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## **Abuse and Bestiality in Women Discourses: A Systemic Functional Grammar Approach**

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### **Abstract**

One of the concerns that many writers have buttressed as constituting a barrier to harmonious living among humans is abuse. This has been addressed from various angles such as physical, psychological, domestic, mental, religious, financial, drug and many more. In literature, the issue of abuse has been linked so much to inter-relationships between men and women in general, and adults and children, with results that show women and children as the major victims of abuse in all cases while men and adults are on the minor. This paper carried out a grammatical analysis, of the verbal relationship in intra-female gender discourses, using systemic functional grammar approach, to underscore verbal abuse and the resultant bestial activities of women against their fellow women. The study made use of excerpts from a Nigerian home video titled *The Prince and the Maid* and some excerpts from the Metro page of The Punch newspaper. The findings of this study show that the maids go through all form of verbal and non-verbal abuses in the hands of their fellow women in the homes where they serve. The marginalized, dominated, subjugated and bestially dehumanized treatments from the other female folks in the home, show the level of power relations between maids and them. In other words, women exercise undue power relations over their fellow women especially, the maids. The study recommends a fair treatment of the maids especially, putting into consideration their economic values in the homes they serve. The use of abusive language and treatment on maids should stop, instead, language use that can boost their self-esteem and bring about positive encouragement should be imbibed by women folks in general.

**Keywords:** Systemic Functional Grammar; Abuse; Economic Value; Discourse.

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## **1. Introduction**

Abuse is the most commonly used word that describes activities and relationships whether between man and his environment, man and his fellow man or man against himself. In other words, men women, and non-humans undergo abuse. Abuse can be defined to include any or all forms of improper practices, maltreatment, causing of injury, evil, unjust or wrong judgement, harsh, coarse or demeaning language use etc. Some of the impacts of abuse on an individual, family and society include, according to [13] functional impairments, permeant inabilities, chronic pains, fatal injuries, negative health behaviours, low self-esteem, suicidal tendencies, depression, trauma, loss of confidence, isolation, emotional over-reaction and more.

This study is concerned with the high use of derogatory labels or lexical items in the home video on the maid which does not augur well with the concerns of the feminists against activities and attitudes that result in women socialization to powerlessness in societies that subject women to different forms of abuse. The language attitude of these women tend to portray the word “maid” as a demeaning word which tends to give them power to treat maids as less than humans. The question here is: Are maids women? Do they deserve to be treated with respect? Can they partake in the rights and privileges that accrue to other women? Can they make positive economic contributions to the homes where they serve? What reward do they receive in recompense for their labour?

### ***1.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics***

Systemic Functional Linguistics approach is also adopted in this study. This is a grammar approach that sees language as networks of interlocking options. It is a grammar of meaning that views language as a system of meanings realised through the functions of the resources of grammatical options [1] The grammar approach identifies three functions texts can perform thus: ideational, textual and interpersonal. These functions can help to uncover what experiences, perceptions and unconsciousness are embodied through language, how information is structured and presented and how meanings about various interactions are expressed. Systemic Functional Grammar is an approach to the study of text that sees text types as representation of social practices; i.e. the classification of the different ways in which social actors can be linguistically represented using such elements as deletion, substitution, rearrangement and addition, inclusion or exclusion. The representation of maid in the movie has “labeling” as one of the social practice of the women on their maid which can affect the self-concepts of the maids or result in any or more of the identified impacts above. Such labeling are evidences of power and superiority attitude that result in the aggressive behaviours of dehumanizing, humiliating, subjugating, subordinating and maltreating of the maid. Author [2] posits that aggressive behaviours could mean denying people language, education, and other opportunities that might make them become fully human in both mind and body. This assertion aligns with the data from the pages of The Punch newspaper.

### ***1.2 Challenge of Economic Value for Informal Labour***

In Africa, as observed by author [3] one of the greatest challenges women have had to wrestle with is the lack of economic theory to diffuse men’s interpretations or conceptions of what activities can account for their economic value or their contributions in the development of the home. Not until recently, when women started

embarking on paid employments, leaving the “no value house chores” to nannies, gardeners, dry cleaners, day-care centers, cooks, genitors, etc could the obvious be made clear. The effect of the cost of servicing these informal and unregulated works women were used to doing can today be easily felt on the pay packages of the man and woman that employ the services of the above informal work force. The work productivity value of the house chores women were denied for lack of regulatory economic system for informal work has been inherited by maids and unfortunately, along the same structural system of capitalist accumulation which led to the exploitation of women by men. As a matter of fact, the societal features for the accumulation dynamics of capital, which depends most obviously on profits gained through formal mechanisms of production and exchange, are as well carried over into the women’s world. There exists the tendency to forget that profits also accumulate through an array of non-formal – unregulated domestic/household activities. The point here is that the informal activities (household chores or housework) sustain accumulation of wealth of these madams by absorbing costs of social reproduction, subsidizing formal wages through provision of cheap goods and services and exerting downward pressure on their wages and salaries.

There is the need for women or feminists to revisit the informal economic theory of labour in Nigeria because it has encouraged inequality and hegemony both between men against women and women against women as is the case in this study. The contributions of the maid is a contestable space in the face of the devaluation ideology of informal activities which constitutes secondary positioning by structure and results in no or minimal economic compensation.

Author [3] observes further that through the redefinition of work to include unpaid care-work as well as informal labour, it is very clear that informality is not a static concept but a contested space that is useful precisely because it reveals underlying patterns of social power that stretch from the behaviour of individuals . . . to the dynamics of national, state alliances .... The labour of a woman for another woman should be recognized as part of economic contribution to the development of the other’s home and as such, should be adequately rewarded.

The activities of madams on their maids reveal concealed hegemonic notion of social oppression that sees maids as slaves; at the mercy of their madams and deserving all kinds of ill treatment. Social oppression is the socially supported mistreatment and exploitation of a group of individuals based on power dynamics and an individual's social location in society [4]. Author [5] opts that these social oppression results in socialization to powerlessness. Social location, as defined by author [6], is "an individual's or a group's social 'place' in the race, class, gender and sexuality hierarchies, as well as in other critical social hierarchies.... In this way, women societies have social locations that determine how a sister should be perceived and treated. Hence, the discourses of the women in the home video, *The Prince and the Maid* will expose aspects of the ideology of the madams about maids and the way and manner they treat them based on such ideology.

### **1.3 Discourse**

Discourse is one important instrument of social construction of reality as perceived by the discourse participants i.e., language use shows language user’s perception of a society or an individual or events. This then means that

the meaning of the linguistic choices in participants' discourses have a dialectical relationship with social identities, social relationships and systems of knowledge and belief about the objects of a talk. In other words, a participant's linguistic choices are in accordance with his or her social frame of the other participant or the event occurring around the object of the talk. Embedded in language are social practices, defined as rules and structures that limit human actions and interaction within a context. Critical Discourse Analysis projects language and discourse as forms of social practice, hence, a deeper and critical analysis or evaluation of discourses will highlight unequal social relations, ideologies, and powers behind the production of certain utterances which might have been regarded as natural way of talking. Simply put, there is no natural way of talking about issues since what is recaptured in talk is what is already structured framed in the mind of an individual or the society.

Discourse as defined by [7] is

the highest unit of linguistic description above phonemes,  
morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, sentences and texts ...  
a sample of language usage, generally written to be spoken,  
that is, a speech ... the communication expected in one  
situation /context, alongside one field and register... a human  
interaction through any means, verbal and non-verbal...  
a spoken interaction only; ... the whole communicative event.

This definition of discourse is all encompassing which means that where to look out for ideologies and the power plays behind those ideologies goes even beyond utterances made or written to include objects used in a context of interaction. These are non-verbal but powerful tools to communicate the intentions and attitudes of the language user. In other words, they are semiotic in nature in the sense that there is a signifier and a signified in the context of the use of objects among women in interaction situations.

Author [8] sees discourse as;

talk and text; the knowledge being produced and circulating in  
talk; ... the general ways of viewing and behaving in the world; ...  
the systems of thoughts, assumptions and talk patterns that  
dominate a particular area; and ...the beliefs and actions that make up social practices.

In this regard, talk is action. No discourse should be seen as abstract but as a concrete reflection of the society or individual that employs it.

Author [9] postulates two types of discourses: linguistic discourse (language in use) and social theorists' discourses i.e. practice(s) constituting objects. In a similar vein, [10] also proposes a three dimensional definition of discourse as: (a) linguistic, described at the syntactic, semantic, stylistic or rhetorical levels; (b) cognitive, that which needs to be understood in terms of the interlocutors' processes of production, reception and understanding; and (c) socio-cultural, which he posits as the social dimension of discourse, ... a sequence of contextualised, controlled and purposeful acts accomplished in society, ... a form of social action taking place in a context. In essence, the discourses in the home video presents some intentional linguistic choices within the ambits of interlocutors such as maids and madams in order to expose social realities or social actions that are taking place among the sisterhood. In this way, [11] puts it that the self no longer uses language to express itself; rather language speaks through the person. The individual self in this context becomes a medium through which the obvious can be made known both verbally or non-verbally.

## **2. The maid and the prince**

In this movie, Ezinne lost her father and mother in an auto crash and was left with her stepmother and step sisters as she had no other sibling from her mother. Life turned sour for her in the hands of her stepmother and stepsisters. She was turned into a maid and because the mind of those in her household are acquainted with the societal treatment of a maid, she faced verbal aggression in form of humiliation, dehumanization, oppression, defamation, verbal and non-verbal abuse and was treated as a second-class citizen treatment.

Step-mother where is this **stupid girl**? I told you I will be leaving at 7:00am. Where is our food?  
(humiliation/ defamation)

(she prepares and serves the food)

Step-mother where is your own food?

Ezinne it's in the kitchen

Step-mother go and bring it (she come in with the food)

Step-mother have I not told you **not to eat whatever we eat** in this house and that you should always **eat leftovers**? (her food is poured away and she receives beating) (dehumanization/humiliation)

Step-sister you are here **crying**. Make sure all **these clothes** are **washed**. You **witch!** (throws the bundle of cloth at her. (subordination/ humiliation)

Step-mother Why is the **drum empty**?

Ezinne I **was washing**...

Step-mother washing what? **Shut up and go and fetch water and wash my car**, you **useless girl** (beating and pushing and she falls and sustains a bad wound on her knee) (Face threatening /servitude/ humiliation)

Ezinne I have **to fetch water**, I have **to clean**, I have **to cook**, I have **to wash** (slavery/domestic servitude).

(goes off to fetch water and meets the uncle on the way)

Uncle What happened to you Ezinne?

Ezinne I fell down

Uncle It is a lie. It is that wicked woman that did this to you. Let me take you to the chemist. Everybody knows she wants to **get rid of you**,

Ezinne No uncle; I have **a lot to do**. I have to go before **they** start looking for me (servitude/powerlessness)

(Lost in thought, she was almost knocked down by a vehicle; although side of the vehicle brushed her down)

Doctor Oh I'm sorry. You shouldn't be walking on the road without watching. Let me help you.

Ezinne No I am fine

Doctor You have a wound. I can help you treat it. I am a doctor

Ezinne I have to take water home (servitude)

Step-mother You this **stupid and ungrateful girl**, you went and reported me to your uncle? You ungrateful girl after I took you in after that your **useless prostitute and wicked mother** died. Leave my house I don't want to see you again. (superiority/ defamatory/ aggression)

(Ezinne was locked outside and the night was getting very cold for her and she goes knocking and begging to be allowed in.)

Step-mother:Go and **fill the drum**. If you don't, you won't come into this house. (subjugation/ hostility)

(Ezinne goes in the night to beg the security to allow her fetch water. Trying to push herself in, the security pushes and she falls and the doctor just arrived and rescued her and treated her wound)

Doctor Which mother sends you out by this time of the night to go fetch water? It is late to be fetching water. You do it tomorrow

Ezinne I live with my step mother, if I **don't fill the drum** this night, she **will kill** me (FTA/  
powerlessness/servitude)

Step mother: who dressed your wound?

Ezinne One doctor saw me and took me in to dress the wound.

Step sister: That should be Madam Oge's son. She has been going around telling people that we are  
wicked (hostility/defamatory)

Ezinne No! I told them I fell down. (powerlessness)

Step-mother: Don't mind her, she is like her mother, **prostituting** around. (defamatory/  
humiliation)

Common go inside that kitchen and prepare that yam for me. (servitude)

Step-sister: Mother you have to go and see Madam Oge before this girl ruins our chances. Madam Oge  
organized a welcome party for her son that came in from abroad and she has invited many girls as a  
way of getting a wife for his son (relational aggression/ oppression)

(The step mother goes to Madam Oge)

Step mother: Do you know Ezinne?

Madam Oge: Yes **your maid** (subjugation)

Step mother: You did not invite my daughters but you invited Ezinne to your son's party. She has been  
going around town telling people that she is the one your son has chosen to marry. (defamatory/  
relational aggression)

Madam Oge: My son? That **can never happen, never, not** her type, she **can't** get my son's attention,  
and my son has **class** and **taste**. (power/superiority)

(Time for party (the three step sisters are ready)

Ezinne: Mum can I go to the party?

Step sister: Eh! Can you imagine this **dirty thing** (dehumanization/humiliation)

Step mother: How can you a **church rat** ask to follow my daughters to a party? (dehumanization)

Step sister: Oh! It is obvious you **don't have enough work** to do. **Idiot. Go** to my room, **pack** all the

**dirty** clothes, **wash** them, **scrub** the floor of the rooms. When you are done, **clean** the compound then, you can come for the party. (servitude)

At the party, the prince abandons all the other girls at the sight of Ezinne and goes over to her.

Prince        what kept you?

Ezinne        I have **to finish all the work** my prince (servitude)

Madam Oge:        Prince you left all **the girls** out there to stay with **this house girl**? what kind of nonsense is this? (humiliation)

Prince        She is my choice, I have chosen who to marry

Madam Oge: She is a **house girl**; there are one thousand and one girls out there that you can choose from that come from **good homes**. She is not your type. I don't want to see her in this house again. (FTA/superiority/humiliation)

Prince        I don't care

Madam Oge: You **won't marry** that girl. Over my dead body! (FTA)

Stepmother: I know that you will become **a prostitute** like **your mother**. Your **useless mother** that snatched my husband, married and killed him. (subordination/humiliation/psychological bullying)

Madam Oge: My husband, can you imagine your son choosing **a house girl over all the girls** that came to the party! I **will not accept** that girl as a daughter-in-law. She is worse than a house girl. (Superiority/power)

Prince father Ezinne is **not a house girl**, it is just that she is **being maltreated by a woman** who is **supposed to protect her** like a daughter. I think she is an embodiment of humility. If you don't want her as a daughter-in law, I want her.

Madam Oge She **deserves** to be **treated worse than** that. (dehumanization)

As Ezinne visits Prince

Prince        welcome, sit down (Ezinne keeps standing). Have your seat.

Ezinne        I have **never been allowed to sit** down before. Please if we are going out, let's go quick so I can go and **do my work** (servitude/ dominance)

Prince           okay! let me get the car key

Prince's mother enters the parlor

Ezinne            Good afternoon ma

Madam Oge:       What are you doing here? (FTA)

Ezinne            I came to see the Prince (politeness)

Madam Oge: You **want to trap** my son the way **your useless mother** trapped her husband. Get out of here!  
(Humiliation/ psychological bullying) (She cries and runs outside)

Prince            Mother, what did you say to Ezinne?

Madam Oge:      Oh stop, she is **not your class**. (superiority)

Prince leaves with Ezinne

Prince I will buy any thing you point at for you.

Ezinne No! I **won't buy anything**. Where will I keep it?

Prince In your room

Ezinne            I **don't have a room, I sleep in the kitchen**. (domestic servitude/dehumanisation) At home

Prince Mother I want us to talk

Madam Oge what is it?

Prince I have decided to **marry Ezinne**.

Prince's father       That's a **better choice**

Madam Oge That **house girl**? I **will not allow** that. It **will not happen**. Of all the girls, you choose a **house girl**, a **prostitute** and a **maid**. (power/relational aggression/ defamation)

Prince it is a serious decision in my life. Mum, you need to know what she is going through. That woman treats her like an animal, she needs love.

Madam Oge `        In my house? I **will give** her **hell**, I **am promising** her that. If you go ahead and marry that girl, if I die, don't come near my corpse. (FTA/ power/ dehumanization)

Stepmother drags her to another man to be forcefully married to the man, sets her up through Chris a friend to Prince to prove she is a prostitute, but failed. Prince went and rescued her and took her home

Prince You can't go back to that woman, she can't stop at any thing to see you dead. I am taking you to my house.

Madam Oge Get this **harlot** out of my house! That **little witch** has taken over my son but that is over my dead body. (defamation/humiliation)

Prince's father he **has** the **right** to choose **whosoever** he wants to **marry**.

Madam Oge I am now an enemy because I want a **decent girl** for him (humiliation)

Prince's father **Your people were poor but my mother never looked down on you**. I hope you have not forgotten how poverty ruined your life.

The step mother plotted to kill her by hiring assassins. But madam Oge became troubled and told the son

Madam Oge I don't want to stain my hands with blood. Elvis rush to garden gate and rescue her, they sent assassins after her; please forgive me. I was **blinded by money**. (superiority/power)

Systemic Functional Grammar approach to the study of the discourses above projects texts as a representation of social practices; i.e. the classification of the different ways in which social actors can be linguistically deleted, substituted, rearranged, added, included or excluded . Applying these linguistic elements to the excerpts from the home video, we can propose that the acts of humiliation, dehumanization, oppression, aggression, both verbal and non-verbal as used in the film,

**deleted** Ezinne from being a bonafide daughter of the home to a house girl/ maid

- Do you know Ezinne?
- Yes your maid

**substituted** her for a prostitute, a witch, dirty thing, church rat.

**excluded** her from the right of every other young woman in the society:

- How could you a church rat ask to follow my daughters to a party?
- she is not your class
- My son, .... not her type, ...., my son has class and taste
- Can you imagine this **dirty thing**

**added** her as a kitchen element:

- I sleep in the kitchen

**included** her as a second class citizen or worse than that- a slave:

- have I not told you not to eat whatever we eat in this house and that you should always **eat leftovers**?
- **I sleep in the kitchen**

**Rearranged** her into a slave

- You are here crying. Make sure all these clothes are washed. You witch!
- Why is the drum empty?
- I was washing...
- Washing what? shut up and go and fetch water and wash my car, you useless girl
- I have to fetch water, I have to clean, I have to cook, I have to wash
- I live with my step mother, if I don't fill the drum this night, she will kill me
- No uncle; I have a lot to do. I have to go....
- Oh! It is obvious you don't have enough work to do. Idiot. Go to my room. Park all the dirty clothes, wash them, scrub the floor of the room. When you are done, clean the compound then, you can come to the party.

It is very unfortunate that despite the maid's very important role in the sustenance of the economic strength of the home (just as it was in the patriarchal system that subjugated women who were not in formal productive labour), their economic contributions in the homes of their madams are never reckoned with. As contained in Ezinne's utterances, I have **to fetch water**, I have **to clean**, I have **to cook**, I have **to wash.... I have a lot to do, I have to finish all the work, etc**, are clear indications of the usefulness of the maids in the economic sustenance of the homes. But in return, what do they receive as reward? They are rewarded with humiliation, dehumanisation, subordination, subjugation, defamation, and equative labels of weak dispositions. (**stupid girl, witch, useless girl, ungrateful girl, prostitute, dirty thing, church rat, harlot, object for hell, eater of leftovers, etc**). In some cases, some of these maids undergo- in the hands of their madams, what [12] calls animalistic or bestial form of dehumanization. This is a type of behavior where these women see the maid as amoral, unintelligent, and not worthy of life, less than human and even likened to animals as are implied in the discourses above. The social or real representation of these can be seen in the following excerpt from the Metro page of The Punch newspaper below. These pictures are a symbolic representation of madam Oge's utterance in response to her husband thus:

Madam Oge: My husband, can you imagine your son choosing a house maid over all the girls that came to the party! I will not accept that girl as a daughter in-law. She is worse than a house girl.

Prince father: Ezinne is not a house girl, it is just that she is being maltreated by a woman who is supposed to protect her like a daughter. I think she is an embodiment of humility. If you don't want her

as a daughter-in law, I want her

Madam Oge She **deserves** to be **treated worse than** that.

The verb phrase “deserves to be treated worse than” practically expresses the experiences of the young women as exemplified in the following Metro pages of The Punch newspaper.

In reality, house maids are treated worse than what Ezinne had to go through in the hand of her step mother and step-siseter.

Below are evidences of “worse than” in the level of abuse of women on their maids.

### From the Metro Page of The Punch newspaper

that alerted everybody to the younger one when they to their relatives.

## Arrested for assaulting housemaid with hot iron

The victim, who admitted that she was dosing, said she had washed the boss' children's clothes and had fanned the woman when there was power outage.

She explained that she was exhausted by the time power was restored, but Momodu instructed her to iron the clothes.

Our correspondent gathered that one of Egbadon's teachers noticed the injuries and reported the incident to the police at the Aswani division, leading to the arrest of the boss.

Egbadon said, “My mum divorced my dad about six years ago and she is now in Benin. She left my three siblings and I with him. When he could not take care of us, he gave me to madam who is our



sleepy while ironing the clothes. She said I wanted to burn the clothes, collected the iron and placed it on my hand and thigh.

“Her husband is not aware of the way she treats me. He lives in Abuja and comes home once in a while. Whenever we travel home, she is kind to me in the presence of my father. I want to go back home.”

But Momodu said the housemaid injured herself with the iron out of fear when she chided her for dosing. She added that she had wanted to take her back home but her father refused.

She said, “She was sleeping and I asked her how she could be sleeping while ironing. It was that shock that led to all this. I did not know she informed her teacher. The iron fell on her. I

•Egbadon Photo: Afeez Hanafi

Figure 1

This excerpt re-echoes Ezinne's response, “I have never been allowed to sit down before.

# Housewife tortured

**Samson Folarin**

**A** 12-year-old girl, Mmesoma Ani, has been admitted to the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Idi-Araba, Surulere,

after she was allegedly tortured by her aunt, Mrs. Ogechi Iruwane.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that the mother of three allegedly used her bare hands to pinch off the victim's chest, and

inflicted injuries on her back.

Ani was also said to have been starved for two days for allegedly stealing a piece of meat.

Our correspondent learnt that a trader on Nurudeen

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**Figure 2**

Brutally tortured and starved for two day on the allegation of stealing a piece of meat



Figure 3

Deformed for life for alleged eating of crayfish



Figure 4

Poured dangerous chemical on the housemaid and after damaging her, used her in that condition to beg for alms

Madam sold a 14-year old girl's virginity to a ritual rapist for money



Figure 5

After being tortured, the madam applied pepper on the injuries

### 3. Shock as Pregnant Beautician Beats 8-year-old Housemaid to Death in Lagos

Policemen in Lagos state have arrested a Lagos beautician identified only as Oby for allegedly beating her eight-year-old maid, Miracle Edegwu, to death in the Isolo area of the city.

According to Punch, the mother-of-two was allegedly planning with some people to dispose of the corpse of the maid after she died when her neighbours raised alarm and reported her to the police. "She brought the victim and another girl by name Chinacherem, from their village in Anambra State some years ago. They were formerly going to school before she stopped them.

"She usually maltreated the two girls and would wake them up as early as 4.30am to start working. She beats them for the least provocation.

"Early Saturday, she descended on Miracle again and beat her till she gave up. She called some people to help her in disposing of her corpse. They were about taking the body out when people challenged them. The people

she brought quickly ran away.”

#### 4. Woman tortures 16-year-old housemaid with iron and electric cables



Figure 6

Fatima Williams, and her neighbour, Waliu Yusuf, have been arrested by the Lagos State Police Command for allegedly brutalizing a 16-year-old girl, identified only as Kemi, with a hot iron and electric cables. According to [Punch](#), Kemi was brought from Cotonou, Benin Republic. She had been reportedly living with Williams, popularly called Alhaja, since January [2016](#) as a housemaid.

The victim was allegedly tortured for not sweeping Williams' compound last Thursday. A resident informed the police and the suspects were arrested by the Ikeja Police Division on Friday, [August 12](#). A police source told [Punch](#) that the [teenager](#) had been admitted to the Police Cottage Hospital, Ikeja. Kemi, who spoke in Yoruba, said, "On that day, Alhaja instructed me to sweep the compound. She also asked me to clean the windows and wash some clothes.

"I started with the washing and she went out. When she returned, she was angry that I had not swept the compound. She called the man to beat me up."

Alhaja, a mother of four children who hails from Kwara State, said she got Yusuf to beat the girl for her obstinacy, adding that Kemi's stubbornness had increased her (Alhaja's) blood pressure.

These are evidences of the animalistic dehumanisation as contained in madam Oge's discourse (she deserves worse treatment...). These girls are denied not just education, food, their bodies, but also their lives. These forms of bestial or animalistic dehumanisation render these girls incapacitated for life. It has become very evident that the worth or value of housemaids is yet to be recognised in the Nigerian society judging by the attitude of these women on their maids.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, most +Higher women exclude the –Higher from the rights and privileges that has accrued to them through the struggles of feminism. Because of differences in status, they dominate, humiliate, deny, subjugate, subordinate the maids through their grammatical techniques of marking that is, naming practices and the use of derogative adjectives that undermined, diminished and trivialised the worth of the maids. The madams in this wise, subject the maids to a socialization of powerlessness. Furthermore, the activities of madams on their maids show that the maids' economic contributions in the society and in the homes are yet to be reckoned with or included in the economic strength of such. In addition, most women are yet to recognize that these maids are potential queens, mothers and leaders of tomorrow and that they need to be encouraged, assisted, and developed into a positive, self-assertive, and self-actualised and self-willed women.

## **6. Recommendation**

Feminists and other proponents of human rights should take seriously the plight of maids especially their education and general development. Women writers should give education and call attention through their works to the rights and privileges of every woman. And just as laws were made that afforded women their rights and privileges in different societies, law makers should make laws that will protect maids' rights and privileges in homes where they serve. Finally, this study recommends that the term informal labour be abrogated and such duties be formalised since their economic values can be ascertained from the different homes that pay for such jobs.

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