph chairs the meeting. "He wanted me to move out of the flat and into the mansion with Uncle N and Cook Woman so they could rent it out. I told him he'd have to kill me first" (263).

Moreover, adultism happens when adults talk down on young people who do not understand what is being said, especially about them. At Idogun, Lola continues to suffer adultism at the hands of Iya Rotimi and her children. She is not given a fair hearing, and her words are not believed even when it is obvious that she is telling the truth. On one occasion, Yinka, Iya Rotimi's daughter, accuses Lola of stealing her mother's chin-chin. Lola tries to explain herself, even though Yinka put the nylon pouches in Lola's suitcase. In Lola's words, "No-one believed me when I said I hadn't put it there and I wasn't allowed dinner. Now, whenever something goes missing the finger points to me and I get punished" (19).

Often, when Lola is falsely accused, she is made to sleep outside of the house, all alone (21). This is a treatment for which Iya Rotimi might not be able to meet her biological children, who are Lola's agemates. On another occasion, Lola was falsely accused again of stealing fifteen naira and a bottle of oil. Despite all her pleas to prove her innocence, Iya Rotimi does not believe her. In Lola's account, "She beat me and beat me and now I've welts all over my body. I might have died if Mama hadn't stopped her. Even Daddy at his angriest has never tried to kill me." (23). However, when the money is found, nobody tells her, "You'd think she'd apologise for her accusations and beatings but no, not a word" (26).

Another facet of adultism is physical and sexual abuse. At Idogun, Lola has to skip the remaining years of primary school and is forcefully made to start secondary school without adequate physical, material, or emotional preparations. When Lola hesitates to go to school, her grandmother, Mama, does something that shames Lola. She writes, "Everyone turned to watch Mama drag me to the front of the assembly. I just wanted to die" (14).

Adebola is also constantly abused physically by Uncle Joseph, who is supposed to raise him as though he were his child. This is the expectation that their father has of him when he hands Adebola to his brother. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case because when Adebola finally discloses to his sister about his experience living with Uncle Joseph, "He has to wait until everyone has eaten and he gets the leftovers. Uncle Joseph doesn't allow him to sleep on a bed even though there is a spare one. He's treated more like a servant and he hates living there" (43). The intricacy of abuse of young people by family members—parents and carers—is hinged on the fact that it happens within the reserved household context. As a result, the World Health Organisation highlights this complexity against other forms of abuse in the social structure. This is because it underscores the "particular difficulties when designing strategies for prevention and victim services since the perpetrators of the maltreatment are at the same time the source of nurture for the child." (7)

Child abuse as an aspect of abuse continues to reoccur in the text with the treatment that Uncle Joseph metes out to his nephew, Adebola. During Lola's grandfather's burial, when everyone returns to the village, Adebola has gunpowder accidentally explode in his face. On returning to the city, one would have thought that he would be given adequate medical care and allowed to rest from house chores while he recovers. However, Adebola writes Lola a letter, saying, among other things, that "he is still a bit ill and hasn't gone back to school because Uncle Joseph says he has to stay at home and get better. But all he does is wash the dishes, wash and iron the clothes, clean the house, go to the market, and make sure there's food on the table when everyone comes home"(84). This

lack of care from Uncle Joseph ultimately leads to the premature demise of Adebola. Lola is thrown into shock, pain, and the trauma of losing the only brother she has. She laments about how lonely she has finally become, although she lives among relatives. "First my mother, now my brother. Where is Daddy? Why isn't he here? I'm all alone. Adebola is dead" (85). Adebola was only twelve years old when he died. After his burial, Lola asks their father why he separated her from Adebola. And he responds, "It takes a village to raise a child" (95). However, Lola desires to be raised by her father and not the "village." In the bid to get everyone to contribute to the raising of children as is the world view of some Africans, it is possible that "even well-meaning adults can be childish adultists" (Joosen 209). Uncle Joseph's adultist treatment of Adebola instantly turns Adebola into a domestic helper.

Adultism also expresses itself in the manifestation of sexual abuse. This happens especially when the adult who perpetrates the sexual abuse knows that the child cannot defend herself, either because the child is younger and is no match for the older person in terms of strength or because the child respects the adult so much. Uncle Niyi brings Lola into his house to continue the process of raising her. Instead, he begins to sexually molest his niece, who looks up to him for protection from other members of the family. Lola is shocked and disappointed at her Uncle Niyi who is the only one who has even shown her care. She records the trauma in her journal, Jupiter: "What do I say? "Uncle, why were you touching and sucking on my breasts last night?" If I tell anyone he'll send me away and there is nowhere else for me to go, no one else to pay my school fees(177).

Furthermore, we see adultism play out in the form of other nonphysical punishments and threats. For instance, when young people are constantly yelled at, invalidated, insulted, intimidated, criticised, and made to feel guilty with the effect of undermining a child's self-respect, being unfairly denied privileges, and so on, it is seen as adultism. When Lola arrives at her aunt's house in Idogun, she notices that her aunt does not like her. "I don't like the way she looks at me... She rolls her eyes, kisses her lips and claps her hands...I don't want to kill her. I just want to go back to Lagos and live with Daddy" (4). Iya Rotimi, Lola's father's sister denies Lola the privileges due to her. This is seen from the outset of the journey from Lagos to Idogun. The bus makes several stops. "I wanted to buy some *akara* at one of the stops but I didn't have any money. Daddy had given Auntie some pocket money for me, but she wouldn't let me have it. I hate her very much for that. It is my money. She and her youngest son, about five, ate a whole loaf of bread by themselves and didn't offer me any" (5).

The effect of adultism is seen as Lola struggles to adjust to the new environment that Idogun offers her. She is unknowingly traumatised by the attitude of Iya Rotimi and her children towards her, such that her body reacts. One of these reactions comes in the form of bedwetting. Sadly, Iya Rotimi sees to it that she is further abused, insulted, and made to feel guilty for bed wetting, "So before they all went to school, Iya Rotimi put me in a chalk circle and made my cousins dance around me, clapping and singing" (6). Lola manages to get through the school term and looks forward to spending the holiday with her father or brother, Adebola. She also misses the maternal care that other children enjoy in the comfort of a nuclear family. At home, she is perpetually working. She writes,

“Iya Rotimi says that I can’t go to Lagos for the holidays and that I will have to stay in Idogun and go to the farm with my uncle, Baba Dayo” (12).

In addition to adultist behaviour at home and at school, Lola’s teacher employs threats to suppress and oppress the students under his care. When Lola comes late to the school assembly because she is not yet mentally prepared to start secondary studies at a very young age, having been separated from her parents, the teacher barks at her and uses her as a scapegoat to threaten the entire class: “All of you should take notice. I do not tolerate any nonsense of any kind from any student. I will show you pepper or my name is not Olufemi Adegoke Adesanya” (15).

Starvation and withdrawal of rights as forms of adultism are brandished by Iya Rotimi and Mama whenever Lola errs. Baba Dayo, Lola’s uncle, who also lives in the village, speaks up for Lola in dire situations. For instance, on one occasion of starvation, he cautions the women, “Iya Rotimi was upset and Mama furious, but he just told them that it was cruel of them to starve me” (19).

In addition to adultism, there are community incidents when youths are constantly policed and monitored by authorities because they have been stereotyped negatively. For instance, despite all the promises Lola makes to her father, saying that she and her elder brother will be good and obedient, her opinion and promises do not count. Lola’s math teacher in the school in Idogun also displays a stereotyped view of diaspora returnees. He constantly demonstrates his negative disposition towards Lola and does not hesitate to take advantage of his position of authority as the math teacher to intimidate and abuse Lola. In addition to constantly asking Lola to kneel or walk on gravel, he is seen to say things like,

“Just because you have been to the land of the white man does not mean you are better than anyone else” (15).

Next are some school examples. This is when adult staff in school communities ensure compliance with rules set by them, which only apply to the young population. Such rules include suspension, expulsion, and detention. These are the attitudes of the school teachers in Lola’s school. As pointed out already, Mr. Adesanya, the math teacher, has a habit of making erring students walk on gravel. Mr. Boye, the chemistry teacher, on the other hand, “keeps a strict register and if anyone is absent, he’ll make them uproot a tree from the forest that’s being cleared around the school” (101). On one occasion, he catches Lola copying Remi’s work and stops them from entering the class until they uproot a tree stump. As Lola recounts in her diary, “It was the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do. The tree wasn’t that big but it had roots that went very deep, so we had to dig deep using a hoe and cut the roots using a cutlass. It took one whole week and a half, and the sun showed us no mercy” (112).

Societal adultism at a larger level includes what Miller refers to as “hurtful”parenting”—situations where parents maltreat their children while asserting their responsibility to teach them supposed “decency and morality” (37). Lola’s father believes that he needs the help of his relatives to raise his children. This is why whenever Lola speaks up about the diverse abuses she suffers at their hands, he does not act on it. Instead, he replies, “She is your grandmother; she does not hate you.” Lola thinks, after listening to him, “She brought him up and he’s turned out all right. I’m not sure about that though. I’m supposed to learn discipline and experience hardship which is meant to make me a better person. I don’t see how

being unhappy and starving will make me a better person” (45).

It is unfortunate that the reason why Lola’s father sent his children to live with their uncle and aunt—to get a better understanding of Idogun culture and how it differs from that of the white man—does not yield any positive outcome. On one occasion, Lola’s father recounts that “HE didn’t know who his father or mother was until he was in school, yet HE was never mistreated by the relatives he stayed with. HE became their son while he lived with them and that’s how it should be” (190). Unfortunately, Lola’s father mysteriously dies after finally amassing wealth, and his siblings focus on distributing his properties among themselves rather than thinking about his children’s future. This results in Lola’s decision to return to the UK, where she is a citizen. After all, the family is divided against itself by envy and jealousy, and nobody cares about her. She is alone in the world, having lost Adebayo and her father to deaths traceable to family members.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to problematise adultism as a social phenomenon. This is not to say that children should be treated equally with adults. However, when a child is treated like a lesser adult, it speaks of adultism—an act that calls for a re-examination of the intents of these treatments. As seen in the paper, the emotional legacy of adultism includes anger, feelings of powerlessness, insecurity, depression, lack of self-confidence, lack of self-respect, hopelessness, feeling unloved, and then trauma. Being disrespected simply because of one is young holds across diverse backgrounds. The incidence of having experienced adultism by most adults, although of diverse severity and cultural variety, makes it appear normal

for these adults. Consequently, this paper finds that the young population, to an extent, experiences adultism as represented in the text in these various forms: school examples, community incidents, verbal interactions, denied control, punishments and threats, and physical and sexual abuse. Furthermore, the effect of adultism on the young population as seen in the text culminates in premature death, physical and sexual abuse, lack of trust, hatred, dismantling of the family structure, and so on.

Finally, the paper finds that adultism, when meted out to the children as depicted in the text, impacts negatively on the overall societal cohesion of the characters in the text. This is seen in the destroyed family unit, where no one cares for the other. It further leads to return migration as the major character Lola sadly returns to London, where she hopes to find love and care.

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