

CHILD RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN AHMADOU KOROUA'S *ALLAH IS NOT OBLIGED* AND ELNATHAN JOHN'S *BORN ON A TUESDAY*

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Abstract

Literary artists often employ their crafts to portray shades of child rights violations which may sometimes lead to physical and psychological complications. Literary critics, therefore, have explored various degrees of child rights violations and the denial of the agency of children in many literary works. Both the writers and the critics tackle this attitude of undermining the rights of children with the hope to prick the conscience of the society against such obnoxious act. This study will add to the discourse of child rights violations as portrayed in Ahmadou Korouma's Allah Is Not Obligated and Elnathan John's Born On A Tuesday in order to highlight some of their grave consequences on children and the society at large. The choice of the two texts is informed by the fact that serious scholarly research in the novels have never focused on issues of child rights violations. Using the qualitative method of analysis, the study utilises the Sociological and Systems Theory to illustrate how environmental factors of social, economic, political and multiple interrelated systems breed mediums of child rights violations. The study aims at exposing the various ways in which these violations occur, and their consequential effects on the child and by extension the society. It further examines how issues of child rights violations can be completely eradicated. This study, therefore, submits that adequate parental guidance and monitoring, political will and stability, and religious tolerance, protective roles of clerics and individuals, use of child rights organisations and proper sex education could bring to an end issues of child's right violations and abuses.

Keywords: Child, Rights, Violations, Abuse, Neglect, Sociological, Systems

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Introduction

Literature has constantly reflected issues of child neglect, abuse, and violations prevalent in the society. These ongoing issues frequently call for concern to everyone, considering the fact that childhood should involve a secure and happy phase of human experience. International bodies like the United Nations, through the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICRC), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, World Health Organization, have tried to intervene in the plights and challenges encountered by children globally. Likewise, the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child aims at protecting children in armed conflict and from human trafficking and prostitution.

Akas Nicholas Chielotam defines the rights of the child as the privileges and obligations of the child as indicated by conventions and laws of the land (1). Children's rights are human rights specifically formulated to protect and care for the essential needs for the growth, development and wellbeing of children. These rights encompass civil, fundamental freedoms, economic, social, cultural rights and specific rights for the protection of children. They further include their right to association with both parents, provision of basic needs, food, universal state-paid education, health-care, protection from discrimination and freedom from abuses of all forms. Even though these rights were created to protect children, there exist heightened levels of violation and various forms of abuses and ill-treatment of children. Eben Badoe claims that, an estimate of 95 million children according to the World Health Organization experience abuse annually with Africa recording the highest (32). These violations and abuses could be sexual, psychological, physical or emotional and thus affect the growth and development of the child. Children are used as vessels for sexual satisfaction, child soldiery, child marriage, forced labour, human trafficking etc. These vices account for the sole reason why the 2015 Sustainable development goals was formulated to "take immediate and effective measure to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour and all its forms".

However, literary artists have frequently brought these horrific abuses to the fore, in order to bring them to an end. Ahmdou Korouma's *Allah is not Obligated*, Uzodimma Iweala's *Beasts of no Nation*, El Nathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*, Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail*, Toni Morrison's

Bluest Eyes, among others, are literary artefacts that have exposed these terrifying violations meted on children .

Depiction of Child Rights Violations in African Literature

Contemporary literary critics have critically engaged in childhood discourses and experiences, bringing to limelight issues of child violations, abuses and neglect as portrayed in literature. The literary artist being a member of the society feels obligated to lend his voice to contemporary issues affecting his society. This 'social commitment' of African writers is emphasised by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his *Homecoming* where he states among other things that "the writer registers with varied degrees of accuracy and success the conflict and tensions in his changing society" (47). As evidently represented in the selected texts under study, writers being influenced by social realities interrogate issues of child violations, child neglect and child abuses meted on children in Africa.

Despite portraying other prevalent issues in the African society, issues of child rights violations have also been imbedded in African literary text right from the Pre-Colonial era down to the contemporary period. Reaffirming this, Philip Amukoya Bainito avers that "while a number of West African countries were going through crises of civil wars in the 90's, many writers around that time were writing and reflecting on the plight of children in their fiction" (2). Such writers make use of child narrator technique as mode of expression because children were often not allowed to express themselves. In the same vein, Honwana observes in relation to Postcolonial Africa that children have rarely been listened to and as such their voices reach a broader platform only in rare cases (2). The child narrator is sincere and in his/her innocence paints pictures of realities the way they occur without significant embellishment. The child narrator technique, therefore, reveals pertinent issues affecting the children. Stretching this view further, he observes in relation to Postcolonial Africa that:

Children have rarely been listened to, and when their voices are not silenced, their talk is never unconstrained... children's voices reach a broader platform only in rare, and sometimes tragic cases, but even then these subaltern voices are often immediately recuperated, transformed, and inserted into different narratives and agendas set by other interest groups. (2)

Some African writers like Ferdinand Oyono, Mongo Beti, among others, have explored how children were physically, sexually and

psychologically abused due to colonial circumstances. This is made evident in Mongo Beti's *Poor Christ of Bomba* where Denis, the Father's boy, was physically abused by Father Drumont. In the novel, the girls in the Sixa, the mission school run by the Catholic Mission in Bomba, were sexually exploited by the mission-appointed administrator, Raphael. At the Sixa, the women and about sixty girls were subjected to forced labour and rigid daily schedules which are violations and abuses of their rights.

Similarly, Nawal El Saadawi exposes through her novel, *Woman at Point Zero*, issues of child marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual abuse and the psychological effects of such horrible experiences on the girl child. The protagonist Firdaus, who is forced into child marriage to a man five decades older, undergoes various forms of trauma and horrendous experiences while growing up. Firdaus takes the reader through her turbulent childhood, from being abused and witnessing the abuse of her mother by her father, to her mysterious female circumcision as a young woman, and the twisted molestation by her uncle, "my uncle's hand moving slowly from behind the book he was reading to touch my legs"(10), among others. Firdaus laments her awful genital mutilation in these words, "They cut off a piece of flesh from between my thighs... a part of me, of my being, was gone and would never return" (14). This part of Firdaus' essence that may never return becomes a lifelong traumatic burden that impedes her fulfilment in life. A similar desecration of the girl child is depicted in Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail*, where the child narrator, Abigail, encounters psychological, physical and sexual violations. Sexually and emotionally, she was abused by her cousin, Edwin, at the age of ten before her father sends her off to London to live with another cousin, Peter, where her devastating sexual violations escalated. Peter tries to turn her into a prostitute, but when she declines, he ties her up in handcuffs in a doghouse, violates her sexually, urinates on her and beats her up as well. Peter's debasement of Abigail portrays filth and hunger. Abigail is made to drink from the plate of rancid water and bends over like a dog to be molested. This makes her traumatised and psychologically derailed with extreme loss of personhood. She is in the end forced to choose between living in exile in England after her loss and trauma or return to Nigeria.

Uzodimma Iweala's *Beast of no Nation* tells the story of Agu, a displaced kid who gets trapped in the terrifying incidents and traumatic memories of the war. Like in real wars, the children in this fictive war are the major victims as they suffer hunger, emotional devastations and loss of an

opportunity to go to school. Most of the boys are coerced into warfare, where, as child soldiers, they become cannon fodders of the conflict. The girls are raped, while others are butchered by the rampaging soldiers. Agu, Strika and other child soldiers are constantly abused sexually by the commandant and this hurts their psyche (123). Many African novelists and playwrights explore various degrees of the denial of child's agency in their literary creativity.

Conceptualizing the Sociological and Systems Theory

The notion of utilitarian posture of African literature influences many African literary artists to serve as catalysts of social consciousness. They through their imaginative skill act as social reformers, crusaders and activists, against societal flaws in order to achieve a better society. This is in tandem with Donatus Nwoga's opinion on the unique role of the literary artist when he asserts that, "if it is necessary to throw bombs in order to change his society, the literary artist should recognize his obligation and throw as many bombs as possible"(4). This position corresponds to the tenet of the sociological criticism as an approach that analyses the basis of social construct in literature and how literature functions in the society. Introduced by Kenneth Burke, this approach is rooted in the idea that literature is a product of the society in which we live. It examines literature through socio-cultural, economic and political perspectives. As Bainito, notes '[I]t focuses on how social phenomena or objects of consciousness develop within social contexts'. The sociological critic, therefore, argues that literary works cannot be studied in isolation but should be examined in relation to the social, cultural, economic and political issues that gave rise to the literary work. Through this framework, this study will interrogate the socio-cultural, economic and political scenarios that give rise to child rights violations in African literature and subsequently proffer societal solutions to eradicate such violations leading to the realisation of the SDGs.

Just like the Sociological theory, the Systems theory in Social work examines the influence of multiple interrelated systems on human behaviour. Developed by Talcott Parson, a renowned Sociologist with the publication of his book *Social Systems*, this theory examines the influence of families, organizations, societies and other systems on the behaviour of an individual. With this framework, this study tends to examine the influence of multiple systems in the behaviour of children. Children in the selected literary texts, influenced by these systems, engage in various forms of social

vices that violate their rights like political 'thuggery', child-soldiery, violence, drug abuse and sexual adventures. The establishment of the Child Protection Theory of Change by the World Vision International in 2014 was to prevent the violations of these child rights. This approach reflects the changes at various levels that occur in order to protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence. This could be achieved through formal elements (use of national legislation, policy framework, legal services, and social welfare) and informal elements (churches, community, indigenous leaders) to work together to protect children from abuse.

Child Rights Violations in Ahmadou Korouma's *Allah is not Obligated*

Narrated through the Bildungsroman technique, Ahmadou Korouma's *Allah is not Obligated* tells the story of the civil war that ravaged parts of West Africa in the 1990s which started in Liberia and spread through Sierra Leone, among others. Using the voice of his twelve year old protagonist and narrator Birahima, Korouma, being a socially-conscious literary artist, feels compelled to lend his voice to issues of tribal wars and use of child soldiers prevalent in his society. Edgar Nabutanyi in his "Representations of Troubled Childhood in Selected Post 1990 African Fiction in English" envisages that the author uses the novel to expose the ills and atrocities of the war on victims by warlords (63). Child soldiers were used as chattels by warlords to accomplish their selfish desires to take control over colonies and states. Birahima, the protagonist of Korouma's novel at the beginning leaves the house on the account that his mother was a witch. This exposure makes him become a street kid where he is negatively impacted. Even when he returns home, the traits of the street life still pervades in his behaviour. Birahima, like many other children in Postcolonial states, lacks basic formal education which is a violation of his right as a child, since all children are entitled to quality education according to the UN stipulations. He succinctly links his lack of education to the failure of the entire social system which reflects the after effects of colonialism. He notes, "I didn't get very far in school...I chucked it because everyone says education doesn't matter" (2).

Child-soldiering is a major form of abuse and violation of children's rights as portrayed in the text. Birahima and other kids were introduced to the use of weapons, killings and smoking hard drugs known as 'kash' at a very tender age. Birahima highlights this fact when he says "[A] four by four full of kids, child soldiers, small soldiers...showing off their kalashes, their AK- 47s slung over their shoulders, dressed in Para-uniforms, the funniest

thing is that there's a girl"(80). Child soldiers are frequently used in the text at every location they arrived to fight the enemies, and in most of these locations they are not properly trained nor catered for. This brutal mode of existence made them hard-hearted and mean, callously murdering souls without remorse. The child soldiers are exposed to the use of hard drugs by the adults in order to make them more violent and brutal. Birahima, brings this to our attention when he states that child soldiers in Colonel Papa le Bon's army had advantages compared to adult soldiers. He notes, "All the kash was kept for the child soldiers because it was good for them and it made them as strong as real soldiers" (79). Thus, hard drugs were used to exploit the vulnerability of the child soldiers.

Abusing the sexuality of children is another form of violation replete in the text. Badoe defines child sexual abuse as "forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities...whether or not the child is aware of what is happening" (33). Most of the children in the text are sexually molested either through rape or sexual acts. Birahima is a victim of sexual abuse in the hands of Rita Baclay who constantly uses him, a minor, as a sex object. The child soldier, Birahima, narrates one of such experiences thus, "she always asked me to take off my clothes...she would stroke my 'bangala' gently, gently and i'd get a hard on like a donkey" (172). Sarah, one of the female child soldiers, having been totally neglected by her father (parents), is violently raped. This rape eventually seals her fate as a female child soldier. Similarly, Sita and Mirta, girls at Mile Thirty Eight, under the protection of Sister Aminata are gang-raped by the hunters which lead to their death.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a cultural practice in many African societies is represented in the text. The World Health Organization defines FGM as "procedures that involves partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injuries to the female organs for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reason" (34). UNICEF's report in 2005 suggests that about three million girls in Sub-Saharan Africa suffer from the traumatic processes of female genital mutilation. Maman, Birahima's mother, was circumcised in the company of other girls, her age, by the tradition of the Malinke people. Unfortunately, she sustained a severe injury during the process that led to a terrible illness that ruined her entire life. According to Birahima, "They cut something out of my mother, but unfortunately Maman's blood didn't stop, it kept gushing like a river swollen by a storm" (26). His mother, therefore, could neither take care her life nor that of her son, Birahima, who eventually ends up as a child soldier and a terror to

humanity during the conflict, is direct product of child right violation. Besides, this crude and unlawful mutilation of the girl child's genitalia amounts to the violation of her basic right to life considering the inherent danger in the process of the act.

Similarly, child rights violations are commonplace occurrence in Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*. A good example of this violation is seen in the life of Dantala, an 'Almajiri' (a child who leaves or is forced out of home without provisions in order to study Islam under a tutor), whose experiences and the numerous challenges he encounters, in a society filled with religious extremism and violence, amount to terrible child neglect. Taiye Selasi, the famous Afropolitan writer, while reviewing the text, avers that the novel offers a good exploration of Islamic extremism in Nigeria. For this critic, Elnathan John portrays in this novel how the 'insignificant' northerner is stripped of basic family values, rights and education. This could probably be the reason why he dedicates the novel to the 'boys who will never be known and the girls who become numbers'. In "Conceiving Neighbourhood in Northern Nigerian Fiction", Stephen Ogundipe, illustrates how friendly neighbours became sworn enemies because of ethno-religious differences (150). This hinders the loyalty of a neighbour as betrayal becomes rampant in a bid to show the superiority of one ethno religion over another. The relationship between the Shiites and Sunnis aptly portrays this scenario which leaves the children as victims.

In Bayan Layi, Dantala becomes friends with Banda and the boys who live on the streets (under the kukah tree), they harbours him and introduces him to smoking hard drugs known as 'wee wee', fighting, stealing, political thuggery, and other forms of violence that lead to child depravity. Banda and his boys are used as political thugs during the election by the small party to mar electioneering process and destroy the activities of the big party. The boys are paid a hundred and fifty naira to engage in underage voter registration, thereby manipulating the result of the election. But when the big party is announced as the winner in the election, they are also mobilised with machete, daggers, fuel to destroy the office of the big party. In executing this order, the gate man is killed, properties are stolen, the opposition party office is burnt and shops owned by their supporters are also not spared.

The religious environment represented in the novel tend to predispose children to certain sexual orientations that tend to undermine their sexuality which adequate parental care could have prevented. This lack

of parental care exposes these children to early harmful sexual activities like masturbation, homosexuality, unprotected sex, pornography, among others. These shades of sexual pervasion are clearly seen in the actions of the boys in the mosque, who engage in various forms of immoral sexual acts. While Dantala engages in masturbation, watching of pornographic videos and having sex with a prostitute, Bilal and Abdulkareem engage in homosexual practices. Jubil on the other hand, constantly had sex with prostitutes and also with his brother's wife against all ethical colourations of their socio-religious environment. Their involvement in these immoral acts is as a result of inadequate parental guidance, tutoring and monitoring enforced by their religious orientation. This failure by their parents to nurture and cater for them amounts to gross violations of their rights as children.

Child labour, another form of child rights violation, is common among many African countries especially with the increased poverty rate. Olaitan Olusegun and Amos Idowu define child labour as "work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children" (7). The Almajiri system exposes innocent children to grave risks in the streets and gives them away as objects of exploitation. This is depicted in the harsh treatment of Malam Junaidu, their teacher, who compels the boys in the Quranic School to work in his farm. Following the tradition in some parts of Northern Nigeria, he made them to beg for food even after working in his maize farm (56). Furthermore, in this novel, children are also seen hawking food items and drinks in the motor parks when they should be in a place of learning. These instances of exploitative child labour, show to a great degree, both the psychological and physical torment and abuse these children are exposed to.

Malam Abdul-Nur is portrayed as the main violator of children's right in the text. He is known to be very brutal and violent in handling the boys at the mosque especially his brother Jubril, whom he whips and hits at any slightest provocation. This brutality by Malam Abdul-Nur is evident in one of Dantala's lamentation, "I don't like the way Malam Abdul-Nur hits people especially the new boys" (118). Jubril also gives an instance of violence against children done by his uncle who beats his children every Friday, in case they did something he didn't know of during the week (118).

Furthermore, one of their basic human rights which is to have access to quality education is blatantly violated because of their peculiar milieu. Malam Abdul-Nur, a religious fanatic, vehemently objects to child education. As a strong advocate of the Mujahideen philosophy, he is against the

education of children, calling people who send their children to Universities 'Kafiri'. He also explores the naivety of these children and indoctrinates some of the boys in the mosque into religious extremism and takes them to the Mujahideen Camp. He is so brutal and violent on them that he once butchers a boy's hand because he steals a piece of meat. Verbal and emotional abuses are other forms of violation that Malam Abdul Nur unleashed on the boys. He insults them at will for not understanding things, calling them 'dakiki', 'dull', and 'stupid', among others. Similarly, Saudatu, the woman who sells kosai and koko abuses a little girl called Maryam verbally. Coercing her to help Dantala carry his koko, she yells; "Maryam, if you like a bastard and don't come back here quickly" (234). The minor characters in the text are roundly abused and assaulted and these actions violet their rights and impede the flowering of their agency.

Towards the Realization of the SDGs Child –Related Indicators (in African Literature)

The achievement of the SDGs depends a lot on the realisation of the rights of the child because children are our future, the future we are trying to develop and their ability to secure that future depends on our own ability to secure their human rights now. Hence, the 2015 SDGs has 17 global goals which address the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. These goals have 169 targets measured by 232 specific indicators out of which 32 are directly related to children.

Several years after the implementation of the *ICRC*, the near-universally adopted international instrument, the SDGs includes a specific target to end all forms of violence against children. Target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) aims to "[E]nd abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children." This target emphasises that ending severe violations of children's rights through abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children is at the heart of the 'global strategic agenda'.

There is need, therefore, for African States to renew their commitment to the rights of children by turning children's global challenges - health, lack of adequate education, poverty, child marriage, violence, child labour and other forms of exploitation, social inequality and discrimination, harmful traditional practices and so on - affecting children from mere goals into global actions. Children should not be exposed to violence whether

physically, emotionally or sexually as this affects not only their health but their general wellbeing and hampers their potential.

Violations of children's rights could come to an end through the attainment of child relational issues present in the Sustainable Development Goals. These goals could be achieved through proper parental guidance and protection, political stability, use of religious systems and organizations, enactment of laws, and formulation of policies and strategies to protect children and through proper sex and moral education.

Parental Guidance and Monitoring: One of the rights of children is the provision of basic needs like food, shelter and parental guidance. Children, who lack proper parental care wander about in the streets hungry and unkempt. Inadequate parental guidance and monitoring made Birahima, the protagonist of Korouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated*, and most of the other child soldiers engage in conflict. Birahima as a street kid spends days in the street stealing food, mining through streams and fields hunting mice and birds as well as sleeping with goats to eat from fields (37). Equally, Sarah another female child soldier grows up without any parental care and protection. Her father, Bouake, as a sailor, who is always travelling, hands Sarah over to his cousin Madame Kokui who turns Sarah into a housemaid. Beyond the chores, Sarah has the added responsibility of contributing to the family finances by selling banana on the street. On one of such occasions, her banana is stolen and she could not go back home for fear of being beaten like in the previous cases. She consequently wanders and begs on the streets, where she is violently raped. When she regains consciousness in the hospital, she is subsequently handed over to an orphanage which gets destroyed as a result of the war. Sarah has no option but to become a prostitute and afterwards a child soldier in order to survive the harsh realities of life. Sosso, is another child soldier with a nonchalant father who is always brutal towards his mother. Sosso, who could no longer bear his irresponsible father's brutality, murders him and afterwards joins the child soldiers. Colonel Papa Le Bon, the leader of one of the rebel groups, is another character who grows up without parental guidance and care. His mother is wandering from bar to bar and eventually gets pregnant and gives birth to him. Upon a re-marriage, she abandons him with her sister who often leaves him to engage in her sex trade business. This parental neglect also connects to Dantala the protagonist of Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* whose father never cares about his wellbeing and that of his siblings. He laments,

"it's been long i saw my father and he had not asked after me (11). He sends his children to different places for Quranic education without proper communication with them. Because of this, Dantala despises him and never cares even when he hears of his death.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced from both texts that parental negligence increases children's vulnerability and leads to the involvement of children in social vices. Parents do not create time to properly train and monitor the activities of their children. These Children, therefore, grow up on the streets imbibing various immoral vices that tends to negatively affect how they develop. The study, therefore, focuses on the measures that can eradicate child rights violations and how to achieve the SDGs that revolve around the wellbeing of children. It is the view of this study that home, being the primary place of socialisation, should be jealously guarded by parents and caregivers. Parents and guardians should carry out their responsibilities of raising their wards properly through constant education, guidance, attention, supervision and monitoring. This will help in curtailing the absorption of environmental evils and imitation of vices practised by the children who are already living on the streets as miscreants.

Religious Institutions, Clerics and Individuals: *In Allah is not Obligated*, Marie-Beatrice, Mother superior of the biggest convent school in the capital did everything within her power to protect the girls in the convent from any form of attack during the war even to the extent of fighting in the battle front. "She took off her cornet, ripped a kalash out of one of the soldiers' hands, got down on the ground and machined-gunned...she killed five looters" (224). Likewise in *Mile Thirty-eight*, Sister Hadja Gabrielle safeguarded the girls under her care. She kept them on the path of righteousness with the intent of safeguarding their virginity, after which she returns them to their families. She warns the hunters and other men in the camp against going close to the girls and instantly kills anyone who violates them. This is evident in the great extent she goes to find out the culprits that violates Sita and Mirta whom she eventually fishes out and kills. Colonel Papa le Bon, the representative of NPFL in Zorzor, who is to be ordained a priest but could not achieve that dream because of the outbreak of the war, gathers all the displaced street kids together and continues to provide them with food and shelter. In his district, he establishes a refugee camp where women and kids under five were properly catered for. He also builds an orphanage for girls under seven who lost their parent in tribal wars and had nothing to eat. This

orphanage is managed by the nuns who teach them writing, reading and religion (124). In Birahima words:

Colonel Papa le Bon, in his goodness, built an orphanage school for girls. It was for girls who had lost their parents in the tribal wars and it was only for girls younger than seven. Little girls who had nothing to eat and not enough breasts to get a husband or be a child soldier were taken care of by nuns who taught the girls writing, reading, and religion (73).

His extreme care and protection of these girls could be seen in the pain he undergoes when one of the girls is raped. He performs rituals to bring the culprit to book. His good humanitarian deed towards children earns him the name Papa Le Bon meaning the good father (106).

In *Born on a Tuesday*, Malam Sheikh, the Imam of the mosque where boys are being trained in the fear and precepts of the Islam, protects and provides not only for the boys in the mosque but other Muslim children as well. He proposes to take care of Dantala and provides all he needs. He refers to him as his son despite not having any blood relations with him (188). He builds a school for Muslim children (276) and seeks peace during the confrontation with the Shiites. Alhaji Usman also provides food and financial assistance for the mosque. Malam Sheikh's protective role to Dantala and the boys in the mosque leads to the end of street living and violation in the life of Dantala. Hence, the clerics have a huge role to play in ending violations against children as represented in the texts under study. The exemplary protection given by the adults in the fictive worlds of these novels should inspire a positive change of attitude towards children.

Political Stability and Religious Tolerance: In *Allah is not Obligated*, Birahima informs us that in the recent years, the dominant ethnic groups in the region have been on the forefront in retaining and fighting for political power. This situation has resulted in the smaller communities revolting. Due to the ethnic competitions for the scarce economic resources and political power, each ethnic group has to fight to produce a president from their own region. For them, the presidency appears to be a hope for the community's prosperity. This shows that the president is not for the state but for his ethnic group. This unstable politics breeds civil wars which disrupt the societal peace and unity thereby leading to separation and disconnection in the family.

Electioneering process should be free and fair in order to avert any form of violence and protest by voters. Laws should be put in place to sternly deter politicians from using political thugs particularly children to cause mayhem in the society. Parents and the general public should be enlightened on the dangers of underage voting and its psychological effects on the child. The government should, therefore, set the machineries of law in motion to prevent as well as punish all forms of abuse, infringements and outright violations of the rights of the children. The Nigerian VAPP Act 2015, setting a high penalty for child sex offenders by declaring them dangerous offenders, is a good example. Olaitan and Idowu also suggest that government at all levels should improve, monitor and evaluate communal participation, proper planning, budgeting, implementation and accountability in child related issues (21).

Various religious beliefs should be respected; children should not be coerced to embrace beliefs that are not in their best interest. Clerics like Malam Abdu Nur should not involve children in religious conflicts which tend to shatter their agency.

Sex Education: Teaching and educating children on sex education would enable them know more about issues relating to sexual pleasures, how to control their sexual urge together with the moralistic, medical and humanistic implications of indulging in sexual activities. The boys in Elnathana John's *Born on a Tuesday* are not educated on sexually-related issues and as such they explore their bodies negatively by engaging in homosexuality, masturbation and illicit sexual affairs. Even when Malam Sheikh catches Dantala watching pornographic movie and masturbating, he never says anything concerning his actions. Hence, parents and guardians should be encouraged to teach their wards sex related issues.

Human Rights Education: Teaching the children about their dignity and rights as humans and their entitlements from parents/family, society and the government. They should be properly informed that they have the right to reject whatever is destructive, negative, or not in the best interest to their life, health, future or wellbeing. Building in the children a good self-concept or healthy sense of self that will enable them develop both physically and psychologically and have a respectable social status irrespective of their family economic background.

Conclusion

The prevalent acts of violations of children's rights call for urgent actions and strategic measures from all sectors of the society. This is in line with the ideals of the Sustainable Development Goals, formulated to enhance the living standard of all peoples including children and which specifically sees the protection of children from injustice, violations and abuses and violence as an indispensable target for the achievement of global development. Literature, being a product of the society, captures and interrogates various ways the agency of children is undermined in the society. Many African novels are replete with the incidents of child rights violations often captured through child narrators whose innocence implicate and indict the society. Ahmadou Korouma *Allah is not Obligated* and Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* are literary works that succinctly represent various shades of violations of the rights of children that include: child soldiery, sexual abuse, lack of education, female genital mutilation, forced labour and domestic violence. These literary texts studied add to the creation of awareness of the traumatic experiences that children are exposed to in many African societies. Child rights violations are endemic and, therefore, requires the involvement of all to tame it. The African literary artists, who are at the vanguard of social reforms, have explored their art to represent these abhorrent violations against the African children. This effort will help to sensitise the society and her institutions on the need to curb this social anomaly. One of the set objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals is to ensure the development of every facet of human society to improve the living standard of all. The children who are considered as a vulnerable group will benefit greatly from the achievement of these goals whereby they have opportunities to survival, development and fulfilled life.

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