

The Role of The Familial Dynamics in Sade Adeniran's***Imagine This*****Hawraa Hamid Kadhim****University of Al-Qadisiyah College of Education Department
of English**hawraa.hamid@qu.edu.iq**Abstract**

The research depicts a journey of a perseverance and hope for a British born Nigerian girl Lola Ogunwole from childhood to adulthood. It focuses on the role of familial dynamics in nurturance of a child and the immense suffering of many Nigerian children at the hands of their parents and relatives. As a reaction of her abandonment from her parents, Lola uses her own easy yet challenging coping mechanism. Instead of eruption, she chooses acceptance and detachment from her emotions to encapsulate herself from her malicious milieu. The research highlights how Lola cultivates her inner peace and how that her coexistence in such toxic familial dynamics affects her positive growth. She succeeds in navigating the traumatic experiences alone achieving her autonomy, which is clearly shown through her storytelling in which she shares her diaries only with the imaginary addressee Jupiter. The research concludes that the eagle-eyed Lola overcomes not only her spatial journey but also navigates the emotional and psychological ones successfully. In addition to that Lola challenges the idealized image of mother by refusing the motherly support recreating her independency away from her biological relatives and succeeds in the assimilation of dual cultures.

Key words: Dynamics, family, Imagine This, Nigeria.

المستخلص

يصور البحث رحلة المثابرة والأمل لفتاة بريطانية من أصل نيجيري تدعى لولا أوغونولي من الطفولة إلى مرحلة البلوغ. يركز البحث على دور الديناميكيات العائلية في تنشئة الطفل والمعاناة الهائلة للعديد من الأطفال النيجيريين على أيدي آبائهم وأقاربهم. كرد فعل على هجرها من قبل والديها و تستخدم لولا آلية تأقلم خاصة بها سهلة ولكنها تشكل تحدياً في نفس الوقت. تختار لولا بدلاً من الانفجار القبول والانفصال عن عواطفها لتحمي نفسها من بيئتها الخبيثة. يسلط البحث الضوء على كيفية رعاية لولا لسلامها الداخلي وكيف أن تعايشها في مثل هذه الديناميكيات العائلية السامة يؤثر على نموها الإيجابي. و تنجح في التنقل عبر التجارب الصادمة بمفردها محققة استقلاليتها وهو ما يتضح جلياً من خلال سرد قصصها حيث تشارك يومياتها مع المخاطب الخيالي جوبيتر فقط. يخلص البحث إلى أن لولا ذات البصيرة الثاقبة تتغلب ليس فقط على رحلتها المكانية ولكن تنجح أيضاً في التنقل عبر الرحلات العاطفية والنفسية. و تتحدى بالإضافة إلى ذلك الصورة المثالية للأم برفضها الدعم الأمومي معيدة خلق استقلاليتها بعيداً عن أقاربها البيولوجيين وتنجح في استيعاب الثقافتين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الديناميكيات، العائلة، تخيل هذا، نيجيريا.

Introduction

The family is the fundamental and significant social unit due to its contribution in the development of human capital resources and its inherent ability to shape the behavior of individuals, households, and communities. Therefore, it serves as a foundational unit of study for the majority of social science fields, including human development, psychology,

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economics, sociology, anthropology, and social psychiatry. A child's family is their first line of defense and security, and it plays a critical role in ensuring their survival, health, education, growth, and protection. It serves as an essential bridge between continuity and change, as well as a primary source of emotional attachment and socializing. Its main advantage is that it can offer security and assistance during difficult times. Therefore, improving family life can contribute to human development (Sonawat, 2001, p.177).

Parents are considered to be their children's primary teachers. When people are feeling overburdened by many issues and difficult circumstances, they are the ones who are initially approached. Family members have a significant role in helping people become ready by providing them with strategies for effectively coping with challenges. Therefore, it is widely acknowledged that these would support the enrichment of family dynamics. Consequently, developing a thorough comprehension of the idea of family dynamics will assist to reinforce moral and ethical values (Kapur, 2023, p.2).

Basem AL-Ubaidi (2017) defines family dynamic as "the scheme of family members' relations and interactions included many prerequisite elements (family arrangements, hierarchies, rules, and patterns of family interactions). Each family is unique in its characteristics; having several helpful and unhelpful dynamics"(p.1). Radhika Kapur (2023, p.4) explains that family dynamics is considered to be one of the fundamental ideas that people from all groups, classes, and socioeconomic backgrounds should understand. One of the persistent and painful signs is considered to be loneliness. People need to be aware to decrease loneliness from the time they are young children till the end of their life. It is necessary that the individuals establish amicable and friendly ties with their family members. By doing this, the people will not only encourage physical and mental health and well-being, but they will also significantly contribute to the enhancement of knowledge, competencies, and abilities.

Consequently, Children who are victims of dysfunctional families are helpless and powerless over their toxic upbringing; they will suffer from severe emotional trauma and suffering as a result of their parents' behaviors, remarks, and attitudes. In the end, they will develop and nurture their own selves independently. Because important aspects of

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their childhood were lost, those harmed persons would restart their varied parental duties rather than enjoying childhood, which will eventually have a detrimental effect that transcends to their adult life, as will be explored regarding the protagonist Lola Ogunwole, the focus of this research (AL-Ubaidi, 2017, p.1).

Recent developments in Nigerian literature include the emergence of third-generation Nigerian writers who appear to be drawing on rich literary and cultural traditions by adopting what the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin refers to as "the genre of becoming" to address difficult issues which including identity and displacement, political conflict, postcolonial disillusionment, multiculturalism and globalization, cultural shock, and poverty. The majority of these authors are migrants, and this is an era when Anglo-American Nigerians in diaspora are writing more (Ayodabo, 2016, p.549).

Actually Nigeria country has recovered from a terrible years of military dictatorship, deadly civil war, and religious strife, which prompt many Nigerian authors to flee to Europe in the late 1960s and early 1990s. During this chaotic and horrible time, a number of works about displacement and identity developed. The writers' problematic political and socioeconomic historical and national origins, as well as their childhood experiences, travels, and the ongoing need to re-negotiate what it is to be a Nigerian, have all influenced their writings.

Authors such as Chimamanda Adichie, Seffie Attah, and Lola Shoneyin, as well as Uzodenma Iweiala, Sade Adiniran, and Segun Afoelabi Cheris Abeani, have impacted these works. Their perception of time is shaped by their childhood, identity, and 'growing up.' Indigenous writers have recently joined the new generation of Nigerian authors. Thanks to self-publishing and the expansion of publishing organizations, many excellent local writers are getting their work published. As a result, third-generation Nigerian writing has both migrant and native elements. The move from poetry to fiction, as well as international recognition of its work, are two important contrasts between the second and third generations (Ayodabo, 2016, p.549).

Nigerian authors identify urban environment, adoption of a child protagonist and narrator, focus on deprivation, denial of individual human rights and ambitions, and

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deterioration of social interactions as major thematic aspects of modern Nigerian literature. The writers' contributions to recording and reconstruction of their country's socio-political experiences have been compensated by many critical works, but few studies relate the writers' personal experiences to their growing up. This entails determining how closely the writers' personal past and experiences are perceived to coincide with their character depictions, and in certain cases, their growth. Because most writers grew up in Nigeria and employ the theme of a child protagonist or narrator in their works, it is important to look at the interaction between the writers and their child protagonists or narrators (Kattanek, 2011, p.428).

The novel's narrative style is undoubtedly influenced by Adeniran's early experiences. Because the first-person narrative technique and the epistolary style present intimate access to the heart, intellect, and creative spirit, the reader is able to fully participate in the narrator's experiences. Because of this, Adeniran's early artistry in letter writing is a clear mirror of her young heroine's use of diaries to convey her anxieties in her novel. Her earliest use of letters as a means of escaping from her distant father and defining her own private space can be inferred. Additionally, writing soothes her young protagonist. Writing for both the protagonist and the author, then, enables the healing of traumatized bodies, minds, and souls in a "safe" setting (Ayodabo, 2016, p.557).

The writing, on the other hand, is rich in vivid descriptions of people, events, and settings that make the readers think the tale is authentic from childhood to maturity. The narrative takes place in the Nigerian cities of Idogun and Lagos. The characters are entirely Yoruba, and they speak in Yoruba idioms. Characters are also detailed in great depth, leading us to believe they are based on actual people. When asked how much of the book is autobiographical, Adeniran's response did not detract from the novel's personal feeling. She generally responds by saying, "It is and it isn't". Several of the novel's events are based on real-life incidents. Adeniran states that despite the fact that she grew up in that area, she has never experienced what Lola has. "It was more of a culture shock for me" (Wilson, 2011, p. 1).

Imagine This

Sade Adeniran grew up in Nigeria, where she was able to witness both the metropolitan life of Lagos and the village's life of Idogun, in Ondo State, South West of Nigeria. She now lives in London, UK. *Imagine This* is an inspiring novel of human spirit and resilience in a foreign world. The story is Lola Ogunewole's notebook, which she starts at nine years old and follows her through childhood and maturity. Lola and her brother Adebola grew up in a transitory foster home after their mother abandoned them. When their father worries he may lose them forever, he packs up and moves them back to Nigeria. In Idogun, Ondo State, Lola's separation from her father and beloved brother Adebola soon outweighs the anguish of leaving London and relocating to Lagos. Lola had to endure hardships inconceivable for a girl her age. Lola is further rejected by her own father who does not offer his children the vital care they require. Lola continues to suffer physical and sexual abuse from her blood relative, making her life in Nigeria distasteful and degrading. So she rejects Africa, especially Nigeria, as her home, much as she longs to return to England at the novel's end, which Adeniran calls the novel's commencement (Jegede, 2012, p.281).

Many literary reviewers on *Imagine This* have accused the writer of depicting Nigeria in an unfavorable light, despite the fact that it is fictional. Arthur Anyaduba is one of the writers who made these accusations in his "Incarnation of Naipaul in Contemporary Nigerian Writing" that; Adeniran's choice of style for the novel is not the result of creativity or convenience. Rather, *Imagine This* is created with the deliberate intention of ridiculing Nigeria and its diverse cultures in the eyes of a Western audience, undermining any "claims to any human achievement in Africa" as Achebe puts it. Reductively revising any favorable image of Nigeria that already existed and reintroducing an outdated bias against African humanity and culture, *Imagine This* is similar to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (except that in this case, a black Nigerian, not a European, "visits" Africa). Adeniran makes sure that the social and cultural life of Nigerians is reduced to Naipaul's "nothing" (Falayi, n.d, p. 55). One of the novel's most remarkable features is her use of the English language as a variation and a symbol of her uniqueness as a Nigerian author. Proverbs are a tool that Adeniran utilizes to converse with different societal systems that are invisible to the

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protagonist who fights against them. The plot's rural setting offers a chance to learn about the customs and beliefs of the indigenous people (Maduagwu, 2018, p.190).

In *Imagine This*, Lola kept diaries from the age of nine to nineteen. Lola, a motherless Nigerian kid reared in London, is abandoned by her father in Idogun, Nigeria, where she has no possessions, running water, or electricity. Imagine the refrain resonating across Lola's tearful notebook entries. Due to a lack of food, care, and attention, Lola's physical and emotional development is slowed. When she finally leaves the hamlet to live with relatives in the city, she faces hostility from her uncles' wives and children, educational challenges, and unwanted attention from men and boys, all while her own wealthy and powerful father ignores her (Jegade, 2012, p. 280).

In one of her interviews Adeniran says that the novel began as a revenge tragedy after her manager abruptly dismissed her; as a result, she wanted to take her revenge but was unable to do so. Adeniran says "I wrote about a hundred pages and realized it was rubbish. But I had these diary entries of Lola's back story which intrigued me" (Wilson, 2011, p.2). Adeniran exhibits a thorough understanding of village life, however it is portrayed primarily negatively. She presents an explanation for the representation of village life: "Life is life and it's not always positive; unfortunately, not everyone gets to live a fairytale existence. Life in a Nigerian village can be harsh and restrictive, it's why you have people flocking to the cities and overcrowding those". Adeniran's response calls attention to one of the effects of globalization that this novel has highlighted. People relocate or migrate to cities and metropolitan areas in pursuit of what is referred to as the "global." The readers must never lose sight of the reality that one effect of globalization is the repression of the traditional and cultural values of the colonized or third world nations" (Falayi, n.d, p. 55).

In fact, African people's negative experiences in Africa are typically the reason they yearn to live in cities and other countries. Their traumatic experiences compel them to leave their culture behind and assimilate into a global one, which essentially hinders them from continuing to live distant from their cultural or ancestral home. The author's story and that of Lola in *Imagine This* are similar in some ways because both Adeniran and Lola returned to Nigeria as children and lived at Idogun, where they were able to absorb a great deal of knowledge about the reality of village life. Adeniran herself asserts that the "plot is taken

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from my experience of living in the village. I grew up in Idogun What happened to Lola didn't happen to me, but I imagined it happened to me and I guess that's what resonates with readers"(Falayi, n.d, p. 56).

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The family molds the primary worldview for children and teenagers as they absorb the culture of their families. Through filtering of thoughts and perceptions of what is as well as what can be, the models, mindsets, expectations, and meanings obtained in the family permeate the rest of life. Just like adults, children have a basic need to be nurtured and cared for. All mammals have an attachment circuit in their brains, which is the basis for this desire. In humans, this circuit generates the need for both emotional and physical support. A different brain circuit that is activated in the parent controls the complementary process of caring. There is an active dependency of the child on the parent and a process of attachment based on warmth (Bell, L. G., & Bell, D. C. , 2005, p.198).

Family therapy has now been demonstrated to be a successful treatment method for a wide range of personal issues, supporting the theory that a lot of individual problems are actually responses to dynamics within the family (Sprenkle, 2000 as cited in Catherall, 2004, p.3). In this novel the matter is completely different, instead of maintaining attachment to her family, the protagonist Lola overcomes her predicament and achieves autonomy by detachment, she detaches herself from her family and her austere surroundings. Her storytelling makes this clear since she solely addresses her diaries with Jupiter, a fictional addressee. Kayode Omoniyi Ogunfolabi (2022, p.28) indicates that using this technique, Adeniran's storytelling supports the protagonist's "center of self" by showing that the events in the journal are not just personal accounts but also Lola's testimony, which she has shared with only Jupiter in an effort to regain her life back. Unlike most prior generations' novels, this one lacks mediating voices. She says at the beginning of the novel, "Dearest Jupiter....May be one day I'll look back with fond memories, but right now I have to live each second as it comes and hope I survive,"

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(Adeniran, 2007, p.62). As the phrase implies, willpower and hope are necessary for survival, therefore surviving the traumatic incident is not an automatic act. To survive, Lola must "evolve new inner forms that include the traumatic event", preventing her from becoming imprisoned in traumatic hysteria. But other horrific experiences that surface in Lola's story undermine her attempts to transform into an entirely new individual (Ogunfolabi, 2022, p.28) .

According to Adeniran, the father of the main character sent her to live with relatives when they returned to Nigeria so that she might learn about the customs and traditions of the Idogun people, which are distinct from those of the white man. "I, apparently needed de-programming and needed to realize that life can be hard and that it takes a whole village to raise a child" (Adeniran, 2007, p.238). The main character experiences cultural shock, just as the majority of youngsters born in England who return to Nigeria (Jegede, 2012, pp. 276-277). Lola's family's love, trust, and devotion are destroyed by the way her father and other family members treat her (Maduagwu, 2012, p. 192). This is evident in the way she speaks describing her father, she says:

My ex-father only came to see me once, but that's okay, I'm used to him not caring...I've come to accept the fact that the man who gave me life doesn't love me, that my mother never wanted me, my only brother is dead and never coming back and my grandmother is the meanest person alive. None of it matters, now I've got to just take things as they come. (Adeniran, 2007, p.125)

In this self-reflexive passage, it is implied that the victim's familial trauma will ultimately turn out tragically, according to the "destiny that [they] never asked for" that was their "father's gift" to them. That's why it seems like Lola's trauma history is overdetermined—both her sense of approaching doom and our knowledge of the terrible incidents (Schönfelder, 2013, pp.207-208).

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Don R. Catherall (2004, p.10) states that human figure drawings are a common tool employed by psychologists in their toolkit of assessment methods. When someone drew a Person in the Rain, it illustrated how they saw stress and how well they could handle it. Although a drawing may occasionally convey the core of a trauma, psychologists have recognized that these depictions are subjective. They give the individual a way to incorporate their own interpretations of the scene. After that, it is the evaluator's responsibility to comprehend that individual meaning in light of this particular person and their circumstances. When psychologists attempt to take into account the complexities of families, that effort is even more challenging. Lola reveals her traumatic experience and her drawings are a reflection of her physical and emotional abuse:

I can just picture Mama with her head scarf tied around her waist to keep hold of her iro, her white hair in plaits and her skull gleaming with oil, wielding the cane that she'd used on me on many occasions. I cackled with sheer delight. It was justice of a sort. Imagine that (Adeniran, 2007, p.42) .

When Lola speaks about Uncle Joseph's behavior, she exposes the face of violence;

When the egunguns left, Uncle Joseph dragged me inside by the ear and pushed me against the wall. I banged my head and started crying and he said I was never to disobey him again and he gave me four lashes of the cane while the kids made fun of me(Adeniran, 2007, p. 77).

This happened because she followed the masquerades since she was so eager to see them. This stage is also portrayed in the classroom with the pupils. Since Lola is a little kid, she is disliked by several people at school, and while she tells the story, one of them beats her up, 'I've been beaten up by Akin. I've got a bruise on my head and a cut on my knee and I think I'm going to have to go to the Medical Centre because it won't stop bleeding...' (Adeniran, 2007, p.102). This occurred as a result of Lola punishing him with Miss Opeyemi's help. In the book, violence is also depicted when her aunt Iya Rotimi presents Lola in public after the witch doctor Babalawo implicated her as the thief despite

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her plea of not guilty (Maduagwu, 2018, p. 192) , "As she dragged me home all the other kids were shouting, "Thief" at me"(Adeniran, 2007, p. 32).

Post-colonial literatures are characterized by a strong focus on place and displacement. The preoccupation with the creation or restoration of an effective identifying relationship between self and place is where the unique post-colonial identity problem emerges. Dislocation arising from migration, the experience of captivity, transportation, or voluntary removal for indentured servitude may have undermined a legitimate and active sense of self. Alternatively, cultural denigration the deliberate and unintentional subjugation of the native character and way of life by an ostensibly higher racial or cultural archetype may have destroyed it. Post-colonial communities are usually characterized by the dialectic of location and displacement, regardless of whether these societies were formed by settlement, intervention, or a combination of the two. Place, displacement, and a recurring preoccupation with the myths of identity and authenticity are characteristics shared by all post-colonial English literatures, despite their historical and cultural distinctions (Ashcroft et al., 1989, pp.8-9).

The protagonist says "sometimes I dreamed that the red slippers transported me home, but I am still not sure where home is"(Adeniran, 2007, p.156). According to Andrew Gurr, the postcolonial exiles' quest for identity and creation of a sense of place are synonymous. The home is usually associated with recollections of childhood, the only source of a perdu, the home of memory, the source of a feeling of identity. London is the protagonist's childhood and past. As she travels through life, from childhood to maturity, and moves from Nigeria to London, she is exposed to her country for the first time and can only naturally think of London as her real home because she is unaware of her Nigerian lineage. She is dissatisfied with what she sees in her motherland, a rural, illiterate, and cultural milieu, and draws comparisons between Nigeria and London. As a result, she must solve the challenge of locating and defining a home because her conception of it is entwined with her early recollections. She views her home as a haven of comfort and ease of conversation (as cited in Jegede, 2012, p. 278). Lola dreams of London as a location

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where she belongs, an arena to which she is deeply attached, and a place with her familiar scenery because of her attachment to the European capital:

I suppose I have to get used to calling this place, home||. But I have to say right now my real home is in London...I really hate it here ,I really want to go back to London.... No one understands a word I'm saying, there's no water, no electricity, no television, ... I can't go to school because they teach in Yoruba and I can't read, write or even speak it properly yet (Adeniran, 2007, p. 8)

As they share a home in Lagos, Lola believes that her father, her sibling, and herself are three musketeers. However, one day their family's harmony changes, leading Lola and her sibling Adebola to experience different aspects of life. Their father sends them to live with other relatives, dividing the family. He sends Lola to live with his sister Iya Rotimi in Idogun and Adebola to live with his brother Uncle Joseph in Ado Ekiti. Omolola is discouraged by this transfer because Idogun is a community lacking the basic amenities she is accustomed to, no one speaks English, and she is unable to understand anyone. She does, however, reside with Iya Rotimi and her kids, a family who detests her greatly. She is mistreated frequently, falsely accused of doing things she didn't do, and frequently deprived from food. Afterwards, she is taken to live with her grandmother, "Mama" who treats her in the same way as Iya Rotimi. As he learns more about his sister's treatment of his daughter, her father considers this choice. She receives the devastating news of her brother's death long before she ever goes to Idogun. Her brother was too young to die, therefore his funeral is not accompanied by the same rites she discovered at her grandfather's grave (Maduagwu, 2018, p.191).

After her brother's burial, Lola's father brings her back to Lagos to live with him. She became withdrawn from everyone and unable to respond to advice from anybody, even her father. In Lagos, everyone believes that she is ill. The chef woman she met in the house gets married to her dad. Unfortunately, her father, Mr. Ogunwole, dies before he has a chance to heal the fracture between him and his young daughter. Following the

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death of her dad, Lola leaves Idogun with little to no reason to stay, so she returns to London as an adult to begin a new life—one that has always been her dream of arriving at Idogun as a little girl (Maduagwu, 2018, p.191).

The three main religions in Nigeria: Islam, Christianity, and traditional religion are highlighted in the novel. The story portrays Christianity as the predominant religion in Nigerian society. Lola begs God at the beginning of the book to change her father's heart. "I prayed and prayed because Daddy said that God answers the prayers of little children" (Adeniran, 2007, p.6). Being a religion that emerged along with colonization, it has had a significant impact on Nigerian society, as those who practice traditional worship continue to attend church on Sundays and participate in Christian religious events. This is demonstrated by Lola's aunt Iya Rotimi's persona and her family, "today is Sunday and my Auntie, Iya Rotimi took us to church" (Adeniran, 2007, p.5). She is a devout follower of traditional religion and holds strong beliefs in it, but she also adheres to Christianity, which is a modern religion. Uncle Niyi's persona reflects this as well. By sacrifice, he returns to the gods what is rightfully theirs, "the cow has been killed...with its neck stretched out over the hole, kola nut and schnapps were offered to the gods and our ancestors" (Adeniran, 2007, p.64). Lola's Christian religious practice of fasting and prayer, which she begins throughout the novel, demonstrates her faith in God to bring her brother back to life; After her brother passes away, she almost loses her sanity, engages in intolerable self-flagellation, and fasts for an extended period of time (Maduagwu, 2018, pp. 195-196). After her brother's death, Lola prays ;

Today is my ninth day of fasting and I'm weakening for food,
but I must be strong...I am at the halfway mark of my
fasting. I've been drinking water to keep my spirit pure so
that God will listen to me when I pray to him on that final
day...ten more days to go and I will finish my fasting and
God will bring Adebola back to life (Adeniran, 2007, p. 112).

Her relocation from London to Lagos and subsequently to Idogun, which has a significant impact on how she perceives home due to the treatment she receives in

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Nigeria from people she believes to be her family, brings an end to her feelings of hatred for Nigeria and love for London. However, as time goes, more difficulties arise. Lola grows up and changes. She Lola begins to mature. An internal transformation occurs when Lola is put to the test and is unable to speak for days. She knows she must battle or her heart and spirit will perish. *Imagine This* is genuine storytelling that enables the readers get a lot more insight into Lola's mind and ideas as feminine dynamic because it's recounted in diary format rather than first or third person. The events that shapes her life from childhood to adulthood are a succession of catastrophes created by fate with the hand of Man.

Linda G. Bell and David C. (2005, p.198) indicate that when parents show empathy and responsiveness to their child's needs, their child grows up with internal working models that help them be safe and open in their adolescent and adult interactions. Optimism for life is accompanied by safety and support. Academic success, improved psychological adjustment, increased social competence, and higher self-esteem are all correlated with more parental support (love, caring, and closeness). But the matter is quite different with Lola, the way Lola's father and other family members treat her destroys their love, trust, and loyalty to her. The novel shows how cultural and social forces affect family dynamics as characters struggle with tradition, prestige, and reputation. These outside factors cause family discord. Family conflict in *Imagine This* highlights the difficulties, emotions, and progress of family connections. The protagonist of Sade Adeniran's novel "Imagine This" develops via identification and emotional growth. Lola Ogunwale's self-discovery and resilience during family conflicts form her identity and emotional development throughout the story. She struggles with society expectations, family pressures, and personal goals as she discovers who she is and what she wants.

This fortitude in the face of hardship is illustrated by Christa Schönfelder in her book *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction*. Schönfelder (2013, p.313) demonstrates how trauma's breakdown and disintegration often generate an urgent desire for trauma victims to reclaim a sense of a consistent

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identity, a coherent life story, and a sense of discipline and control. Lola 's upbringing in a poisonous family did not impede her path to self-realization. In a world where her family is unable to provide her the love and support she needs, she reclaims her sense of self and authenticity.

Similarly, Ogunfolabi (2022, pp.34,36) argues that after enduring various apathetic spaces occupied and defended by other women, such as Mama in Idogun, the "Cook woman" (her stepmother) in Lagos, Iya Foluso at Surulere, and Iya Soji at Festac, Lola starts to write a new story of determination and hope. In addition, by rejecting the motherly support she had always craved at the height of her suffering, Lola challenges the idealized image of the mother, which demonstrates her growth from childhood to adulthood and, in the end, reconstructs herself as a subject. surprisingly, Alhaja's family is the only one where she does not feel "Other," and her incorporation into the family might happen there without any biological prerequisites. The family's status as a timeless haven is undermined by this action, which is why *Imagine This* focuses on the manner in which young female characters restructure familial dynamics to strengthen themselves. As Adeniran, (2007, p.334) portrays "depiction of her journey towards wisdom ... a sensitive and perceptive account of a voyage through memory, imagination and a re-imagined past".

Despite this personal independence from family members, the novel does not minimize the importance of support; rather, it simply highlights loyalty from non-biological relatives, since the text has unveiled the received views of the family as the place of bonding and assistance. *Imagine This* can therefore be "justified in celebrating the subject's ability to rewrite the past, but more importantly her power to re-imagine the future"(Ogunfolabi, 2022, p.36).

Conclusion

The study shows how Lola, the main character, overcomes her difficult circumstances to forge an independent and self-sufficient personality while experiencing familial

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disintegration and abuse. As the primary indicator of an individual's intellectual maturity is their ability to let go of anything, no matter how important, this concept is evident in Lola's character and her journey to achieve positive growth. The primary catalyst of her positive growth was her presence in that malicious milieu. She overcomes her plight and achieves autonomy by detaching herself from her austere surroundings. This is evident in her storytelling, as she shares her diaries only with the imaginary addressee Jupiter. The novel highlighted how people can form their own identities and that, as Lola's character demonstrates they are free to decide their own path in life rather than having it predetermined for them. Therefore, her journey to self-realization was not hindered by growing up in a toxic familial environment. She did not, however, use rebellion or agitation to challenge her reality. On the contrary, she employs peaceful strategies and faced her experience with determination, acceptance, and detachment. The novel provides readers with a vivid depiction of a feminine dynamic of a young woman's path towards self-awareness, empowerment, and acceptance by exploring topics of identity development and emotional maturation. Lola's development serves as a reminder of the transformational potential of personal development and the fortitude required to deal with the challenges of relationships and daily life.

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