



The Cost of Being Heard: Intersectionality and Trauma in *The Girl with the Louding Voice*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines human trafficking as a systemic violation of rights through Adunni, the protagonist. The research paper investigates how the vulnerabilities of women in postcolonial countries are aggravated by intersecting oppressions related to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, applying the concept of Intersectionality and trauma theory. Dare's novel presents an incisive analysis of how gender and socio-economic structures in the Global South perpetuate human trafficking, highlighting the contributions of local patriarchal structures to the persistence of exploitation. Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality elucidates how Adunni's marginalised position as a destitute, rural girl intensifies her exploitation by rendering her susceptible to the overlapping systems of patriarchy and financial turmoil. Moreover, Trauma Theory has been used to analyse both the psychological and spiritual consequences of these lived experiences, highlighting the way systematic violence and exploitation engrave scars that can never be erased from Adunni's identity.

Keywords: Global South, Human Trafficking, Marginalisation, Nigeria, Trauma, Voice

INTRODUCTION

Trafficking of people is not a new problem. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Britain controlled the lucrative trade of African slaves who were selected to work on plantations, in mines, and in the colonies of America. During the 19th century, there was a moral panic over the trading of white women and girls for sex slavery in Europe. This has evolved as a global trade, marketing both male and female body parts. Human trafficking, considered modern-day slavery, constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights. Thousands of people suffer serious health and social repercussions each year. Osita Agbu observes “human trafficking as an act of carrying men, women and children from their natural homes or habitation to foreign places where they may not be able to trace their way back home” (Agbu, 2003, p. 29). He further states:

Human trafficking tends to be systematic in its occurrence, especially as its span increases as the globalisation process intensifies. Though previously in existence in forms such as prostitution, child labor and domestic servitude. Today, contemporary human trafficking is an organised business just as the transatlantic slave trade was, with various linkages spread around the globe. Today, not only children and women are trafficked; young boys seeking greener pastures abroad also fall prey to this evil. It can safely be argued that in this age of jet planes, cellular phones, and the Internet, there are faster means of dealing in human commodities than before. There is little doubt that globalisation has created inequalities and inequities, resulting in the migration of the poor to the richer regions of the world (Agbu, 2003, p. 1).

In 2021, the Global Slavery Index predicted that fifty million individuals were subjected to slavery, marking a growth of ten million from 2016. In Africa, 7 million individuals were subjected to modern slavery, at an incidence of 5.2 per 1,000 inhabitants (Walk Free, 2021). According to the United Nations Palermo Protocol from 2000, human trafficking is defined as the following: the hiring process, or receiving of innocent people through force or other coercive methods, fabrication, abduction, scams, abuse of authority, or exploitation of a position of vulnerability, as well as the provision or receipt of money or benefits to secure the consent of a person in a place of dominance over another for exploitative purposes. This process of human trafficking may involve, but is not contingent upon, the movement of individuals. Anyone may be classified as a trafficking victim irrespective of whether they were born into servitude, exploited in their place of origin, or relocated to an exploitative environment. In instances of domestic human

trafficking, every phase of the smuggling process, including the selection of victims, transpires within national boundaries (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2000). Although the majority of people are transported within their own countries, worldwide human trafficking has drawn more attention than human trafficking that occurs at a domestic level. According to a 2022 United Nations report, 85% of those trafficked in sub-Saharan Africa are trafficked domestically (UNODC, 2022).

In Africa and the global context, human trafficking and sexual slavery are extremely common. These practices are broadly acknowledged as contemporary forms of slavery that severely compromise the health, safety, and human rights of individuals, particularly impacting children, women, and specifically girls. According to Taneem-Saeed (2015), millions of people worldwide continue to live in situations akin to slavery even though slavery was formally abolished 200 years ago. Taneem Saeed (2015) said that there exist numerous forms of human trafficking. The referenced UNDOC report indicates that sexual exploitation constitutes 79%, making it the most common type of human trafficking. The second most prevalent form is enslaved work (18%). Africa is the predominant region for various forms of trafficking. Labor exploitation in domestic servitude, agriculture and sexual trafficking are extensive forms of human trafficking. Women may be trafficked to become wives, while girls can be exploited as child brides. Youngsters may potentially be trafficked for the sake of ritual sacrifice or conscription as child soldiers. In the last ten years, UNODC has constructed an understanding of the trafficking trends affecting Africa. Although consistent data throughout the years is lacking for many nations on the continent, the information regarding victims identified and court cases provided by national authorities within Africa and other regions facilitates an investigation of the profiles of those targeted and traffickers, the types of exploitation, the patterns of trafficking flows, and the reactions and outcomes of legal systems (UNODC, 2024).

Child trafficking constitutes a significant challenge for African nations. Children who are trafficked are more commonly identified than adults in the majority of regions across the continent, specifically in both West and East Africa. Young boys and girls are predominantly trafficked for enforced labour, including domestic chores. Girls are frequently reported as victims of trafficking for sexual abuse throughout the continent. As Fiona Fleck asserts, “Girls were trafficked far from home as domestic servants. In Malawi, European tourists drive demand for child prostitutes, and some of those children are sent to Europe as sex slaves” (Fleck, 2004). Additionally, the trafficking of young children for begging is widely documented across the

region. In Africa, along with child trafficking, sexual slavery also constitutes a significant challenge. The trafficking of females, especially young girls, for sexual exploitation remains lucrative, as the penalties imposed are quite mild when juxtaposed with those for trafficking in drugs, arms, and explosives. It is an exceedingly intricate phenomenon. Each of the cultural environments is influenced both directly and indirectly. Frequently, girls from underdeveloped African nations are trafficked into advanced and industrialized countries, including the United States, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Spain, for various purposes. Fiona Fleck, in her research, said, "Recruited as soldiers and sold into prostitution and forced labour ... A third of countries reported trafficking of humans to Europe, where women and children work as prostitutes" (Fleck, 2004). Yet, several sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and environmental factors, including poverty, unnecessary consumerism, a lack of supportive parental figures, peer pressure, oppressive cultural traditions, and the desire for independence, encourage girls to fall prey to sex slavery and human trafficking. These social issues have shaped the psychological condition of the people, and thus, their ethical perceptions and actions have been drastically affected. Many, out of economic hardship, have plunged into the sex trade or human trafficking, and hence, they have little or no control over their lives, emotions, or experiences. Their actions, emotions, bodies, experiences, and expectations, therefore, are controlled and dictated by others. Sexual slavery or servitude is the attachment of the right of ownership to one or more individuals with the intention of compelling them to undertake sexual activities such as compulsory prostitution/labour, compulsory marriage, and sex trafficking. In essence, sexual slavery is a form of captivity characterized by limiting individual choices and or freedom to make decisions concerning their sexual activities or experiences. On the contrary, sex trafficking, a subtype of human trafficking, entails the coercive or deceptive transportation of individuals, particularly females, to disparate locations for the exclusive aim of sexually exploiting or abusing them. In numerous instances, female victims are coerced or enticed into this unlawful activity due to poverty and a scarcity of economic options, influenced by the societal issues afflicting individuals. In addition to this, certain girls are deceived by foreign employment opportunities, including education, household, or promotional activities, only to be compelled into sex slavery or adultery in foreign countries under rigorous monitoring or deplorable conditions. Belinda Luscombe, editor at *Time*, in her article "The Modern Slave Trade", states that Abubakar Shekau, group leader of the well-known terrorist group Boko Haram, asserted in one of his videos, "We will give their hands in marriage because they are our slaves, we will sell them in the market"

(Luscombe, 2014). Human Rights Watch (2019) says that Nigerian women and girls who were transported to Europe said they couldn't send money home and often came back empty-handed after years of being exploited. Due to these conditions, these girls become disconnected from the real world due to the molestation and abuse they endure in countries where they are unable to comprehend or speak the language of the perpetrators. The majority of the time, girls' documents or registration papers are confiscated, and they are exposed to sexual abuse until they are released after giving a substantial amount of money as directed by their owners, mistresses, or agencies. Still, a significant number of girls are compelled to engage in prostitution or trafficking due to financial hardship.

Consequently, they are acutely aware of the consequences of these illegal activities as they pursue excessive consumption. In addition, many guardians subject their daughters to these inhumane behaviours as a consequence of impoverished conditions. These parents often surrender their daughters in exchange for money when approached by local or foreign recruiters who offer their daughters suitable employment opportunities. A few indigent guardians embrace the offer, given that their daughters will provide for the whole household while working abroad. In many traditional societies, families prefer male children over females; consequently, numerous girls are discouraged from furthering their studies by their family members. For example, in Tsitsi Dangarembga's work *Nervous Conditions* (1988), the protagonist, Tambu, is first deprived of education as her family prioritizes her brother's study. Tambu boldly asserts, "Can you imagine what it would be like, to have to go to school, and to know that your brother is getting all the attention, all the opportunities, just because he is male?" (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 27). This literary work is a great example of how the African education system is different for boys and girls. In turn, they are misled into participating in a variety of malicious activities that undermine human moral principles, thereby jeopardizing their health and future. Hence, the inaccurate presumption is that the cash they earned would be used to provide for their families. As a result, a lot of girls are tricked, purchased, traded, and exploited as sex workers. In certain cases, girls who are oblivious to the rationale behind their trafficking often exhibit ambivalent responses or remorse when coerced into prostitution. These unusual experiences compel individuals to engage in criminal activities such as abortion, drug abuse, and burglary, and risk their health by exposing themselves to fatal illnesses. Also, some girls who may oppose the notion of prostitution are pressured into participating in it to reduce and terminate the cyclical nature of poverty within their families by providing financial support, often at the expense of their well-being.

Nowadays, there has been an increase in illegitimate transactions and activities due to many socioeconomic difficulties, resulting in girls being humiliated, dehumanised, and even murdered because of trafficking. They have fallen prey to human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and coerced work. In many African nations, the trafficking of girls and sex slavery has evolved and become entrenched, instilling fear among those whose moral conscience remains intact. African literature has been successful in portraying a range of issues that impact a girl child's development over the years. Authors throughout Africa have recognised literature as a reflection of society, using it to articulate social, political, financial, and religious concerns. To reveal the psychological ramifications and long-term repercussions on the victims, this research paper examines the intersectionality of sex slavery and trafficking in the chosen novel, *The Girl with Louding Voice*. Theories of Intersectionality and Trauma will be used to thoroughly examine and minimize the adverse impacts of sex slavery and trafficking on female victims.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adewuyi and Oyedeji, in their paper titled "Narratives of Stratification: Complications of Girl Child Education in Lola Akande's *What It Takes* and Abi Dare's *The Girl with the Louding Voice*", assert that cultural narratives of stratification are important in normalising and perpetuating gender inequities, particularly concerning girl-child schooling. These texts, often internalised by women, serve as control mechanisms that silence them and inhibit their access to power and financial opportunities.

Muna Alfadlilah, in his paper titled, "Sustaining Racism In Popular Literature: *The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Dare" discusses the novel through a postmodern perspective and shows how the novel endorses and resists systemic racism within popular literature in a postmodern setting. The paper describes the novel as a powerful cultural artefact that reverberates with readers today through its discussion of the human experience through racial and sexual disparity, especially in postcolonial settings. The author states that in the novel, discrimination is interpersonal and systemic; this is evident in Adunni's limited access to education, forced marriage, and later captivity in urban Nigeria. Using Lyotard's postmodernist theory, the research proves that Daré's use of allegorical verse and fractured English is an opposition against racial and linguistic stratification. The novel presents serious issues to its readers in the form of xenophobia and identity through popular forms of storytelling, proving that popular novels can indeed present serious social issues to readers.

M'vouende Balenda, J. R., Epounda, M. S., & Makosso, A. D., in their research paper titled, "Narrating African Women's Marriage Perception in Abi Dare's *The Girl with the Louding Voice*", explore the perception of marriage. Having focused on the protagonist, Adunni, the paper tries to show how the question of marriage affects female characters in the text. This is done by drawing on theoretical ideas from the sociocultural and psychological approaches. From the study, it has been revealed that Adunni—who is supposed to be a microcosm of African women—has had both problematic and pleasant interactions in her married home. All of these elements about marriage reveal how Abi Dare views marriage in the novel.

Muna Alfadlilah, in his paper, "Sustaining Racism in Popular Literature: *The Girl with Louding Voice* by Abi Dare", analyses the sustained existence of racism from a postmodern perspective. He articulates that women can't live independently and aren't allowed to follow and complete their education. This paper adopted a postmodern approach towards the analysis of the connection between society and literature. The result of this paper shows that society has multi-dimensional views regarding racism, and hence, the literary work is significantly consumed. Fiction, over which the general public continues to have intense debates regarding events encountered by the Black community.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study will look into the complex encounters of the protagonist, Adunni, as she navigates systemic exploitation in a comprehensive textual analysis using qualitative methods in Abi Dare's *The Girl with the Louding Voice*. It examines how colonial inequality, destitution, and patriarchy intersect in ways to imprison women in cycles of violence using the concepts of intersectionality and trauma theory. The interpretations provided are contextualised and substantiated with secondary sources that comprise both peer-reviewed articles from journals and academic publications. Through such analytic means as dialogic engagement with the narrative, contextual analysis, and detailed descriptions, a look into Adunni's character and the sociopolitical realities surrounding her is critically done. This qualitative study thus explains the transformative power of Adunni's resounding voice, an instrument of agency and resistance, while also depicting the psychological and systemic dimensions of exploitation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, written by Cathy Caruth in 1996, the phrase "Trauma theory" was first used and described. The notion derives from Sigmund Freud's presentation and

interpretation of traumatic events in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Moses and Monotheism*. In essence, the American Psychiatric Association recognised Freud's idea of "traumatic neurosis" as "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" in 1980. This concept is crucial to establishing the trauma theory. Cathy Caruth states:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event...The event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly...To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event (Caruth, 1995, p. 3-5).

Caruth, Tal, and others have focused on depicting trauma in literature, film, and photography. Therefore, it has impacted many aspects of human experience. Felman elucidates that literature acknowledges traumatic experiences, which persist in their entirety, encompassing dread, nightmares, and cognitive and linguistic disintegration (Felman, 2002). Patricia Clough states, "Trauma is the engulfment of the ego in memory. But memory might be better understood not as unconscious memory so much as memory without consciousness and therefore, incorporated, body memory or cellular memory" (Clough, 2007, p. 6). The central trauma theory used to support the claim that traumatic experiences cause a "temporal gap" and disintegration of the self depends on the specifics of the experience. For example, Hurt Kali Tal said: "Accurate representation of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event since, by its very definition, trauma lies beyond the bounds of normal conception" (Tal, 1996, p.15). It illustrates the Freudian idea of trauma and memory, highlighting the significance of comprehending trauma through the narrative recollection of specific experiences. Tal's literary trauma theory, along with critiques like Cathy Caruth, argues that responses to painful experiences are intrinsic to the nature of trauma and memory. Critics use the metaphor of traumatic experiences separating physical and intellectual identity to show how the experience damages a person's sense of self and alters consciousness. However, depending on their experiences, trauma varies from person to person. Traumatic memories are implicit, pre-verbal, and inaccessible to conscious recollection, although environmental stimuli can elicit them.

The term "intersectionality" first came into view during the 1960s and 1970s, particularly during the second wave of feminism. The second wave of feminism, compared to the first wave, focused on addressing issues in everyday women's lives, such as those related to working, family, and

sexuality. It was during this era that people started to realize the injustice of being discriminated against, across several sectors; thus, the word 'intersectionality' was born, encompassing these aspects of discrimination. This theory deals with the claim that an individual may face discrimination based on several social and cultural aspects. Inequalities occur in three main groups: ethnicity, racial background, and class.

This concept was first proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1988 at a conference on feminism and law hosted at the University of Chicago, and she also explained the topic in her 1989 article, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex in Anti-discrimination Law: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. She explained the overlapping structure of social categories creating social inequality, which the judiciary cannot assist because of its complexity (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw has written numerous articles about intersectionality, such as *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Colour* (1993) and *From Private Violence to Mass Incarceration: Thinking Intersectionally About Women, Race, and Social Control* (published in the UCLA Law Review in 2012). Crenshaw first pointed out the issue by using the case of Emma DeGraffenreid, a black female who suffered from discrimination due to both race and gender in the workplace. Still, the judiciary then dismissed her case because it did not represent a single category of discrimination but a combination of both. In our daily life, gender outlines the differences between men and women, including responsibilities, entitlements, as well as behaviours that are culturally determined and learned since childhood.

DISCUSSION

The story of Adunni, who resides in the Nigerian town of Ikati, is told in *The Girl with the Louding Voice*. Adunni is portrayed in the text as a woman who experiences mistreatment from her family members. She is enthusiastic about pursuing her education and aims to become a classroom teacher. But ever since her mother passed away, she hasn't been able to finish her schooling.

I know he wants to tell me something bad. I can see it inside his eyes; his eyeballs have the dullness of a brown stone that has been sitting inside the hot sun for too long. He had the same eyes when he was telling me, three years ago, that I must stop my education. That time, I was the most old of all in my class and all the children were always calling me "Aunty." I tell you true, the day I stopped

school and the day my mama was dead is the worst day of my life (Dare, 2020, p.2)

Adunni discontinued her education at her father's urging after her mother's demise. She could only agree because it was a directive from the father, the patriarch of the household. Crenshaw, in her work *Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color*, said that "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244). This explicitly illustrates how Adunni's gender, socio-economic status, and age combine to intensify her oppression. She, as a young girl from an impoverished Nigerian family, is deprived of schooling and compelled into early marriage, experiences influenced by patriarchal dominance and financial hardship. Furthermore, her father succumbed to drunkenness and unemployment after her mother's death. Adunni was subjected to mistreatment by her father. "One day, Father demanded that Adunni you have to get married to Morofu. He is an elderly man employed as a cab driver" (Dare, 2020, p. 33). Her father unintentionally traded Adunni to Morofu for three hundred thousand naira to cover the community's rent and feeding expenses. She moved into her husband's home and stayed married to Morofu because she had no other option. She resided there with Morofu's wives and kids.

Adunni, this is your new house, Morofu say. And in this house, I am having a rule. There is respect for me. I am the king in this house. Nobody must talk back to me. Not you, not the children, not anybody. When I am speaking, you keep your mouth quiet. Adunni, that means you don't ask questions in front, you hear me? (Dare, 2020, p.42).

Regrettably, she was dissatisfied with this marriage and attempted to flee from her husband's residence. She was employed as a housemaid once she was able to flee Morofu's home. Sadly, she had a particularly brutal employer who consistently assaulted her. Her employer's husband almost raped her. But eventually, she runs across Ms Tia. She informed Ms Tia of her desire to pursue further education. Ms Tia assisted her in pursuing her studies by enrolling her in a scholarship program. After that, Adunni applied for the scholarship and commenced a new chapter in her life. When it comes to life, men are more fortunate than women. This relates to their freedom to select their lifestyle, including employment or education, whereas marriage is the only option available to women.

If I have my boys, I will send them to school. They will become English-speaking taxi driver and make plenty of money. Girls are only good for marriage, cooking food, and bedroom work. I have already found Kike a husband, I will use her bride-price to repair my car window, maybe buy more chickens for my farm, because I use too much money to marry her (Dare, 2020, p.44).

The quote mentioned above was said by Adunni's father, which shows how desperately he wants more sons in place of his daughter. It illustrates the devaluation of women, the denial of educational possibilities for girls, and the objectification of daughters through matrimonial arrangements. Parents tend to worry more about their sons' high school experiences than their daughters, who are generally expected to stay home. This makes it harder for girls to learn. This selected work notably addresses gender inequity, depicting males as fathers' triumphs owing to their role in continuing the family company. As a result, men have better access to a good education than women. "Girls are only good for marriage, cooking food, and bedroom work" (Dare, 2020, p.44). Adduni is portrayed as a strong character who deals with the challenges that arise. The narrative recounts that Adunni's difficulties began with the absence of her mother in her life, her father's unemployment and alcoholism, her marriage to an elderly man with two wives, and her subsequent employment as a housemaid under a harsh supervisor. She has endured this experience with such resilience that by the novel's conclusion, Adunni is informed that she can realize her aspiration of completing her degree and educating women in access to schooling. Adunni shows her strength in the narrative through her commitment to looking after her father and younger brother, Kayus, despite her countless family issues, which is evident from these lines of the work:

When Mama was dead, a light went off itself inside of me. I kept myself in the dark for many months until one day Kayus found me in the room where I was sorrowing and weeping, and with his eyes round, full of fear, he begged me to stop my crying because my crying is causing him heart pain. That day, I pick up my sorrow and lock it in my heart so that I can be strong and care for Kayus and Papa (Dare, 2020, p. 10).

In this situation, it can be justified by the experience of Cathy Caruth, who examines the processing and representation of traumatic experiences. She observes: "The traumatised, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (Caruth, 1996, p. 5). This emotion is reflected in Adunni's story. The major loss of a mother, and then the responsibilities laid

on her from a very young age, generate a horrid anguish inside her. She repressed her grief, opting to conceal her sorrow to support her brother and father. This denial of emotion aligns with Caruth's theory that trauma may manifest as an unprocessed, internalised past. Consequently, Adunni's resilience would signify her ability to manage and withstand the psychological repercussions of her experience, rather than indicating a lack of trauma. This is further emphasised by the reality that her boss, Big Madam, routinely smacks Adduni anytime any mistake occurs. It is exemplified through the character of Adunni,

But I am not crying; I am just collecting the slap and slapping her back in my mind. When she slaps me, I slap her back too, only I don't touch her. I don't count how many slaps before I hear Big Daddy's voice, What the hell is going on here? (Dare, 2020, p. 134).

Adunni becomes frustrated with Big Madam, knowing she will not be able to fight back physically. This anticipated revenge is typical of what Judith Herman describes as one of the coping mechanisms to retrieve an inner sense of power and control in cases of assault and helplessness. Internal resistance, as demonstrated by Adunni, indicates that trauma does not necessarily silence a victim; sometimes it leads to discrete acts of rebellion that keep her alive. Judith Herman, in her work *Trauma and Recovery*, said that "When the survivor is unable to resist or escape, she may resort to altered states of consciousness, such as dissociation, to preserve some form of psychological control" (Herman, 1992, p. 42). She underscores that trauma sufferers frequently choose internal coping strategies, such as mental resilience, dissociation, or imaginary revenge, when physical resistance is impossible. In this story, particularly within the Nigerian community, it has become customary for males to possess multiple wives. This indicates that men's status surpasses that of women in patriarchal sexual interactions. To put it another way, when there is an inequitable scenario with men, women's sexuality is viewed as irrelevant or disparaged.

You are now a complete woman; he says after a small moment. Tomorrow, we do this again. We keep doing it until you fall pregnant and you give birth to a boy. He climbs down from the mattress, wear his trouser, and leaves me and my burning under alone in the room (Dare, 2020, p.53)

The above quotation reveals the repressive and patriarchal expectations from women, whereby their identities and values are organically coupled with their procreative powers, especially son-bearing. It reveals that women are obliged to satisfy their sexual desires only after they deliver sons. It proves that men consider women as sexual objects only. The statement, "You are now a

complete woman” (Dare, 2020, p. 53), uttered during a forced intimate moment, highlights the downgrading of gender to mere reproductive ability, neglecting the emotional aspect and consent. It is evident from the man’s statement that “we keep doing it until you fall pregnant and you give birth to a boy” (Dare, 2020, p.53) that the act is not one of intimacy but rather a machine-like, repetitive task imposed onto the woman until she satisfies a gendered desire. It depicts the male-dominated societal belief that a woman is obligated to affirm her value by bearing a male heir, regardless of her own wish. It shows how sexual assault and forced procreation are typical in a system that views a woman's body as a way to keep the family line going. Adunni's experiences are not only physically painful but also mentally painful, and they will probably stay with her for a long time. Cathy Caruth states: “Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event... but rather in the way it’s very unassimilated nature, the way it was precisely not known in the first instance, returns to haunt the survivor later on” (Caruth,1996, p. 4).

In a patriarchal society, women are regarded as an inferior gender. It implies that they do not view women as capable of reasoning independently. Women have, ironically, historically been viewed as objects of sexual desire (Walby, 1990, p.118). In the novel, the section involving Chief Adeoti, also known as “Big Daddy,” provides a disturbing example of verbal sexual harassment that underlines male dominance in patriarchal societal orders. Adunni, who was already subjected to systematic oppression, is further objectified and dehumanised through the comments made by Big Daddy, who said:

Adunni, dunnii-licious. He licked his lips, tongue climbing over his mustache. “Beautiful name for a beautiful girl.” He touched his chest, showing a handful of plenty hair, thick and curling. “I am Chief Adeoti, the one and only. But you can call me Big Daddy. Say it, let me hear. Say, Big Daddy! (Dare, 2020, p.167).

This incident is akin to what Sylvia Walby (1990) termed structural aspects of patriarchy, where violence is embedded in social practices that legitimise male supremacy and female subjugation, rather than just an instance of individual misbehaviour. Walby suggests that violence is an integral aspect of the male model and is often legitimised through cultural practices and institutions. In cases of human trafficking, such violence highlights women’s and girls’ commoditisation, whose bodies are controlled and utilised under a larger scope of gender oppression.

“Aha!” His face is looking at me. There are eyes everywhere on his face, evil wicked eyes. “Aha!” he says again as he grabs my feet and

drags me and all the dust from under the bed. He falls on top of me, his whole-body stinking like sweat of three years (Dare, 2020, p.342).

He attempted to subjugate Adunni after capturing her. This constitutes an act of male aggression expressed as sexual assault, wherein a man commits sexual violence against a woman. Adunni comes to her sense that she was lucky Big Daddy did not rape her. Adunni resisted Big Daddy's dominance by screaming as loudly as possible, hoping to attract attention. In between the situation, a miracle occurred when Big Madam heard Adunni's pleas and intervened to rescue her from Big Daddy's assault. "He didn't rape me, I say, voice soft. The memory of it is still giving me shivers, still causing my heart to bang in my chest. Big Madam opened the door before it happened" (Dare, 2020, p.348). The interlocking structures of oppression that first put Adunni in that situation, her low income, gender, social exclusion, and lack of education, must be taken into consideration to properly comprehend this experience. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) compellingly asserts:

The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, but rather the opposite, that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences. In the context of violence against women, this elision of difference in identity politics can result in the erasure of Black women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242).

This quotation clearly addresses Adunni's experience as a Black girl in a postcolonial African nation, where her socioeconomic background exacerbates her distinct encounters with sexual threat and systemic exploitation. Her narrative illustrates the necessity of an intersectional framework in comprehending human trafficking, not merely as a singular act of violence but as a multifaceted, systemic violation that exploits individuals who are already marginalised due to race, gender, and socioeconomic status.

RESULT

In summary, Abi Dare's *The Girl with the Louding Voice* is a powerful work of literature that sheds light on the complex issues of human trafficking, gendered oppression, and psychic pain in postcolonial Nigeria. Through the theoretical lens of trauma theory, as extended by such scholars as Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, and intersectionality, as articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw, the novel reveals how axes of discrimination, such as economic status, gender, age, and social class, intersect to further exploit and silence young girls like Adunni. Yet her character remains formidable, strong, resilient, and in pursuit of freedom through education and self-expression. It challenges prevailing discourses by placing centre-stage the lived realities of

the disadvantaged girl and giving her voice. This paper concludes that literature provides transformational power toward highlighting injustice, evoking empathy, and inspiring institutional change to address the root causes of gender-based violence and human trafficking in the Global South.

CONCLUSION

Using intersectionality and trauma theory, it asserts that trafficking happens because of financial, social, and gender-based oppressions that keep people in perpetual states of exploitation and slavery. So, this is a pitch for a lot of different groups to work together to halt or fight against this problem from becoming worse. Girls, especially those who reside in poor or distant places, need to be allowed to go to school. This will make it less likely that they will be trafficked or compelled into marriage. There should be more emphasis on changes to the law and society that make sentences for traffickers tougher, better protect victims, and get rid of attitudes that make gendered exploitation seem acceptable. A big reason why people are trafficked is still financial difficulties. This is why programs that help women and families get their finances in order are so crucial. In the end, literature and oral tradition, as shown by Daré's work, are important for raising awareness, giving oppressed people a stronger voice, and building empathy that can lead to societal change.

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