

OLD TRADITION IN NEW FORM: SIDE CHICK TREND IN NIGERIAN SPACE THROUGH THE LENS OF TWO PLAYS

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Abstract

This paper examines the side chick phenomenon and its impact in the society and the family space. Before the emergence of the slang side chick, names like mistress, paramour and concubine have been in existence. From the pre biblical era to the present, extra marital affairs and transactional relationships have continued to generate many discourses, but not much have been written from the perspective of side chick syndrome which has assumed a new garb in the contemporary time. Findings show that side chickism as a phenomenon is fast gaining ground and wider acceptance and the desire to curtail it, reinforced this discourse. Currently, there has been a lot of hue and cry over the deteriorating moral value of people especially young women globally. The paper seeks to examine the prevalence of this phenomenon and its antecedent consequences in Nigerian setting the syndrome, which is one of the trending pop cultures is destroying many relationships and generating several issues of domestic violence, health related challenges and socio-economic upheavals. The paper is predicated on the theoretical framework of Relative deprivation theory, and adopts content analysis methodology for the analysis of Emeka Nwabueze's *A Dance of the Dead* and *Spokesman for the Oracle*. The paper concludes that side chick has negative impact on families and society in general, and recommends that the Nigerian government should initiate bills and sign them into law, which will aim at curtailing the activities of side chicks and at the same time, make available advocacy groups whose jobs will be to sensitize the youths especially young girls and ladies on the negative impact of side chickism, with a view to curtail the threats that this old tradition in new form poses to the Nigerian society and the global community.

Keywords: Side chick, Menace, transactional sex, 21st Century, Infidelity, Wife, side guy

Introduction

In the ancient Greece, the place of women was often determined by the way and manner that marriage was perceived. Greek convention had it that marriage was only a formality, a duty of each citizen, and not an evidence of emotional bond, with this view in mind,, most men during the era were known to be finding female relationships and sexual fulfillment outside their marriage and matrimonial home – with “hetaerae (hired female companions)” and concubines. Attesting to this, Demosthenes in the fourth century B.C., stated that “We have mistresses for our enjoyment, concubines to serve our person, and wives for the bearing of legitimate offspring”(8) Wealthy men during the era used to surround themselves with a number of women, each playing a different role in their lives. In the olden times, the phenomenon of side chick was never accorded the relevance that exists today, neither was it in any way celebrated or elevated to the status it has assumed today. In the contemporary time, the phenomenon is wrecking many homes especially as many of the men and women that indulge in it, no longer attempt to conceal the affair, instead, many boldly try to justify the reasons for their actions, while some will go to the extent of trying to push the blame to the wives or intimate partners of the men.

In light of the above, it is obvious that the phenomenon of side chick which is one of the contemporary pop cultures is not something new in human society, rather it can be said to simply mean a change of garb. Before the emergence of the name, names like paramour, mistress, courtesan, sugar babies and concubine among others have been in existence, serving the same function as side chick. With the increasing trend in fads, pop or hook up culture like vagaina-preneurs (another name for prostitution), side chickism as a phenomenon is alarmingly becoming an acceptable trend, a way of life and part of the everyday reality among many people in Nigeria, especially young ladies in the guise of celebrities, actresses and politicians among others in the 21st century. Many women, both married and unmarried are increasingly indulging in this culture of transactional sex as a means of sustenance. Despite the upsurge in side chick syndrome, there is a paucity of research works on the dangers inherent in such culture within the Nigerian space.

The writer’s Club views, side chick as “the millennial word for the other woman or mistress; a female that is neither a male’s wife or girlfriend, who maintains a relationship with the male while he is in another committed relationship (The writer’s Club, 2017).In ordinary parlance, side chick is a woman (married or unmarried), who is willingly dating a married man for material gains. Participants in this culture view this act of transactional relationship (sex

in exchange for cash) as mutually beneficial to both parties since it is a casual affair in the sense that it is different from conventional intimate relationships that come with lots of emotional attachment. Amaka Nicholas, a news article writer, captures side chick as “a lady who plays the role of a second woman to the man and who should not try to compete with the main woman and who should not be clingy, or an attention seeker” (The Sun, 15th September, 2018). In the contemporary time however, acts of side chickism as a phenomenon has been gaining ground, a situation which has prompted the need for its (re)examination and thus, has reinforced this discourse. As a trend which assumed a new name in the contemporary time, the researchers are of the view that the phenomenon is precipitously being made by many young women to appear plausible, logical and acceptable to many people in the society despite its glaring negative impact. This paper will attempt to unravel the threats which this old tradition in new form poses to the Nigerian society, as captured in Emeka Nwabueze’s *A Dance of the Dead* and *Spokesman for the Oracle*.

Concept of Side Chick.

The concept of side chick have come to be variously referred to by many as ‘the other woman’, side babe, sugar baby, paramour, mistress, side piece, bed mate, and even a fornicator or adulterer, while the wife, fiancée or girlfriend of the male is variously described as the main chick or the main woman (because she is the main one and is either married to the man or she is the main babe or about to be married to the man). Often times, the wife or main girl friend of the man is kept in the dark about the illicit relationship between her man and the side chick. The researchers view side chick as any human (female variant) that is not a legal wife or girlfriend to but is into a transactional relationship and provides one or two duties of a wife or girlfriend such as sex and companionship to a man and in most cases with no intention of bearing a child for the man. Side chick menace is one of the major social realities presently and a nightmare to women in committed relationships or marriages. The society views side chick as a woman that a man dates in addition to his girlfriend or wife, and it is usually a secret and an illicit affair. Ayoola Adetayo views a side chick as “the mistress, the other woman who never come home with the man except when the main chick is away, and the hidden one that no one else knows except the man” (Pulse.Ng, July 18, 2022). However, it is pertinent to note that some women who are referred to as side chicks do not even know they are addressed as such. Buttressing this point, Damilola Akinmolayan submits that, “the side chick is

not unknown in modern relationships, or in relationships of previous eras for that matter, but in some cases, the woman may not be aware of the tag of side chick added to her name”(The Hope newspaper, 2022)

The idea of being a side chick is to be the girl on the side, the girl that the man messes around with at will, the one that he goes to for hookups and hang outs and after that, he goes right back to his main wife or actual girlfriend, the affair is supposed to be kept a secret, with the wife or main chick having no idea that her husband or boyfriend is having an affair with another girl. The side chick is supposed to accept that she is the fun for the night or for just a few days and that nothing more will come out of the affair except material items, cash and maybe power. The concept of “the other woman manifests itself when two consenting adults engage in a committed sexual “relationship” while one or both are intimately committed to other people. (The writer’s Club, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

The theory that underpins this work is Robert K. Merto’s Relative deprivation theory. The theory states that a person or group of people who feel that they are being deprived of something important like money, status, items often join or form a relationship with others in order to obtain what they want and to sustain their lifestyle. Robert Longley defines it as an “actual or perceived lack of resources required to maintain the quality of life (e.g. diet, activities, material possessions) to which ...individuals within a group has grown accustomed to...”(ThoughtCo.com). In line with the study in view, it can be argued that many young women engage in the acts of side chickism, in order to sustain their life style and acquire material things which they may not be able to acquire based their background.

Evolution of side chick

From the biblical era to the contemporary time, transactional relationships has continued to generate different kinds of discourses, but not much have been written from the perspective of side chick and its impact on the family and society at large. The holy writ recorded in (Genesis16:1-5) that father Abraham was blessed with riches by God but at a point, he was childless and his wife Sarai was not getting any younger and in an unconventional move, Sarai provided Abraham with a side chick (her maid Hagar) to help bear him a child. In the same vein, one cannot talk about the issues of side chick without remembering the story of King David, the man after God’s heart. Out of lust and despite knowing that Bathsheba was married to Uriah, King David turned

her to his side chick and unintentionally got her pregnant. The bible also recorded that when David got her pregnant...he "ordered her husband to be sent to the fiercest part of the battle ground where he was killed" (2 Samuel 11:4-12), and he took over the woman as a side chick. The story of Solomon is also another instance in this context. God gave him wisdom, and he used his wisdom to gather so much wealth in addition to a harem of side-chicks. Solomon was probably like many men including celebrities, politicians and people of affluence among many others in our contemporary society who use their power, wisdom and riches to keep as many side chicks as they want.

Robin M Boylorn on the origin of side chick syndrome is of the view that it "originated from women of colour who are in relationships with men who they know are already in committed relationships" (9). He argued that the phenomenon is a "seemingly new one resulting from black women's portrayal on the silver screen" (9). TV journalist, Courtney Carter Dejesus however, contends that side chicks existed long before reality television, BET, and tabloids. TV and explains that "many celebrities are known for starting out as side chicks and they include; Gabrielle Union, Alicia Keys, Angelina Jolie, Leann Rimes, and Tori Spelling among others" (Huffpost, 2017). It is also pertinent to note that some English playwrights of the Restoration period in the likes of William Wycherley in His work, *The Country Wife* (1675) and William Congreve *The Way of the World* (1700), made references to what is today known as side chick. Another school of thought while agreeing that the phenomenon is not new, contends rather that it changed its garb from originally known names like concubine, paramour and mistress to adopt a more contemporary slang- 'side chick' which is synonymous with 21st century pop culture.

Unmarried White women who have intimate relationship with married men are often referred to as mistresses, while women of colour who sleep around with men in relationships are identified as side chicks. Playwrights like Wycherley and Congreve are of the view that mistresses are most times taken care of, splurged on, and on few instances, prioritized above the wife. On the other hand, side chicks' affair are meant to be kept secrets, limited to booty calls and late night texts, and they are expected to play their position (never interfering with the man's "real" relationship) Mistresses are white and upper-class and therefore redeemable. Side chicks are assumed to be indigent and people of colour and are therefore viewed as thirsty, grimy, gold-digging whores who actively pursue somebody else's man with a view to get their financial and material gains, power and attention among other derogatory names (4).

Arising from the increase in the number of side chicks and the rate at which many married men are indulging in this pop culture, many women especially wives, itches to know what it is about the side chicks that makes them more desirable persons than themselves, by the males who are often addressed as side cock, sugar daddies, 'blesser' or side guys. Side cock, or side guy is the male version of side chicks, married or unmarried man whose stock in trade is to have intimate relationships with married and unmarried women either for pecuniary benefit or for fun (pleasure). They can also assume pseudo names like, blesser, zaddy (daddy), uncles, sugar daddies, and toy boys. . Zikhona Singata explaining the nature of the side guy, stated that;

A sugar daddy is someone who has a hectic schedule and is not expected to be available at all times as a result of being busy. The young woman who is dating the sugar daddy is known as the sugar baby and she is supposed to be available all the times. The sugar babe anticipates that the sugar daddy would lavish her with expensive presents and provide for all her needs and wants in exchange for her company and sexual favours (14).

When caught in the act of infidelity, the side guy is often shielded and hardly punished and his identity is hardly exposed. An instance is the mysterious culprit in the holy bible narrative of John 8:1-11, who slept with the adulterous woman, the identity of the man till date, is shrouded in secrecy. Often times when side chicks are caught in the act, the identity of the side chick are made known with a view to ridicule her and at the end of the day, it is mostly the side chicks that are exposed, publicly disgraced and derided. Curiously, the researchers find the woman caught in adultery (an act of side chickism) in the bible narrative very intriguing to say the least. If the woman was caught in the very act of adultery, it means that she could have probably been married to a husband who must have been known and was alive at the time that the incident occurred. Thus, the woman who was referred to as an adulterous woman in the bible can also be likened to and described as a side chick.

Image of the Side Chick

As a result of the antecedents associated with side chicks, many people like Don Kester Oshorieame view them as the "21st century Jezebel, someone who is unethical, immoral, greedy, heartless and disrespectful of other women and their relationships. Side chicks are not aliens from outer space, they live within us, work in our space, sometimes fellowship and dine with us

unknowingly" (facebook, 2021). Sometimes too, they are so close to us, such that one would hardly suspect them. They can appear in the guise of one's counselor, confidant or spiritual leader. They can appear as aunts, neighbours, secretaries, in-laws, boss, and colleagues in the office, exes, landladies, gym instructors, teachers and lecturers among others. Adding to the rate of influx of side chicks in Nigeria setting, they are everywhere around married couples seeking for relevance in the man's life. Some of them graduate to become co-wives or even the main 'dish'. Some men are known to have driven away their wives and married their side chicks. In the past, when a woman is in this type of relationship, she cannot tell anyone, as it can all leak back to her family or cast aspersion on her person. In the contemporary time, especially with the advent of the internet, many women are proud to disclose their relationship status both in physical and virtual spaces. Many of them take pride in displaying what their side cocks buy for them.

The Metaphor of Side Chick

Over time, the image of side chicks has been likened to names which include but not limited to such metaphors as , "dietary supplements which are meant to augment the nutrients needed by the body of the man which 'regular and normal diets (main chick) do not adequately supply" others have likened them to "leeches that just know how to plug in and feast on their host wantonly" Another school of thought holds that side chicks are " like social media influencers always out to impress, influence and entice gullible men with a lifestyle that contradicts their job description" while others think that side chicks are like " mouse traps, they are not always as generous as they may seem, they often times have a bait that attract 'would be victims' before they strike"(facebook, 2021). They are like ice cream, cakes and candies, they come in varied colours and flavours and in most cases, they appear delicious, taste sweet and appear well packaged and so appealing to the eyes of the (side cock). Candies, pastries and ice cream are all prepared to deliver satisfaction and on being consumed, they give a dopamine (feeling good hormones' to the brain which never gets satisfied but repeatedly gives a feeling of more craving. Like the mosquitoes, side chicks hover around until they find a suitable target and with their proboscis they begin to suck their victim's blood for their own material and financial benefits, just like the blood that real mosquitoes suck from human beings are used for their own reproduction. The researchers are of the view that "side chicks are like spare tyres hidden in the trunk of a car and are usually brought out when the main/regular tyre has an issue, fails to deliver or is

not available. Thus, like razor blade, they know how to slice their way into the hearts of their victims. Beneath the metaphors used to describe a side chick, lies the true nature of young woman whose only intention is to milk the side guy as much as possible with a view to upgrade her status for better at the detriment of the side guy's main woman.

In the Sit Com industry, shows like "*Love & Hip Hop*". are dramatized to mirror the effect of side chick, In Nollywood industry, in the movie titled *Executive Side Chick*, Destiny Etiko is rewarded with a brand new SUV car for a one night stand with her side guy, this is in addition to threatening the wife of the man for trying to retrieve the car. This goes to show that in the present time, the side chick phenomenon is no longer kept a secret by many of the people who indulge in it. Their notoriety cannot be missed nor can their looming shadow over a relationship or as a threat to many marriages be denied. Many young women find themselves in relationships with side guys who lavishes expensively on them in return for a no holds barred sexual escapades. Often times, such sexual orgies turn out to be extremely adventurous and the thrill of the forbidden usually heightens the passion for more. This is in contrast with the routine and predicable intimacy pattern that some of them are used to with their wives.

It has been established that the side cock moves on to new adventure after having his fill with one side chick. Many of the side chicks delude themselves and refuse to face the reality that they can never move from being the side chick to the main chick. Even Statistics have shown that men rarely leave their significant other for their mistresses or side chick and even if they do, many of such relationships never turn out well. One wonders how one can build a life with a supposed cheat in the first place? There is the tendency that if he is cheating on his wife, chances are that he will also cheat with the side chick over time. In view of his double standard lifestyle, he can never be faithful to the other woman.

Reasons for the Side Chick phenomenon

Many young women are of the view that getting involved in transactional relationship secures their financial and economic status. Thus, they engage in acts of side chick with a view to acquire flashy lifestyle which is embedded in designer fashion styles, trendy hair styles, state of the art gadgets, expensive houses, international travels, continental cuisines and snacks. In view of this, it is imperative to affirm that many factors are responsible for side chick culture in the society. Premium Times newspaper, in

an interview with some young women in Benin City, alleges that some Nigerian men would continue to keep 'side chicks,' due to their perceived benefits. The respondents' submissions arose from the growing reports of infidelity in the lives of men and women, especially the highly placed celebrities in the society. "Other respondents, added that wives may never be able to compete with the side-chicks in terms of allure, attention to detail, and penchant for romance" (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com>). Some argue that some of the claims may have some elements of truth because in Nigeria like other places across the globe, many men keep side chick in order to meet their sexual needs and fantasies. Similarly, in another online forum Nairaland, some of the reasons people gave are captured below;

Men have side chicks and cheat because they are selfish and don't care about a woman's feelings. Men are just selfish and manipulative cheats who can't think of anything but sex. They don't know the meaning of love, they think love is separate from sex and don't care less that women see it another way around. If you care about a woman you will not cheat her for your own gratification. If you care about your relationship then you will communicate about sex instead of going to the next girl for something better. A wife is meant to be a partner, not a group of whores to sleep with (<https://www.nairaland.com>).

Additionally, economic insecurity, peer pressure, family expectations are also some of the reasons for the upsurge in side chick adventures. Toeing this line of thought, Joshua A. Adjei avers that "transactional sex for survival, is linked to financial considerations, where girls use their sexuality to meet their daily needs such as food, clothing and housing' (9). From the views above, intimacy and the quest for adventure seems to be some of the factors propelling some men to cheat. The fact still remains that, for whatever reasons people give for keeping side chicks, the disadvantages of the act outweighs any perceived advantage. Some of the reasons that men usually adduce for indulging in the affair include that men are polygamous in nature and they are created differently from women, forgetting that lust and sexual desires are not traits for only a particular gender. Thus, the researchers contend that no reason can justify the betrayal of one's marital vow or the habit of sleeping around by married men and women. Countering men's view on why they keep side chicks, Adedayo Dotun, contends that he is not in support of men having side chicks, but if he really wants to peep into their world by trying to understand why, I

think "it's purely because of insecurity. According to him, "most of the men believe ladies are not trustworthy and reliable and they are always cautious about being cheated, so in view of this, they tend to protect their emotions by having a side-chick just like a plan B" (<https://www.thehopenewspaper.com>). Although it is an entirely different story for some, because they believe they might not be properly satisfied with just a lady, basically they are just being promiscuous, while some claim that it is because of the frustration and torture they are getting from their women (<https://www.thehopenewspaper.com>).

Furthermore, media glorification plays a role in hyping side chick syndrome. As stated earlier, side chick phenomenon is not a new trend, the reason why there appear to be an upsurge in the contemporary time is because of media hype, reality television, celebrity show offs and the social media hypes which seems to be glorifying and laundering the trend as something of honour, when in fact it is a degrading trend. The women that act as side chicks are often too quick to adduce reasons why they are intimately involved with married men. Some of the people interviewed claim that often times, "many main chicks do not give their men peace of mind rather they try to put certain expectations on their men" (facebook, 2021). Chidumga Izuzu, a Lagos based movie critic and Editor at *Pulse Ng* shares a contrary view when he says that "men are attracted to side chicks simply because they are scum and he sees no justification whatsoever for cheating" (Pulse. Ng, July 18, 2022). From Izuzu's view above, it appears that the society is gradually trying to make the act of side chickism appear normal and acceptable in the society, just the same way many are now seeing baby mama syndrome as a normal pop culture. Side chicks most times do not expect marital commitment from the side guy except for material things like all paid travel expenses, sex, monetary gratification and gifts in form of houses, personal effects and cars among others.

Looking at the prevailing rate of infidelity in the contemporary time, side guys are known to dish out reasons why their side chicks get more attention than the women they should be giving their attentions to. In another on line forum on Instagram popularly known as *Frank no-holds barred*, about the reason why some men keep side chicks, a respondent to a question posted on Instagram on August 22nd, 2022, by a handle known as @macshayn says "the ability of the side chick to offer wild sex and be less problematic is the edge she has over the main chick" (Pulse.Ng, July 2022). While in a personal interview, a sex therapist Amaka Okoro toeing the same line added that "side chick give less drama and unexplainable sex positions" (pi). Many are of the view that these two reasons are the two strongest pull with which the side chick draws the side

guy in. While the question was posted majorly due to the desire to understand how the male minds works when it comes to the issue of side chicks, @hormo_tee posits that "a man is drawn to a side chick due to the peace of mind she gives him while @inemudodiong alleges that some men can hardly say no to the chance to put in less commitment than normal escape from the stress and pressure that their wives mount on them while likely enjoying more sex" (instagram@Frank no hold bars, 2021). He added that "these are Greek offers too juicy to be resisted by some men.

Some of the excuses that are being advanced for this anomaly in the family space includes that some husbands for no fault of theirs, operate long distant marriages, they are off from their matrimonial homes for months if not years in search of greener pastures. In the times of long absence, some of them may be tempted or lured into the act of keeping other women for sexual gratification. Many husbands are so unconscious of their marital space and their wives, and they reason that all is well with their families, provided they take care of their home when they should and have intimate moments with their wives when they can. Whenever they are confronted with the fact that they are lacking in their marital duties, they argue that they provide enough to take care of the home as much as they can. Without minding that women are prone to changes and what the husband may think they need may not be what they desire.

In view of some of the opinions popularly expressed above, it is glaring that some men try to justify having a side chick, an act which they say provide a means to get their desired peace of mind and experimental sex styles without being overly under pressure or nagged at. On the other hand, the side chicks are of the view that married men give them attention, money, power and an avenue to satisfy their sexual needs. Some of them also date married men when they think that no suitors are coming their way and they have needs to take care of. Over time some of them in their desperation to have a child, trap men into impregnate them. When they attempt to confront the men with the pregnancy, they often get responses like I don't want the pregnancy and are quick to remind the side chicks that they made it clear to them from the beginning that they are married with children and would not want another child from an outsider and would not want their marriage to break up. There are instances where some of the women would reject the offer of abortion and chose to keep the baby since they know they are not getting any younger. With this view in mind, they make do with what they see, and as such, refuse to see any crime in dating married men or someone else's boyfriend. We shall move on

to examine the selected plays for the paper with a view to sift out the nature and impact of side chick phenomenon in the society

Synopsis of the Selected Play Texts

Emeka Nwanbeze's *A Dance of the Dead* is a story of infidelity and desperation, and its related consequences. The play revolves around Ngozi, a beautiful young lady that has just finished her secondary school education. She has finance, named Okey. Okey is loved and accepted by Ngozi's family as an intending in-law, however, Ngozi's desire to marry Okey vanishes the very moment she meets, Chief Nwoye, a rich married old business man. Okey who is serving the mandatory National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) no longer appeals to her as she suddenly realizes that he is not rich enough to satisfy her numerous financial needs. All attempts and efforts made by her parents and best friend to stop her from derailing her life and future falls on a deaf ear as she elopes with Chief Nwoye who is old enough to be her father to the city. At the city, Ngozi becomes pregnant for Chief Nwoye who refuses to accept the pregnancy. They plan to abort the baby and in the process, Ngozi dies as a result of complications arising from the abortion.

The second play *The Spokesman for the Oracle* is a contemporary play on extra marital affairs, deceit and betrayal. It mirrors some contemporary issues bedeviling many Nigerian girls and presents us with the consequences of getting involved in extra marital affairs and the challenges arising from indulging in side chickism. It depicts low relationship standard of a married man who is not faithful to his wife and the consequences thereof. The story centres on Chidi, a school teacher, but who later becomes a successful business man. The conflict in the story is caused by Chidi's deceitful acts at the time he serves in a school as a teacher. During this time, he impregnates one of his students, named Nneka and he does not want to have a second wife, hence, he hides the affairs with his side chick Nneka from his family. At some point, while under pressure from Nneka, he even promises to marry her with no intention of fulfilling the promise. Chidi rejects the pregnancy and Nneka is abandoned by Chidi to suffer and later gives birth to a baby boy whom she dumps into the school latrine, perhaps to avoid further suffering. Chidi takes the child to his house and practically assumes the role of the parent of the child alongside his wife who has no child of her own. The boy, Ikemefuna, grew to be a very intelligent and a hardworking young man. Chidi's former side chick Nneka resurfaces and this leads to a catastrophic consequences, as she comes back

after many years to take back her son and to reveal the secret about the boy's paternity and at the end, the boy Ikemefuna runs mad and the family ruined.

Side chickism in the Selected Play Texts

It is apparent that drama remains an indispensable and a viable platform to fight against social ills. In other words, drama is a mirror of the society; it reflects the socio-economic and cultural realities surrounding man, with a view to suggest feasible solutions to them. The selected plays are evidences of these facts. The plays examined a number of socio-cultural issues confronting the society including the menace of side chick. Nwabueze's *Spokesman of the Oracle* for instance, through the characters, and setting, attempts to depict the social realities in the society. With no doubt, Chidi is a reflection of some men, who are never satisfied with what their partners can offer them in marriage, hence they seek for side chicks for their sexual and other needs. His activity with Nneka which leads to the birth of Ikemefuna and his relationship with Nkoli as Mr. Amadi narrates below are clear evidence of this claim and it is captured thus:

Young men of these days are suffering from dysentery of senselessness. . . I don't know what is between you and this girl, but you promised her that you'll divorce your barren wife and marry her. You told her about your son, how your wife suggested that you say that the child was dead to avert the possibility of the mother appearing in the future. You told her that you want other children as companions to the boy. You told her about the boy's birth, and even mentioned my daughter's name to this girl. (Nwabueze's *Spokesman for...* 48-49)

As stated earlier, the above lines reveals that Chidi indulges in acts of infidelity which is of course replica of the situations going on among many men in Nigeria.

In the same vein, Nwabueze's *A Dance of the Dead* also portrays issues of side chick at its own best. Just like in *Spokesman of the Oracle* that centres on infidelity and deceitful behaviour amongst married men, the second play portrays Chief Nwoye Who abandons his family and moves into a hotel with a girl old enough to be his daughter for acts of infidelity. Ada prefers the company of Chief against that of her fiancée simply because chief spoils her with gifts and money, this fact is shown from the conversation between Ada and her friend Ngozi:

NGOZI: Chief will be going back to Bokina today. . .

ADA: I knew it! That's why your head is so strong.

NGOZI: It's not so, Ada. You may not understand me because you are not in my shoes. You have your brothers who come to school every time to take you to some nice places, buy you nice things, you don't understand that people like me suffer. Chief was nice to me. I couldn't resist going in . . . (A *Dance* . . . 23)

Indeed, the two plays do not only reflect the issues of side chick in our society but they also portrayed the negative implications of the menace, some of which includes, domestic conflict, broken home, lack of trust and in some cases death. The two plays to some extent portrayed the aforementioned themes and more. In *Spokesman of the Oracle* for instance, the actions of Chidi and his side chick causes psychological and emotional problems to his wife and son and Oyibo laments thus:

You have destroyed the future of your own son, you marred his life and made him a walking corpse. You have made a fool of me for nearly twenty years. You have taken advantage of my love and concessions. The result of your irresponsibility has descended on us like locust. You have frozen our smiles, you have caused perpetual agony to reign in this household, you have caused your son to be restricted in human interaction and bottled him in the purgatory of psychosis. (*Spokesman for* . . . 51-52)

On the other hand, the above described situations are some of the scenarios that often generate domestic violence in the society. As a result of side chick menace in the play, trust and love gets destroyed and friendly relationship that exists in the family of Chidi vanishes. Hence, misuse of words that normally leads to domestic violence becomes noticeable.

A Dance of the Dead, reflects the fact that side chick menace also comes with health implications. Like Nneka in *Spokesman...*, Ngozi who is Chief Nwoye's side chick gets pregnant for Chief, and he gives her a "mixture" with a view to terminate the pregnancy. The concoction affects Ngozi's womb and thus leads to her death. Furthermore, since both side guys (sugar daddies) in the study plays keep intimate relationship with many women, the possibility of contracting sexually transmitted diseases from different sexual partners is high.

Impact of side Chick and its Implications within the Nigerian Space

It is obvious that side chick breeds a lot of problems. One of such problems is sexually transmitted diseases (STD). With no doubt, side chicks usually do not expect anything except, money and sex from a man, whether married or single. On the other hand, the man who is keeping a side chick is sleeping with the side chick while he has a wife or main girl, he is sleeping with them, and he may not be using protection on them. Having sexual contact with multiple partners in a way like this is said to be one of the major ways of contacting (STD) like HIV/AIDS and many others. According to World Health Organization (WHO): "More than 30 different bacteria, viruses and parasites are known to be transmitted through sexual contact. Eight of these pathogens are linked to the greatest incidence of sexually transmitted disease" (3). Other implications of engaging in side chick phenomenon includes pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, scandal, blackmail, extortion, emotional abandonment and broken homes are amongst the impacts of side chick phenomenon.

Apart from this, keeping of side chick normally generate gender-based violence such as domestic conflicts which often lead to divorce or even death. This is as a result of the fact that soon as the husband starts keeping a side chick, he will start looking down on his wife as not being good or sophisticated enough. Since most side chicks will always come in their flashy apparels, the man will begin placing high demands and expectations on his wife. Once she does not fit into the class of the side chick or does not dress in similar way, the man will start to despise her. The woman's attempt to fight against these situations normally lead to violence against her. Traditionally, in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, the beating of wives and children is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline (UNICEF, 2021). Therefore, in beating their-children parents believe they are instilling discipline in them, much the same way as in husbands beating their wives. This is especially so when the woman is economically dependent on the man. The society is basically patriarchal and women's place within the scheme is decidedly subordinate. Domestic violence therefore functions as a means of enforcing conformity with the role of a woman within customary society. Violence against women in the home is generally regarded as belonging to the private sphere in Nigeria and is therefore shielded from outside scrutiny. A culture of silence reinforces the stigma attached to the victim rather than condemning the perpetrator of such crimes (AfrolNews, 2007).

Apart from health related risks that are peculiar to side chick practice and which has been discussed earlier, it is virtually impossible for a man to give

his full attention and concentration to his family while he is keeping a side chick, this is because side chicks require time, money and company too. Thus, to impress a side chick, a man may want to give her more attention and preference by spending more money and time with her. Also, with a side chick around, the man's focus will be divided between catering for his family and pleasing his side chick. In the same vein, since the husband is cheating and having affairs, it will come quite easy for him to be suspecting his wife of doing same. He will become suspicious of every move made by his wife. In like manner, once the wife notices the shady movements of the husband, distrust and accusations will arise. On the long run, these frictions does nothing but to divide the home and can subsequently ruin the marriage or relationship. Arising from this, the need to tackle the menace is sacrosanct. Cindy Anene Ezeugwu is of the view that "there is an urgent need for us to focus on rebuilding and sensitizing the families which is believed to be the most important unit of human existence, on the need to revisit our rich cultural values...and the need to know the value of abstinence, restraint, self control and a sense of direction which is fast being eroded by western ideas" (4).

Conclusion

While the so-called side chick phenomenon is an old tradition in a new garb, the language or slang toes the line of repackaging infidelity, transactional relationship and immorality as a trend invented by both white and black people especially celebrities, politicians and people of affluence and which should be viewed by all and sundry as very abominable, therefore should not be encouraged. The syndrome is fast turning to a trend and a social issue that has to be nipped in the bud and urgent attempt should be made to eradicate it in the society. The researchers recommend that sex education and human value reorientation should be introduced early in the school curriculum while advising that parents, religious bodies, Government and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should take up advocacy workshops and symposia to address this trending menace.

As a result of side chick menace, many intimate relationships are crashing and a number of persons have been infected with one sexually transmitted diseases or the other as a result of keeping multiple intimate affairs. The problem has and is equally generating many issues of domestic violence, broken homes and in some cases destruction of lives and properties. Theatre too has a significant role to play in re-imagining the society, it can be deployed to address the issue of the menace and other contemporary problems

that is plaguing the society. Playwrights make use of available socio-cultural realities in the society to talk to the people through channels like movie and play performances, amongst others. Hence, the socio-cultural challenges such as side chick menace can be addressed through the theatre. The paper, through content analysis and relative deprivation theory has analysed the themes of side chick in Nigeria using *A Dance of the Dead* and *Spokesman for the Oracle* as paradigms. It has displayed the fact that drama is one of the feasible instruments that can be deployed to tackle social ills such as side chick syndrome among many others.

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