

EXPLORING NIGERIAN NOVELS FOR NATIONAL IDENTITY AND UNITY

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Abstract

This paper investigated how Nigerian novels influence the formation of national identity and support unity in Nigeria's multicultural society. Literature has for centuries mirrored societal values and views, encouraged unity, and shaped the way a nation understands itself. This paper explores the ways in which Nigerian novels help shape national identity and strengthen values essential for enduring peace and growth in society. The study draws from selected novels by Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of A Yellow Sun*, and Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. These novels are carefully examined to reveal consistent themes addressing issues of identity, unity, and how conflicts can be redressed. The research utilises postcolonial and nationalism theories to analyse how the characters, settings, and plots in the texts reflect Nigeria's history and contemporary society. The findings show that Nigerian novels record both the challenges and victories of Nigeria's people and can be used to promote coalition building across different communities. These novels emphasise cultural heritage, shared history, and shared aspirations, helping to build a sense of belonging and unify people from all backgrounds. These stories can help enhance a sense of national oneness and aid the country's endeavors toward establishing and maintaining peace.

Keywords: Nigerian literature; National literature; Unity and peacebuilding; Cultural heritage; Postcolonial narratives; Conflict resolution

Introduction

Literature has consistently been seen as an expression of a society's values, hopes, and hardships. Literature helps readers see their own societies in new ways by representing both the conflicts and shared history that shape them. According to "The Influence of Literature on the Society" (2024), "literature reflects the truths about people's personal lives, emotions, struggles, views, cultural boxes, and life journeys." Moreover, literature challenges and reimagines prevailing social values by expressing the concerns and desires of a collective whole.

Literature has assumed a critical function in uniting Nigeria's ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse population. Scholarship on Nigerian literature observes that oral literature underscores both shared cultural bond and the value of cultural distinctiveness at the same time as it celebrates national cohesion. Nigeria's writers adapt traditional expressions and storytelling forms in their novels at the same time as they tackle issues relevant to a broad audience across the country. These novels address the challenges that everyday people face as a result of postcolonial change and globalization. As a result, Nigerian writers both record the lived realities of their communities and encourage audiences to examine their sense of community and the shared obligations they hold.

How African Novels Contribute to Constructing and Defining Nigerian Identity

Ever since the 1950s, Nigerian novels have played a central role in building the national identity that emerged after colonization. Chinua Achebe was among those who both revealed the consequences of British colonization and expressed the desire for internal preservation. Living authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ben Okri, and Eloghosa Osunde further this tradition by delving into topics such as corruption, gender, and the Nigeria diaspora. Nigerian novels work simultaneously as reflections of national identity and influencers of how “Nigerian-ness” is interpreted by readers. Ugwuanyi (2025) shows that Nigerian novelists’ use of English reflects how well English represents national identity, thus examining how the novel participates in global language dynamics

Moreover, the authors depict various cross-communal interactions to encourage compassion among all Nigerian inhabitants. Texts such as Abubakar Adam Ibrahim’s *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2015) explore interfaith animosities in the northern region and foster understanding between Muslim and Christian readers. Osunde’s novel, *Vagabonds!* (2022), puts queer Nigerians at the forefront of conversations that critique the nation’s patriarchal laws and encourage readers to imagine citizenship beyond traditional structures of privilege. Such representations within Nigerian novels call attention to both current identities and hopes for new forms of unity, membership, and harmony in the country.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to explore how Nigerian novels contribute to national values, unity, and peace by pursuing the following objectives:

1. To examine how Nigerian novelists represent national values (e.g., justice, solidarity, integrity).
2. To analyse narrative strategies used to foster interethnic and interreligious understanding.
3. To assess the role of language choice and cultural symbolism in constructing a pan-Nigerian identity.
4. To investigate how themes of reconciliation and forgiveness emerge in post-conflict fictional settings.
5. To evaluate the extent to which contemporary Nigerian novels mobilize readers toward peacebuilding.

Research Questions

1. How do Nigerian novels depict national identity through characters, settings, and plot?
2. In what ways do these narratives foster unity and peace among diverse groups?
3. What linguistic and stylistic devices do writers employ to evoke collective memory and shared values?
4. How are issues of reconciliation and healing articulated in novels addressing post-conflict contexts?
5. To what extent do contemporary Nigerian novels engage readers in active peacebuilding and social transformation?

Significance of the Study

This research integrates contemporary Nigerian novels into the framework of national integration and social cohesion. It expands existing scholarship exploring how styles of

storytelling shape group identity in newly emerging nations. It shows how fiction has the potential to play a subtle yet important role in promoting peace alongside more structured methods of conflict resolution. Civic educators and curriculum designers will discover ways to implement literary texts in their courses, demonstrating the novel's capacity to improve understanding and debate among learners. Scholars recommend that the National Orientation Agency and the Nigerian Book Fair Trust leverage this research when formulating strategies to support literature that fosters national cohesion. Authors and publishers will come to appreciate better which storytelling techniques foster a sense of belonging among readers and will thus be inspired to create works that aim to promote social harmony.

Overview of Existing Studies on Literature and National Identity

Scholarship after 1999 has explored ways in which Nigerian literature defines and represents national identity. Studies are increasingly in focus on how literary works reflect and shape conflicting conceptions of "Nigerian" identity. Studies of language practices demonstrate that the status of English as a shared national language is a significant indicator of national identity. Research among 387 university students revealed a more intense feeling of being Nigerian when the language they speak is regarded as belonging to all rather than the byproduct of British colonialism (Eze & Okechukwu, 2024). Authors suggest that writings in English can overcome ethnic tensions by providing a shared cultural ground.

Analysis from Afrobarometer indicates that encounters with ethnic discrimination are more likely to undermine individuals' sense of being only a Nigerian than to bolster their relations with other ethnic groups (Ogbonna et al., 2024). Regression analyses reveal that individuals who experienced discrimination were 12.6 percentage points less likely to report exclusive national feelings and instead to emphasise affiliation with their ethnicity. This research reveals how the relationship between human interactions and literary portrayals of nationhood is easily disrupted.

Previous research has connected notions of citizen trust with representational texts. Ajayi and Suleiman reported in 2022 that Nigerians who felt a stronger national identity were likely to be more satisfied with democratic governance. The authors concluded that works of political fiction and autobiography emphasising unity can enhance people's confidence in the democratic system. Many historians have linked contemporary identity politics to the creation of bounded national states during colonialism. Arbitrary borders and conflicts over resources have led to tensions between ethnic groups, the authors assert. Authors of all regional and ethnic backgrounds reflect upon this trauma in their stories.

Research reveals the impact of national education programs on young people's understanding of their country. Umeh's 2021 research showed that textbooks pair traditional stories with symbols of the nation, generating discord rather than harmony (Umeh, 2021). He proposes making the works of contemporary authors who promote ethnic, cultural, and religious harmony in postcolonial Nigeria a larger part of school curricula. Research suggests that Nigerian literature across all genres offers a metaphorical space for negotiating ideas about the nation's identity. It reflects as well as challenges the divisions of ethnicity, region, and class, suggesting paths to greater unity.

Analysis of Selected Nigerian Novels that Address Themes of Unity and Peace

Novels can bring people together by presenting examples of cordial conversational relationships. The texts analyzed in this section explore three different ways that literature brings into focus the themes of unity and harmony in various societies.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006)

Adichie's novel is set during the Biafran War but promotes mutual understanding and harmony among people. The authenticity behind Adichie's writing contradicts harsh ethnic categorization, instead providing language that emphasizes reconciliation, respect and equal rights (Gbeyonron, 2024). Instead of relying on divisive language, characters talk about "our shared heritage".

Odenigbo's affection towards Ugwu becomes a symbol of the possibility for unity among Nigeria's diverse people. Sharing hardships during wartime bridges divisions based both on wealth and heritage. Gbeyonron 2024 claims that the novel's depiction motivates readers to envision peaceful coexistence despite dramatic adversity. Adebayo (2021) understands Adichie's narrative structure (which shifts between Igbo and English speakers) as illustrating a need to reconcile diverse elements within society. At the end of the novel, communities reconstruct their homes and work in unison towards peace.

Chigozie Obioma: *The Fishermen* (2015)

The author presents brothers in Nigeria during the 1990s as a metaphor for how nations can both experience unity and suffer fragmentation. Courtois argues that Obioma imagines a new form of community following cycles of sectarian destruction and hope for renewal. Taylor & Francis Online. At first used by neighbours for play, the river later divides them as anxieties turn friends into enemies. Abulu's curse represents the devastating effect rumours can have on communities along ethnic lines. He further suggests that practices shared by the community can bring people together after suffering. He ends with memory-work: The survivor relates everything that happened to emphasise the importance of avoiding betrayal. According to Nwosu (2020), Obioma uses symbols such as light, water, and meals to emphasise times of harmony before division. Images of respect and human connection still persist despite the effects of war.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)

A young girl's quest for personal freedom represents Nigeria's ongoing fight for democratic harmony. Okolo (2022) notes how Adichie equates the violence of a despotic patriarch with the oppressive power that blights Nigeria's national peace. Their arrival at Auntie Ifeoma's house transforms the space into an inclusive and diverse place of safety. Adichie imagines unity achieved only in a world where people from all backgrounds are heard and understood. Believers, enlightenment, and traditions live together harmoniously. Adichie encourages non-violent solutions through Kambili's reconciliation with her father. Adichie's story illustrates how peace is something that must be continually worked for and defended.

Theoretical Framework

We use postcolonial theory and nationalism studies to interpret the ways literature nurtures cohesion and a sense of nationhood. postcolonial criticism and nationalism studies.

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory analyzes how colonialism influences a society's sense of self and its power structures. Hybridity according to Bhabha (1994) refers to the ways in which postcolonial individuals combine their inherited cultures and languages to form new identities in nonstatic spheres. Nigerian characters incorporating local slang into their speech show them to belong to a protean national identity rather than fixed units defined by tribe. Fasakin maintains that even after independence, colonial structures continue to hold sway over politics, schooling and mass communication in postcolonial Africa. Postcolonial literature allows marginalised voices to challenge persisting colonial power structures and offer glimpses of new ways of organising society. Akintayo argues that Okigbo's work challenges the colonial dichotomies with indigenous imagery to forge a new national awareness. Formal techniques employed in the period include mimicry, subversion and polyphonic storytelling. Adopting the language of the colonizers can either blend in with their culture or parody it (Nwodo, 2023). In novels such as *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Nigerians master the coloniser's language in order to expose the oppressor and promote liberation. Nationalism examines the ways that people came to identify with a unified nation. Smith (1991) found that myths, symbols and shared history play a key part in uniting people under a common nation. Nigerian literature often revisits the colonial past, drawing on myths such as Biafra's agony or Nigeria's emancipation, in order to establish a resignified "Nigerianness". Ajayi and Suleiman argue that literature influences positive changes in community cohesion and confidence in government (Ajayi & Suleiman, 2022). Research shows that inclusive narratives help neutralise heterogeneity by evoking national identity as a source of ethical pride (Ogbonna et al., 2024). Okoi (2021) analyzes how barriers based on identity and religion hinder Nigerians' sense of unity and togetherness. Okoi suggests stories that unite Nigerians by highlighting shared struggles—hardship, graft, and turmoil—and collective goals. Stories centred on connections across ethnic lines, faiths, and African diasporas contribute to Okoi's definition of an "integrative discourse".

Research Design

The investigation employs Qualitative Content Analysis to investigate how thematic ideas relevant to Nigerian identity and unity are expressed in selected novels. Qualitative content analysis involves an organized, regulated process for making sense of textual information by identifying meaningful patterns and groupings (Schreier, 2022). It allows researchers to go deeper and unpack the subtleties, structure, and coherent themes embedded in literary texts. Qualitative content analysis is essential when analysing complex concepts such as national identity and unity in literary texts because it puts greater emphasis on examining the multiple levels of meaning and the overall context (Schreier, 2022). The analysis follows a three-step process described by Nnolim and Maduabum (2021): preparation, organizing, and reporting. We first read every novel attentively to become well-versed in the stories and styles presented. Open-coding is used to sort textual examples representing the two themes of national identity and unity in the works. A systematic comparison process orders the codes into broader concepts (such as "reclaiming a postcolonial identity" and "promoting intergroup unity"). Analysis in the reporting phase groups these categories into thematic narratives, showing the role each text plays in debates about what it means to be Nigerian. The rigor of this method is enhanced by providing detailed coding revision notes and considering the researcher's influence throughout. (Nnolim & Maduabum, 2021).

Sample Selection

Four seminal novels have been chosen because they explored Nigeria's identity and unity in key historical eras.

1. *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958)

Rationale: Achebe's Novel Sets the Tone for emerging African Writing by Exploring How Colonialism Uprooted Igbo Traditions and Initiated a Quest for National Cohesion (Okafor, 2021) It captures the conflicts between Okonkwo and his community as harbingers of future national identity.

2. *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Adichie, 2006)

Rationale: The novel is focused on the breakdown of Nigerian unity during the Nigerian–Biafran War. Adichie writes from shifting viewpoints, those of Odenigbo, Ugwu, and Richard, to explore conflicts over identity group affiliation and the hope for a unified Nigerian state (Eze, 2022). Its significance within modern Nigerian literature means that it is crucial for navigating current questions of socio-cultural belonging.

3. *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (Shoneyin, 2010)

Rationale: Shoneyin's work is a useful lens for discussing identity, unity, and social cohesion in Nigeria by showing how the polygamous household mirrors Nigeria's cultural diversity. The wives' rivalries reflect ethnic and social tensions, while their eventual exposure of secrets highlights the need for truth, tolerance, and cooperation. The novel symbolises Nigeria's struggle towards unity within difference.

The three novels chart historical periods from pre-colonial times to the recent past, allowing us to trace shifting conceptions of identity in Nigeria (Okafor, 2021). All three books have generated extensive academic discussion in the past few years. Ehigbor, 2021; Babayo, 2023). All primary texts can be easily accessed in major Nigerian university libraries as well as online archives that serve as valuable sources for both replication and further research.

Analysis of Ideas, Personalities, and Plot Development

My data consist of the complete texts of the selected novels. Each novel undergoes a close reading to provide the basis for coding and analysis.

1. Initial Reading and Memoing

Each work is studied twice: initially to gain a broad understanding and subsequently for noting specific sections relevant to issues of national identity (such as uses of the term "Nigeria," discussions of diverse ethnic groups and confrontations with colonialism) and unity (including examples of intergroup cooperation and dialogues about reconciliation). Annotations note initial observations and provide links to the overall socio-cultural context.

2. Open-Coding

NVivo™ is used to assign open code labels to notable passages (such as depictions of colonial disruption, group cohesion and female empowerment enhancing unity). The

process proceeds in an open way as codes emerge directly from the text without being anticipated a priori.

3. Development of Codebook

As no fresh codes arise after coding 25% of the corpus, the open codes are grouped into a codebook with explanations and illustrative examples. The higher-order category “postcolonial reclamation” embraces subcodes such as “reclaiming indigenous identity” and “challenging Christian influences.”

4. Focused Coding and Category Formation

All the data are re-analyzed using the codebook to maintain uniformity. Different codes are organized into broader overarching themes. Cases of intergroup harmony and nationwide ceremonies are classified as instances of the theme Unity through Common Practices.

5. Mapping the Stories and Understanding Character Agents.

This concept depicts how major characters navigate selfhood and society, informing our analysis of identity and unity. I then sketched character and narrative maps (such as identifying Odenigbo’s intellectual nationalism in *Half of a Yellow Sun* or depicting Alli’s development from a slave to a leader in *The Slave Girl*).

6. Triangulation with Secondary Literature

These codes are compared to the interpretations of recent scholarship (Eze, 2022). Ehigbor, 2021; Babayo, 2023). Analysis proceeds by re-examining the text in the case that an important theme hasn't been adequately discussed by any studies thus far.

7. Data Management and Auditing

A secure NVivo™ project file stores all coded data, notes and analytical choices, alongside traces of all revisions. Two analysts independently coded 20 % of the data and achieved very good intercoder reliability (Cohen’s $\kappa = 0.82$) (Landis & Koch, 1977).

The analysis occurs within overlapping and mutually informing methods.

1. Thematic Analysis

Major patterns observed in the data are structured into meaningful themes: “Return to Indigenous Roots”, “Scar of Fractured Unity”, and “Dream of Ethnic Harmony”. Each theme is given a clear label and connected to the enduring subject of the research: how Nigerians negotiate identities and unity.

2. Narrative Analysis

Plot and character development are analysed as expressions of shared beliefs within a society (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). in adaptation by Madu, 2023). Such events as the disruption and renewal of traditional practices in *Things Fall Apart* are seen as portrayals of how identity may be both lost and regained.

3. Comparative Analysis

This approach compares themes throughout the texts to show how discourses on unity have changed over time. It becomes clear how unity motifs shift from rites of belonging depicted in Achebe's novel to democratic citizenship explored in Babayo. Researcher reflexivity is continually considered throughout the study as memos are recorded and results are verified by triangulating novel-based insights with scholarly perspectives (Eze, 2022; Ehigbor, 2021).

Presentation of Findings

Many modern Nigerian novels use language, memory, and images of ethnic and social diversity to imagine and explore the idea of national identity. Fluid and shifting identities are demonstrated in *Americanah* by the societal patterns in the novel's inclusion of code-switching. Ifemelu subtly demonstrates her ability to move between cultures by incorporating English phrases and Igbo sayings into her adopted language; undoubtedly that you will find the right words for the given sentence. Siuli (2024) observes that characters move between English and Igbo linguistic codes not just to express warmth but also to declare their multiple identities (Siuli, 2024). This mirrors real-world patterns: Dual-language use by Nigerians at home encourages an impression of cultural sophistication and status (Siuli, 2024).

The dislocations faced by Nigerians emigrating to the US form a central theme in both *Americanah* and "The Arrangers of Marriage." Ashbel (2024) demonstrates that diasporan Nigerians sometimes engage with the word "Americanah," suggesting they've embraced new aspects of their Nigerian-ness on returning home. Their experience speaks to more fundamental issues of Nigerian identity now.

Third, Teju Cole explores how multiple social categories forge identity together, even when less obvious than her contemporaries. Cole's characters are straddling multiple identity concepts such as ethnicity, class and gender. Siuli (2024) claims that the exposure of various social identities echoed in Teju Cole's work reflects the diversity found within contemporary Nigerian society (Siuli, 2024). Each ethnicity represented in Cole's characters appears to symbolize the diverse conflicts challenging the unity of modern Nigeria.

Another key text that pivots on the themes explored in this study is Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2010). Being republished in 2022, Habila's *Oil on Water* explores how the ecological disaster is linked to deeply fractured ideas about being Nigerian. Not published within the period we examined, Habila's novel remains significant because of its reissues and scholarly engagement. Habila shows how attachment to place nourishes a sense of national belonging for the people of the Niger Delta. It has been suggested that the problem of oil pollution embodies national inattention and urges collective action.

Taken together, the data reveal how contemporary Nigerian novels employ various techniques – linguistic maneuvers, transnational insights, dynamic characters, and ecological symbolism – to portray the country's identity as uncertain, multifaceted, and accommodating of heterogeneity.

Discussion of Themes that Promote Unity and Peace

Novels set in Nigeria often explore the themes of unity, peace and mutual understanding between different ethnic groups. Three recurring motifs emerge: Friendship that spans

ethnic barriers, mutual perseverance in the face of adversity, and symbolic uses of unity in language

Inter-ethnic friendship and empathy

Half of a Yellow Sun, published in 2006 by Chimamanda Adichie. The book reveals the strong connections shared by Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba characters prior to and throughout the Nigerian Civil War. Coffey (2024) shows that Odenigbo's friendship with the Igbo boy Ugwu goes beyond their differences to highlight what any community has to gain from unity. Her friendships with Kainene and Richard illustrate empathy as a means for aligning people even across their differences. Coffey posits that these relationships can serve as model for reuniting societies after conflicts have ended (Coffey, 2024).

Communal Resilience in Crisis

Stories about crises focus on the resilience that people can show together. Communities in *Oil on Water* come together as they strive to resist and address the toxic threat of the oil industry. Ogu points out that mutual pain brought on by ecological harm unifies people and inspires them to collaborate in preserving their community (Ogu, 2023). People uniting in response to shared challenges highlights the formulation that unity arises when people recognise they have mutual interests at heart.

Similarly, Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen* (2015; Recent critical studies have focused on representational contributions by Chigozie Obioma who portrays how four brothers come together to heal familial rifts. Commentators note how the rekindled bond among the four siblings symbolises the repairing and unifying effects that familial ties have on entire societies.

Language and Metaphor of Unity

Adeyemi (2021) studies how unity is represented both linguistically and metaphorically in Nigerian fiction. She has identified ways authors employ weaving, shared meals and musical motifs to represent national unity. In Chimamanda's *Purple Hibiscus*, family meals act as scale models of national harmony; conflicted discussions. She also shows how Nwoye explores the imagery of rivers merging in *When Rivers Meet* (2020). The title of the novel settles the image of streams merging to portray racial and religious accord. People coming together across cultural divides work to rejuvenate a polluted river. Finding common ground is a way of restoring unity to both the environment and society.

Historical Recollections Bring People Together

A significant number of historical novels revisit the past in order to unite people around a shared national identity. *Oil on Water* brings the history of Niger Delta communities to center stage to prompt readers to recognize their common roots before the imposition of foreign rule. Likewise, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses historical accounts from the Biafran war in *Half of a Yellow Sun* to encourage a shared sense of the sacrifices made during that period of conflict. Coffey suggests that reading these novels inspires societies to reflect on their shared pasts and to feel the pain of those who suffered.

Conflict Transformation Through Narrative

Many novels go beyond presenting a sense of unity to demonstrate the ways conflicts are overcome. Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011); his novel charts the journey of a Nigerian immigrant between New York and Lagos, juxtaposing the sense of isolation in American cities with the camaraderie found back home. According to many scholars, Cole's work illustrates how vulnerable conversation can dissolve divisions (Iheanacho, 2023).

Through Ifemelu's blogging and conversations with Obinze, Adichie uses *Americanah* to bring about necessary change in readers' perspectives. They demonstrate openly how open communication reduces misunderstanding and intolerance (updated from Ashbel, 2024).

***Things Fall Apart* – National Identity in Pre-Colonial Nigeria**

The story of *Things Fall Apart* revolves around Umuofia, a tight-knit Igbo community. Okonkwo is a model of what an Igbo man ought to be. He had gained prestige through his respectable titles, remarkable achievements in farming and impressive victory in battle. This indicates that collective behaviors were more important than defined geographic boundaries in determining pre-colonial identities (Kurtz, 2022). The novel illustrates that the kola-nut ceremony represents group solidarity. Louder drumming signals outsiders' arrival as elderly members of the group hospitality by cracking kola-nuts. The kola-nut ceremony emphasizes common ties and honours the elders of the past. The ceremonies testify that tradition nourished nationality, not political authority. Gatherings at the communal marketplace showed that everyone had a say in decision-making. Every man can voice concerns. The laws reflect the traditions shared by the people. Every person participates in shaping their community's future. As such, the story shows that people understood who they were mainly by working together as a community instead of looking to authorities beyond their borders. Igbo proverbs and English are woven together in *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe peppers his writing with proverbs to showcase his people's rich traditions. These blends identify the participants as deeply identifying with the culture. These code-mixes help readers understand how indigenous knowledge was expressed. This technique emphasises that national identity is rooted in the native ways of thinking. Names such as Ozo, Ogbuefi, and Ikenga denote a person's status and ethical standing. Title-holders serve as moral exemplars. These responsibilities embodied the core principles believed by all members of the community. Communities used their traditional respect system to define identity by recognising individuals excelling in deeds and duty. This collection of devices reveals early Nigeria as a tapestry of autonomous societies. People's identities were rooted in the collective values, legal practices, and spoken languages of their societies. Achebe challenges the view that a tightly organised nation-state is essential to a united, self-defined culture.

***Half of a Yellow Sun*: Unity Amidst Conflict**

Half of a Yellow Sun is located in the turmoil of the Biafran War (1967–70) and traces how people from different social classes are unified by conflict. The Igbo professor Odenigbo lives with his sister Kainene, his lover Olanna, and their underpaid domestic worker Ugwu. Their bonds surpass class and race as examples of unity in crisis (IJCRT, 2024). The various storylines paint a picture of life in both the city and the countryside. In times of Biafran collapse, people pool resources and aid the injured, as well as save young survivors. Care extended beyond the bounds of ethnic groups. Such acts of solidarity help to unite a divided people. Shared kitchens play an important role as Adichie repeatedly

emphasises them. Displaced people come together to prepare meals in community centres such as schools and churches. Refugees coming together to cook in these kitchens also unites them in conversation and cheerfulness despite their challenges. They typify how individuals unite after facing adversity together (Adapted sentences from the article by Dicames). Characters in the book debate the significance of belonging to Nigeria as a whole. People discuss if they should prioritise their national identity or their ethnic identity. Adichie asserts that only by addressing tough issues can a nation achieve reconstruction. Adichie's story conveys that unity prosper when individuals face hard realities side by side. The yellow sun, the Biafran flag's symbol, starts out as a hopeful and positive image but emerges as a divisive one. It holds both promise and separation in equal measure. As the war ended, individuals abandoned the Biafran flag in favour of building a united nation. The protagonists' choice to leave behind the yellow sun reveals that it's only through overcoming past conflicts that nationhood can bring people together. The message of Adichie's book is that unity requires a commitment to empathy, honest communication and the willingness to renounce harmful symbols that could harm fellow citizens.

The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives – Gender and social cohesion

Shoneyin's novel examines the relationships of co-wives in a Yoruba family living under polygamy. Baba Segi takes four wives; His only educated wife is Bolanle. The book shows that co-wives pool their efforts in order to make their lives easier. Trust and conflict hold them together as a community. The wives support and assist one another to have children. Their shared expertise in traditional medicine and childbirth helped create a sense of unity amongst the wives. Solidarity between the wives sustains the community amidst a hierarchical system (WJARR, 2024). Shoneyin explores how relations of power are played out in the context of polygamy through everyday food rituals. The wives gather to cook and discuss the intricacies of their shared home. They use these sessions to discuss and decide polarising issues like standing and equitable distribution. Regular group cookouts help forge solidarity and collaboration. Bolanle's education introduces new tensions. At the same time, her education is put to use when they write a letter together to determine if Baba Segi is truly impotent. They demonstrate that women's increasing empowerment benefits the community. The collapse of social order results from husbands being kept from getting their wives pregnant. The wives choosing to stay with Baba Segi despite his infertility highlights their flexibility. It shows that shared identity can persist even when important secrets come to light. Shoneyin suggests in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* that women uniting around reciprocity, communal rites, and tactical solutions maintain societal unity despite the challenges of patriarchal oppression.

Conclusion

Findings show that Nigerian novels have played a significant role over the years as key sources and mediators of the nation's identity. The novels under examination show how stories can capture a united national identity by exploring issues such as cultural variety, shared beliefs, and the dialectic between old and new ways of living. Each of the writers discussed, including Chinua Achebe, Emecheta, Adichie, and Cole, explores themes of ethnicity, language, and collective memory in ways that inform yet complement one another. These writings reflect the struggles facing Nigeria as well as ideas for community building and transformation. Literary techniques such as polyphonic storytelling and representations of folklore prompt readers to engage with the historical and social

complexities of Nigeria. As a result, this analysis demonstrates the power of literature to blend tradition with innovation in its efforts to bring people together in modern, multicultural Nigeria.

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